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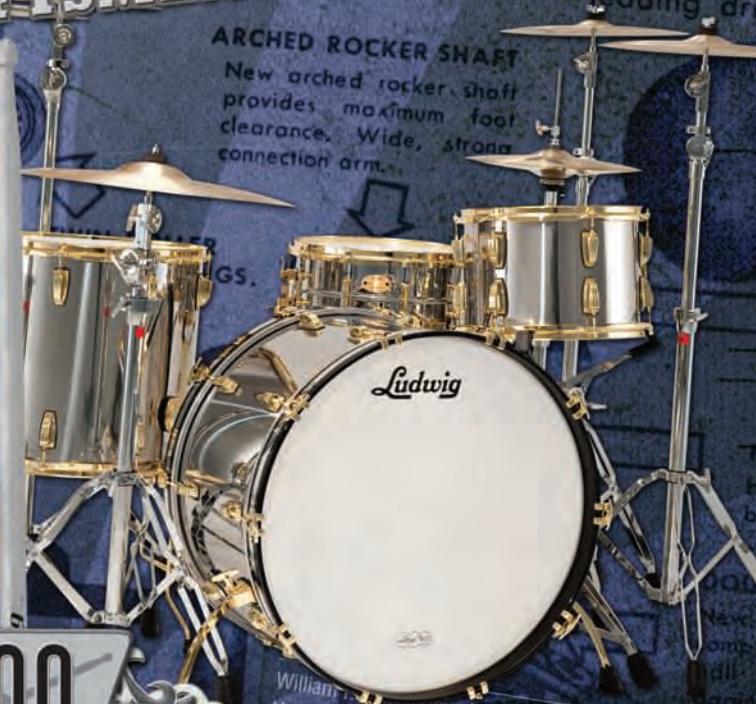
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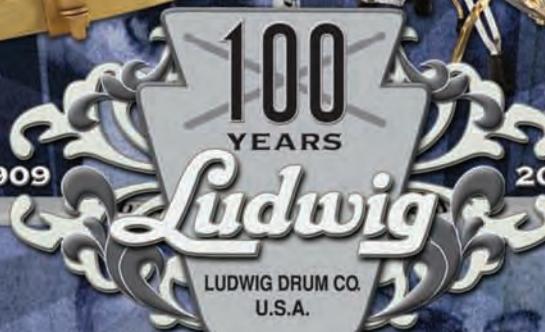
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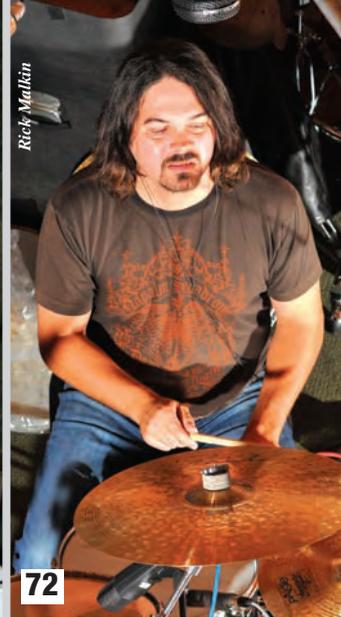
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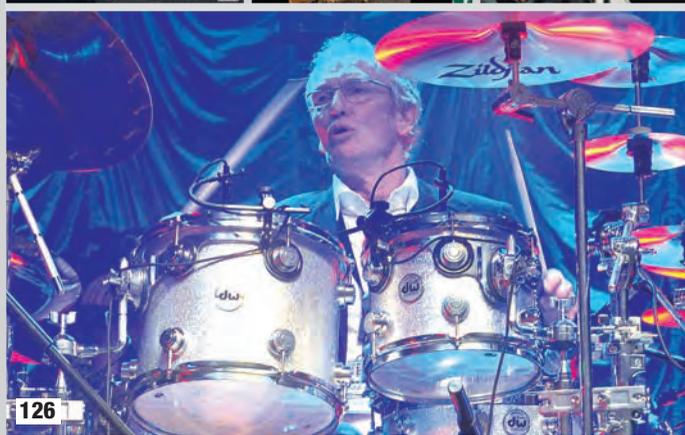
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The Heart Is Saddened, But The Beat Goes On



As some of you might be aware, *MD* editor in chief Bill Miller recently passed away after a long battle with cancer. Bill was with us since 1984, when he came on board as an intern. Soon after, he became a full-time member of the staff as an associate editor, eventually rising to the top post of the editorial staff. In those early days at *Modern Drummer*, we welcomed Bill to the *MD* family as...well...family, knowing that at a young age he had taken the bold step of moving far from his Illinois home to embark on a new adventure.

Bill took to his new position with great enthusiasm, tirelessly blowing the horn for the magazine that he himself had been a dedicated reader of as a student at the University of Miami, from which he had graduated with a music degree. Bill especially enjoyed the opportunity to interview, and in some cases get to know personally, drummers he greatly admired, such as Phil Collins, Billy Cobham, and Neil Peart. Bill's spirit and dedication will be missed at *Modern Drummer*, and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and son, Sarah and Clifford.

This isn't the first time we at *MD* have mourned the loss of an important member of our staff. Five years ago my husband, Ron, also succumbed to cancer, leaving a void and a sadness that, at the time, was difficult to imagine getting past. We persevered, however, knowing that Ron wanted us to maintain the journalistic quality and integrity that was so important to him, and to make sure *MD's* status as "the drummer's bible" never diminished. Recently we've found ourselves in a similar situation. But again, by reminding ourselves of what the core elements of *MD's* success have always been, and by relying on the depth of talent within our staff, we're quite prepared to continue putting out the type of products our loyal readers have long expected of us.

To that end, former *Modern Drummer* managing editor Adam Budofsky has moved into the position of editorial director. Adam has been with the magazine for over twenty years, and is well prepared and very excited to continue bringing you the high-quality editorial *MD* is world-renowned for, and to bring some fresh ingredients to the stew as well. In addition, former associate editor Mike Dawson has been promoted to managing editor. Mike will work closely with Adam in conceiving *Modern Drummer* articles, particularly in the educational and product areas.

Many readers are familiar with longtime *MD* associate editor Billy Amendola, and he too is rising to the challenge, taking on further responsibilities and continuing to be a constant presence in the pages of *MD*. (And you'll still be able to find him backstage at clubs and arenas any number of nights a week—Billy hangs better than anybody in the industry as far as we're concerned!) Finally, we're very excited to announce the arrival of new *MD* associate editor Michael Parillo. Michael has been writing for *Modern Drummer* for a number of years, and we're thrilled to have him join us at the office, where, among his other duties, he'll be putting his considerable interviewing and writing skills to use.

Those who knew Bill Miller well will, like his co-workers, feel his absence for a long time to come. Those who know *Modern Drummer* well will expect us to retain the quality we're known for, and we have no intentions of letting you down. We at the magazine would like to personally thank those who've supported us so fervently in the past, and we promise to continue to serve you in the future.

MODERN DRUMMER

Volume 33, Number 4

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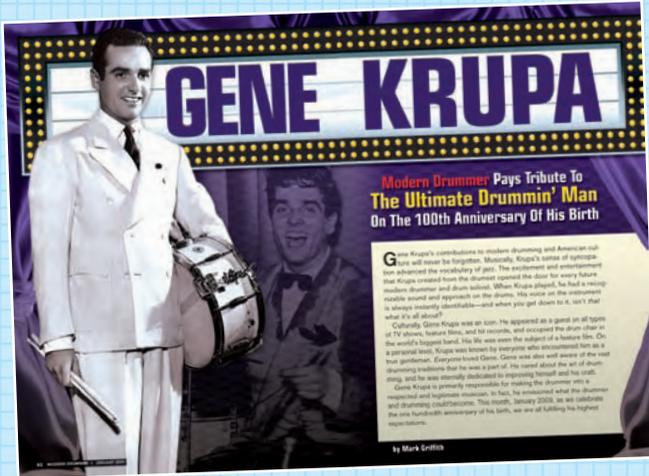
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BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS



What's In A Name?

I'm continuously annoyed by the overuse and misuse of the terms "progressive rock drummer" and "prog rock drummer." Personally, I think they're nebulous and ridiculous terms for drummers who play free-form rock. What's progressive about it? The definition of progressive is "gradually advancing in extent." I do not see anything more progressive about "prog rock" than any other genre of music. The great Buddy Rich once said that a drummer is a drummer no matter what style of music he plays. Let's quit pigeonholing drumming styles and recognize that we are all first and foremost drummers!

Will DeBouwer

MD Online

I just watched the online interview with Liberty DeVitto and Dino Danelli, and it was very entertaining as well as educational. I love both drummers, and the casual conversations on drumming and their bands were great! Thanks for always being there for us drummers.

Jeffrey Serfes



Buddy Harman

Thank you for the tribute to Buddy Harman in your February '09 issue. It brought back some great memories. I knew Buddy well, having met him almost twenty years ago backstage at the Opry. We hit it off instantly, and he recalled using Pro-Mark sticks for most of his recording career. Buddy made sure my wife and I had a standing invitation to "hang" with him whenever we were in town—and we always took him up on it. Watching Buddy play at the Opry was a joy, and occasionally he'd tell stories about recording with Roy Orbison, The Everly Brothers, Patsy Cline, and Elvis. What a treat! As his health declined, Buddy slowed down and eventually stopped playing, but we remained in contact on a regular basis until just a few months prior to his passing. I'll miss him a lot.

Pat Brown,

director of sales and marketing, Pro-Mark Corporation

DROPPED BEATS

- The *Readers' Platform* letter titled "More Praise For Todd [Sucherman]" that ran in *MD's* February issue was written by Chris Moore, former president of the Percussive Arts Society's Alabama chapter. It was incorrectly credited to unrelated PAS Georgia chapter president Chris Moore.
- The photo of Ian Froman on page 102 of the March issue should have been credited to Andrew Lepley.

Gene Krupa

I'd like to offer my compliments to *MD* on a wonderful piece on Gene Krupa in the January '09 issue. Gene was my close personal friend and mentor in the last seven years of his life. Given my friendship with Gene, I see myself as "the keeper of the flame" when it comes to him.

Regarding the current article, thank you for dedicating so much space in the magazine to it. To writer Mark Griffith, I offer the same and would like to add that the historical perspective, thoroughness, and sentiment in the article were perfect and certainly among the best I've seen about Gene. Regarding some of the photos, the one of Gene "in shadow" behind the drums is important in that he was extremely proud of how he created the then-modern version of a drumkit. It was a conscious effort on his part to eliminate clutter, create the five-cymbal setup, and use white marine pearl to highlight the kit for the audience.

In terms of his recordings, there are two that can be added to the list included in the piece. The recent Japanese release *Big Noise From Winnetka* features a recording from The London House in Chicago in 1959. On it you hear every bit of Gene's musical expression as a small-group player. In addition, this concert might have been one of the last times Gene used a Slingerland snare drum. (From 1960 on, he used a snare that looked like a Slingerland but was in fact made of fiberglass. It was given to Gene by Bob Grauso, the founder of Fibes Drum Company. In many photos after 1960 you can see a small golden plaque on the side of his snare drum that was engraved with this information.)

Another recording of Gene was made, not long before he died: *Live At The New School 1973*. It is thought to be his final recording.

Joe Vetrano

Congratulations to *Modern Drummer* and Mark Griffith on the article on Gene Krupa in the January issue. Having spent some time with Mr. Krupa in the '60s as a young, aspiring drummer, I can personally tell you that he was not only a great drummer but also a great man. Gene took the time to sit down on the steps of a high school and show me one of his patterns. Later he was kind enough to send me a signed copy and a letter, which I've displayed in my teaching studio. The impression that Gene Krupa made on the drumming world is indelible—I'm happy to see that young players can learn about him through your magazine.

Joe Buerger



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UNUSUAL BEATS AND KICK DRUM PATTERNS



Alex Sotoca

Your drumming with Deftones has been a huge influence on me. I love how you keep everyone on their toes with groove twists and unexpected hits and flourishes over repeating guitar riffs. Can you explain how you came up with the intro and verse beats to the song "Hole In The Earth" from *Saturday Night Wrist*? You also play some really cool bass drum licks in the beginning of the song "Needles And Pins" from Deftones' self-titled record. What have you practiced to get your foot technique so quick?

Karl Lucas

Hey, Karl, I'm glad you enjoy our music, and thanks for the question's. "Hole In The Earth" was one of the first songs that was written for *Saturday Night Wrist* and came about due to our having a renewed excitement for making music together. It initially came out of a jam between me and Chino, our singer and occasional guitarist. He started out on guitar with the intro "stabs," and I slugged down a huge iced coffee and then jumped in. While the intro section is kind of like a storm and comes out with arms swinging, the verse section just seemed to wanna hang back a bit, breathe, and keep an eye out for the next approaching storm.

The bass drum patterns on "Needles And Pins" were inspired by two things: Number one, the sound of the drums in my headphones was a huge thing. I had our engineer bring the level of the room mics way up in my "cans," thus making my kit sound naturally massive, due to the mics being super-compressed and therefore dictating that my playing be somewhat sparse. The second thing would be my appreciation for both Earl Hudson and Mackie Jayson from The Bad Brains, Nicko McBrain from Iron Maiden, and a thousand other great drummers and what they are able to pull off with a single bass drum pedal. As for getting my foot technique where I want it? Well, that's something I'll probably be working on as long as I'm on this planet. That said, pedal tension, seat height, and your overall comfort when sitting down at the drums will play a large

part in getting your feet right. So will being active away from the drums, eating your veggies, and keeping that P.M.A. (positive mental attitude). I hope this helps, and as always, keep it loose, keep it fun!



"Hole In The Earth"

Intro

etc.

Verse



"Needles And Pins"

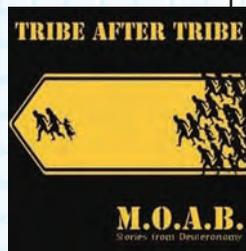
WHAT ARE YOU GOING FOR THERE?

TRACK: "UNDERSTANDING THE WATER"

ARTIST: TRIBE AFTER TRIBE

DRUMMER: RICHARD STUVERUD

As far as the drum parts go, it's essentially a syncopated funk pattern in the verses with a side stick on the snare. The B section starts as a tribal tom/floor tom groove with the snare making its way into the pattern after a few bars. The middle section of the song is a breakdown of just guitars and samples. To make things more exciting live, we've incorporated an up-tempo jam into this section, much in the spirit of The Police and The Sex Pistols. Imagine Stewart Copeland on ten cups of coffee and Paul Cook just waking up from a nap...to give you an idea! The breakdown on the record does have some nice space to it, to keep things ethereal. The outro is more of the tom/floor/snare thing with more cymbals.



To see clips of Tribe After Tribe playing excerpts of this tune, go to YouTube and search for "Understanding The Water."

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JOSH GARZA

A BONHAM DISCIPLE CARVES HIS OWN PATH

It's one thing for a drummer to cite John Bonham as an influence, but it's another thing entirely for his playing to actually channel the principal characteristics of Bonham's distinctive sound. Josh Garza of NYC's Secret Machines, who recently released their self-titled third album, has spent twenty years studying Bonham's seminal style and pulling it into his own approach. Garza, who says, "John Bonham played his kit the way Hendrix played his guitar,"

recently let *MD* in on a few of his drumming secrets.

"Obviously, the sizes of my drums have a lot to do with it," Josh explains, referring to a Tama kit that includes two 16" floor toms (one tuned lower), a 14" rack tom, and a 28" bass drum.

"I got the idea for the tunings on these big drums from reading that Bonham tuned his drums really high, like a big-band drummer. On my kick the batter head is tuned high and tight, and the reso-

nant head is loose and full of juice. When the sound engineer puts a mic there, I tell him, 'Dial in the low end that you need.' Mine is very percussive, but a lot of players these days like the kick to be really dead and dry. My feeling has always been that if the kick drum were meant to have a pillow in there, it would have been designed that way. My sound guy can turn up the low end, but what he *can't* do is give it the cannon effect, which is what I get by putting nothing inside the drum.

"There was a 'eureka' moment when I realized how Bonham got that sound," Garza adds. "Nowadays it's easy to sound like him because of Pro Tools and plug-ins, but it was cool to get that early on and not have to go into the studio and try to fake it. Of course, my drumming doesn't sound *exactly* like Bonham—it sounds like Josh Garza—but it's from that same school. One of my secret weapons is to dig deep, find the cannon sound, turn it up, and not be scared. I think that's paid off for me."

Gail Worley

DRUM DATES THIS MONTH'S IMPORTANT EVENTS IN DRUMMING HISTORY

Dave Tough was born on 4/26/07, Lionel Hampton on 4/12/09, Tito Puente on 4/20/23, Ray Barretto on 4/29/29, Modern Drummer publisher Ronald Spagnardi on 4/25/43, Average White Band's Robbie McIntosh on 4/25/50, The Knack's Bruce Gary on 4/7/52, and Toto's Jeff Porcaro on 4/1/54. Buddy Rich passed away on 4/2/87, Cozy Powell on 4/5/98, and Carlos Vega on 4/7/98.

On 4/27/64, John Coltrane records "The Drum Thing" with Elvin Jones for his record *Crescent*.

On 4/30/66, The Rascals (with Dino Danelli) have the number-one hit with "Good Lovin'."

On 4/24/77, The Talking Heads (with Chris Frantz) begin their first European tour, opening for The Ramones.

On 4/10/92, Rush's *Roll The Bones* (with Neil Peart) is named Best Hard Rock Album at the annual Juno Awards.

VIRGIL DONATI

HELLACIOUS DRUMMING WITH DEVIL'S SLINGSHOT AND BEYOND

When guitar god Tony MacAlpine was asked to tour Europe in 2007, he called on two of his former bandmates from Steve Vai's touring group, bass virtuoso Billy Sheehan and drumming superstar Virgil Donati. The shreddsters quickly gelled, and Devil's Slingshot was born. This progressive instrumental rock trio recently released its burning debut CD, *Clinophobia*. In his typical otherworldly fashion, Donati creates over-the-top drumming concepts with a major "How'd he do that?" factor. In particular, "Flamed" and "Def Bitch Blues" display his complex wizardry. The drummer, who penned several tracks on *Clinophobia*, says, "I'm always trying to figure out something new on the drums, but finding time to carefully develop new ideas is the main problem. Writing music is my priority right now, and I work on developing drumming ideas related to that. And I'm constantly working on projects for many artists around the world."

Meanwhile, Donati's prog-fusion group Planet X recently played its first shows in more than four years. "It was a lot of fun," Virgil says. "We're talking about the possibility of a tenth-anniversary anthology with a live DVD."

When he's not recording or performing, Donati travels the world as an in-demand clinician. "One of the two main themes of my recent clinics has been the importance of learning about your playing habits through recording your practice sessions," he says. "By recording parts of your practice, you subliminally place yourself in a professional environment, therefore optimizing your intensity, focus, and execution. With the plethora of recording software readily available, it has



never been easier to do this."

Donati continues, "The other theme discusses our concern with rhythm: learning to strive for a balance of steadiness and freedom of rhythmic invention. I talk about developing a sense for subdivided and subordinate accents in our playing, which can be helpful for our overall creativity and also for mastering steady time. I discuss understanding the relationship between all note values and their placement in a measure of time, which I believe is an important step toward being creative with rhythms."

Finally for now, fans will be thrilled to hear that

Virgil is prepping a new solo album. "I've been working on it for quite some time, and it's going to be truly unique," he says. "I've written symphonic music for drums and orchestra, including a drum concerto. It therefore goes without saying that most of my listening time has been devoted to great orchestral works, and for further inspiration I'm also studying piano pieces by such composers as Debussy and Rachmaninoff. It's a massive work, and I hope it will see the light of day in the near future."

Mike Haid

JUICE NEWTON'S

RICK LATHAM

FOR HIM, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GROOVE



Two thousand nine has a lot in store for Rick Latham. First up is his new DVD, *All About The Groove*. "I believe that drummers need to play a lot of different styles to stay busy," says Latham, whose own résumé includes jazz and pop legend Quincy Jones, blues icons B.B. King and Edgar Winter, and now singer-songwriter Juice Newton.

"The better a musician you are," the drummer suggests, "the more you're going to get gigs and keep them. My DVD deals with how to approach a lot of different styles, primarily groove-type stuff—R&B, shuffles, faster things like upbeat sambas, and slower tunes. I put a rhythm section together for the DVD, and I've incorporated play-

alongs." The video, which was shot at DW's recently opened sound facility, also features interview and playing footage, exercises, and downloads.

Despite his rep as a premier educator, established largely by his books *Advanced Funk Studies* and *Contemporary Drumset Techniques*, Latham is more than simply an academic, which these days he's proving on the road with Newton, a.k.a. The Queen Of Hearts. "Playing with Juice is great," Latham says. "It's a bit of a change for me to play a more country show, but it's pretty rockin'. And it's not as country as most people would think. For instance, we do ballads like 'The Sweetest Thing,' which was a big hit for her. She puts on a great

show, and I think I bring something a little different to the mix."

Speaking of ballads, Latham offers this advice for drummers dealing with the form's unique challenges: "It's important to play the song and not just something drumistic. Try to be musical. A lot of big ballads have huge drum fills, which are great, and we all live for that. But play for the song, and don't overdo it. Play dynamically, and let the vocals carry the tune. Learn how to be supportive and not always over the top."

It's not *all* about being tasty, though, explains Latham, who takes a solo on Newton's "Night Time Without You." The drummer describes the tune as a Gene Krupa "Sing Sing Sing" type of swing number, with big-band horn licks. "It's really a fun, musical show," Rick says.

The hardworking drummer can also be heard on a project by former Starship bassist John Garnache, and he's been working on his own solo album, *Stickman*, which he is engineering, producing, and mixing. "I'm using loops of all the instruments except the drums," Latham reveals. "They're real instruments being played by real musicians; I'm just turning the tables on the folks who usually use drum loops."

Robyn Flans

THURSDAY'S

TUCKER RULE

CHILLIN' ON THE EGO FOR THE COMMON GOOD



With their new release, *Common Existence*, post-hardcore band Thursday returns as forceful as ever, driven by drummer Tucker Rule. Rule explains the concept of the album as "a culmination of all our records" to date while still being a definitive step in the progression of the band's music.

From the harder sounds of opening track "Resuscitation Of Man" to more vibey, ambient material such as "Time's Arrow," Rule plays what's needed for each song while still displaying his chops when necessary. The drummer describes his approach this time around as "less ego driven" and a bit "less serious" than on previous recordings. This mind-set, plus a little help from influences ranging from Stewart Copeland and Abe Cunningham to Dave Grohl and Quicksand's Alan Cage, serves Rule well on this recording.

For the majority of the album Rule used a C&C acrylic set with wood hoops, and tried to attain a "deep, warm sound that still cut." He made an interesting move on one song, the slower "Time's Arrow," by swapping out the C&C kick for a gigantic 28" Ayotte drum to fill out the room sound used on the track. This switch definitely provides the desired effect.

The drummer says he had some help in achieving his sound from producer Dave Fridmann, who also worked on Thursday's 2006 release, *A City By The Light Divided*. As Rule explains, "Fridmann kept the recording process from going stale by recording us for two weeks and then giving us two weeks off." This strategy seems to have paid off for Rule and his bandmates.

You can witness Rule's mature yet aggressive drumming on this year's Taste Of Chaos tour, which Thursday is headlining.

Anthony Riscica

UPDATE NEWS

Josh Trager is on The Sam Roberts Band's *Love At The End Of The World*.

Elton John percussionist **John Mahon** has been busy composing, recording, and producing the album *Decadent Percussion* for a firm that places songs in films, commercials, and TV shows.

Brendan Buckley has been touring with Daniel Powder and can be heard on Beto Cuevas' *Miedo Escenico*, Volumen Cero's *I Can See The Brite Spot*, Elsten Torres' *If You Say So*, and Michael Miller's *I Made You Up*. He's also been in the studio recording Shakira's next release. For more with Brendan visit brendanbuckley.com.



Ari Hoenig is on *Avant Wot Not* by Jazzheads.

Gloria Trevi drummer and musical director **Julio Figueroa** is on the Latin pop star's new CD, *Rosa Blu*. The first single, "Cinco Minutos," hit the top-ten on the *Billboard* Hot Latin Songs chart.

Head over to modern drummer.com and check out our second "Conversations" piece filmed live at The Cutting Room in NYC, featuring longtime Billy Joel drummer **Liberty DeVitto** and legendary Vanilla Fudge/Rod Stewart sticksman **Carmine Appice**.

Jimmy Paxson recently toured with Stevie Nicks and can be seen on her PBS *Soundstage* special/live DVD (with **Lenny Castro** on percussion). Jimmy's also on Sharon Little's CD *Perfect Time For A Breakdown*, and he's playing live dates with Broadway star Idina Menzel.

Percussionist **Gumbi Ortiz** is on tour with guitar great Al Di Meola and World Sinfonia.

Anthony "Tiny" Biuso recorded the latest (Hed)p.e. album, *New World Orphans*, before leaving the band to track T.S.O.L.'s *Life, Liberty And The Pursuit Of Free Downloads*, which is, appropriately, available for free online at www.hurley.com/tsol. Tiny also recorded two tracks on G N' R keyboardist Dizzy Reed's recent solo album; **Frankie Banali** of Quiet Riot also plays on the disc.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Joe Porcaro (educator): 4/29/30

Jim Keltner (studio great): 4/27/42

Clyde Stubblefield (James Brown): 4/18/43

John Barbata (Turtles, CSNY, Jefferson Airplane): 4/1/45

Steve Gadd (drum great): 4/9/45

Doug "Cosmo" Clifford (Creedence Clearwater Revival): 4/24/45

Bill Kreutzmann (Grateful Dead): 4/7/46

Joe Vitale (CSN): 4/2/49

Steve Ferrone (Tom Petty/sessions): 4/25/50

Max Weinberg (Bruce Springsteen): 4/13/51

Narada Michael Walden (producer/session great): 4/23/52

Rod Morgenstein (Dixie Dregs/Winger): 4/19/56

Chris Mars (The Replacements): 4/26/61

Mike Mangini (independent): 4/18/63

Mike Portnoy (Dream Theater): 4/20/67

Aaron Comess (Spin Doctors): 4/24/68

Andreas Bye and **Hakon Mjaset Johansen** are on Jon Larsen's latest, *The Jimmy Carl Black Story*. The album features the late Zappa/Mothers drummer narrating his life story.

Rich Scannella recently played with Jon Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen (under the musical direction of Bobby Bandiera) at the fourth annual Hope Concert at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, New Jersey. Rich can also be heard on the Buddhahead track "Standing Still," which was featured in a recent episode of the CW TV show *One Tree Hill*. Scannella is currently on a world tour with John Eddie that will visit the U.S., Mexico, Honduras, and Belize.

Joe McCarthy won a Latin Grammy for Latin Jazz Album Of The Year with Caribbean Jazz Project/Afro Bop Alliance featuring Dave Samuels. Joe is the leader/founder of the group and is also the drummer for the United States Naval Academy Band's jazz ensemble, The Next Wave.

John "JR" Robinson performed at the Grammy nominations TV show with B.B. King, John Mayer, and Mariah Carey.



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- 29 MILAN/ITALY
- 31 VERONA/ITALY

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- 02 BARCELONA/SPAIN
- 03 BARCELONA/SPAIN
- 04 HUESCA/SPAIN
- 05 ZARAGOZA/SPAIN
- 07 BARCELONA/SPAIN
- 13 CAGLIARI/ITALY
- 14 ROMA/ITALY
- 16 SALERNO/ITALY
- 19 LECCE/ITALY
- 20 LARINO/ITALY
- 21 URBANIA/ITALY
- 22 UDINE/ITALY
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U.S. DATES TO BE ANNOUNCED

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Name That Drummer



Whose tasty drumming is on Charles & Eddie's "Would I Lie To You" single?
Gabe

The drumming on that funky R&B track, as well as on the remainder of Charles & Eddie's 1992 debut album *Duophonic*, is credited to modern funk/jazz/fusion master Gene Lake. To confirm that fact, we went directly to the source. "That's me all right" confirms Gene. "I was going for that old Motown vibe in the intro—you can hear that right off the bat. But I was trying to update that vibe as well; I didn't want to do it like it had been done before. I had a lot of freedom working on that CD. That was back when you could play on an entire album—what a great time for making records."

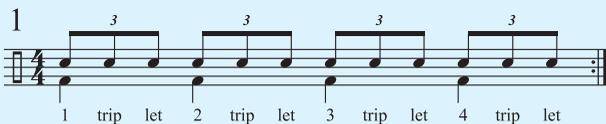
Counting Triplets

Matt Ritter's letter in February's *Readers' Platform* regarding his suggestions on how to count triplets ("1-trip-let, 2-trip-let" instead of "1-and-ah, 2-and-ah") seems to make sense when working with 8th-note triplets. But how would that system translate to longer rhythms (quarter- and half-note triplets) or faster 16th-note triplets?

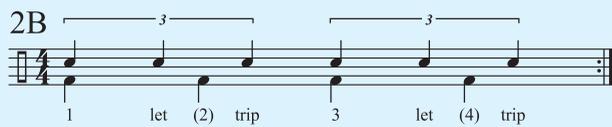
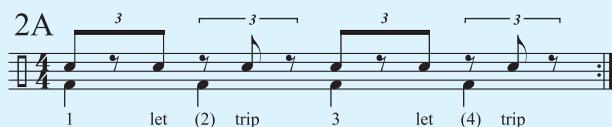
Scott Simmons

There are many different ideas on counting and notating triplets. The following system is one way to adapt the "1-trip-let, 2-trip-let" concept to quarter note-triplet rhythms.

Begin by counting 8th-note triplets like this (quarter notes are notated on the bottom of the staff so you can see how the rhythms line up with the beat):



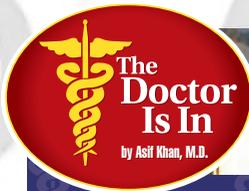
To turn these into quarter-note triplets, leave out every other syllable. It's helpful to also count (but not play) the downbeats ("1, 2, 3, 4") in order to maintain a sense of the pulse.



To make half-note triplets, leave out every other syllable in the quarter-note triplets. Again, include the quarter notes in your counting to keep track of the beat.



16th-note triplets (or sextuplets) require a modified counting system, mainly because the rhythms go by too fast for the previously used syllables. Here's a method that rudimentary expert Chet Doboie recommends for these quicker triplet subdivisions.



Sharp Shoulder Pain

Every time I reach to hit my crash cymbals, there's a sharp pain in my right shoulder. I'm right handed, and I play hard rock and heavy metal for long periods of time. I also work construction, and this pain is just getting worse. Any ideas on what I should do?
Shane W.



From your story, it sounds like you have a rotator cuff injury (RCI), which is the most common condition of the shoulder for patients seeking treatment. RCI usually presents itself as pain and weakness, mainly caused by tension overload on the four main structures that make up the rotator cuff. That being said, this diagnosis can be kind of fuzzy since there are many structures in the shoulder that could be the cause of your pain. The correct diagnosis means the correct treatment.

The factors that lead to RCI can include occupations requiring overhead activity (in your case: construction work, high cymbal placement, etc.). Smoking is also an unexpected risk factor for a rotator cuff tear.

So how do you test for RCI? We use a combination of three main physical tests to determine the presence of rotator cuff tear and the need for further work-up: painful arc sign (raising the arm from your body outward), drop arm sign (failure to smoothly bring the shoulder to your body from an outstretched position), and weakness in external rotation of the shoulder (pointing the palms outward with the arms stretched overhead). Imaging studies also help in the diagnosis.

X-rays can assess large, chronic rotator cuff tears, and they can see if the upper arm bone (humerus) has moved. Ultrasound evaluates tendon and muscle lesions, as well as bursitis. An MRI accurately diagnoses both partial and full-thickness rotator cuff tears, which is critical in preoperative planning for rotator cuff repair.

Basic therapy for RCI consists of ice, rest (no overhead activity), and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAID) for seven to ten days. It should be noted that there is no clear evidence to support the use of electrical stimulation, phonophoresis (ultrasound therapy), iontophoresis (electrical charge therapy), and laser. There are a number of physical therapy techniques, and I recommend those found on the Nicholas Institute of Sports Medicine and Athletic Trauma of Lenox Hill Hospital Web site (www.nismat.org/orthocor/programs/upperstr.html). Range of motion exercises, stretching and strengthening of the muscles of the rotator cuff, and the combination of mobilization (i.e., not keeping the arm in a sling) and exercise (with small weights) show greater benefit than exercise alone. If these do not work, steroid injection can be used as a temporary treatment of pain, but clear evidence of long-term benefit is lacking.

Once you can exhibit full range of motion with appropriate strength and shoulder stability, drumming should be resumed using a gradual, stepwise increase in activity. Minimize overhead cymbal use by lowering your crashes and moving your cymbals toward you. Surgery is considered if non-operative therapy fails to provide relief within six to nine months, or if a significant rotator cuff tear is diagnosed.

Dr. Asif Khan is a board-certified internist, specializing in allergy and immunology, with a private practice in northeast Ohio. He also directs the non-profit organization *Passion And Profession* (www.passionandprofession.com), which focuses on career counseling and education. Dr. Khan has been an avid drummer for twenty years and is currently performing with Johnny Hi-Fi (www.johnnyhi-fi.com).

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JUST INTRODUCED

Bebop drums, innovative metal-coated wood snares, and exciting effects cymbals are just a sampling of **this month's most interesting product releases.**

1



2



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4



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8



1. GMS's new Revolution Series drums feature a thin coating of metal on the outer and/or inner surface of premium maple drum shells. Available metal types include bronze, brass, copper, steel, and nickel. Drummers can even mix and match different combinations of metal and wood.

Adhering to the wood with a chemical cross-link bond, the metal is thin enough—approximately $\frac{1}{32}$ "—to make a negligible difference in the shell's overall mass, therefore having no appreciable effect on its fundamental pitch. However, each metal type has a noticeable impact on the drum's tone due to its characteristic reflection properties. Bearing edges are left uncoated to promote a warmer tone, while the metal coating amplifies attack, projection, brightness, and bite.

gmsdrums.com

2. NEXT LEVEL PRODUCTS' overtone controlling Killer Rings utilize a specific weight to width ratio called Sound Formula to eliminate unwanted overtones without losing drum projection. They're available in three designs, each with different color schemes. Rings are available in 10", 12", 13", 14", 15", and 16" sizes and come in packages of four, five, or six. Custom packages can also be created. Retail pricing starts at \$19.98 for a set of four rings.

killerrings.com

3. VATER has released signature sticks for R&B great Brian Frasier-Moore, blast beat master Derek Roddy, and Disturb's Mike Wengren. Brian's stick is just under a 5A in the grip, with some extra length for added reach. The gradual taper to the medium-sized barrel tip makes it a nicely balanced and versatile stick. Derek's model is between a 5A and 5B in the grip. The stick features a quick taper to a small acorn tip for warm but defined cymbal tones. Wengren's stick is larger, measuring between a 5B and a 2B with a quick taper to an oval nylon tip. The extra length gives added weight and a bit more reach. Nicely weighted and durable, this is a great model for hard-hitting players. The stick is finished in a black stain with artwork featuring Disturbed's album logos. (Each of the three models lists for \$14.99.)

vater.com

4. TAYE's Studio Maple line is now available in a bebop configuration. This kit includes an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor, a 14x18 bass drum, and a matching 5x14 snare. Finish options include Black Oyster and White Pearl. Studio Maple's shell design consists of six alternating vertical and horizontal plies of 100% North American Sugar Maple.

tayedrums.com

5. MXL MICROPHONES has released several products designed to deliver professional sound at very affordable prices. The 603 recording pack is ideal for overheads on drums. (Street price per pair: \$199.) The V67N is a small-diaphragm instrument mic

that's said to provide solid bottom end, exposed top, and just the right amount of presence. The V67N has a high SPL level for capturing loud sound sources (like drums) and includes changeable capsules for cardioid or omnidirectional polar patterns. (Street price: \$119.95.) The US-made V6 is a large-diaphragm condenser designed to reproduce the quality of a tube mic. (Street price: \$299.)

mxlmics.com

6. ZILDJIAN's popular K Custom Hybrid cymbals have been expanded to include a 21" ride, a 15" Trash crash, and a 13" Trash splash. The 21" Hybrid ride offers much of the same versatility found with the original 20" version, but with a fuller body of overtones. The unlathed, Brilliant finish on its inner portion and traditional-finish lathing on the outer half provides the superior stick definition and strong bell dynamic of the classic K Custom ride with the crashability and increased spread of overtones you expect from a thinner, lathed cymbal.

The 13" Hybrid Trash splash and the 15" Hybrid Trash crash offer thin special-effect options that can be used within any percussion setup. These cymbals have a cone-shaped bell, and they are randomly hammered very heavily throughout the surface with additional "under-hammering" near the outer edge to establish an increased bend to the bow. The result is a dirty and trashy body of overtones, an extremely fast response, and a quick decay time.

zildjian.com

7. In an effort to become more environmentally conscious, HQ PERCUSSION has released the EcoPad, a rubber practice pad made from recycled tires and residual wood waste. EcoPad models include a 6" one-side mountable pad, a 12" two-sided pad, and a 9" adjustable snare pad. The 6" and 9" models include an 8-mm threaded insert for mounting them on standard cymbal stands or the HQ practice pad stand. The 12" model features a harder rubber surface on the reverse side for a more intense workout. The 9" Adjustable Snare model includes a variable snare simulator. List prices range from \$34.99 to \$84.99.

hqpercussion.com

8. ISTANBUL MEHMET has released two new tribute rides, the Mehmet Tamdeger 60th Anniversary and Mikael Zican models. The Tamdeger is a lightweight crash-ride with very low overtones and prominent stick definition. It's said to be very smooth- and vintage-sounding. Mikael Zilcan was Mehmet's partner in the original Zilcan factory, and his tribute cymbal is also a lightweight crash-ride, but with fewer overtones and a traditional finish. This model is designed to replicate the original Turkish sound. Both cymbals come with a certificate of authenticity, hand-signed by Mehmet.

istanbulmehmet.com



DRUM WORKSHOP

COLLECTORS SERIES HYBRID KIT by David Ciauro

Sitting at the helm of a massive drumkit like this one from Drum Workshop automatically triggers **nostalgia for my teenage days.** Back then I played a large kit and I was solely influenced by music that showcased drummers utilizing oversized (and sometimes overplayed) drumsets. I've always appreciated large drumsets for their ability to accommodate complex, musical drum parts, but I've succumbed to the practicality of a four-piece kit on gigs. Portability issues aside, I also never liked having to tune a large drumset. Depending on the natural tuning range of the drums, the pitch intervals between a series of toms can be quite uneven, especially if the drums aren't well made. That's not the case with these beauties.





Thanks to DW's "wood whisperer," John Good, new advances in drum-shell composition, such as VLT and X shells, allow drummers to tune their drums to significantly lower pitches without sacrificing playability. These new shell designs also create more consistent pitch intervals between toms. Pushing the envelope of innovation further, DW is also exploring concepts like Short Stack toms, 23" bass drums, resonating bass drum Woofers, and deep Ballad snares. When all of these ideas are put together to create a hybrid drumset, what you hear is a harmonious monster that boasts serious low-end potential, warm tones, and superior musicality.

VLT AND X SHELL EXPLAINED

VLT (vertical low timbre) shells use vertical-grain plies on the outer and innermost layers. The logic is that vertical grains, when bent, put less tension on a shell than horizontal grains would. This is said to allow the shell to vibrate more freely, giving the drum a lower fundamental pitch. A shell with all horizontal plies has more tension. Increased tension means less vibration, which causes the shell's natural pitch to rise.

Building on the concept that vertical grains produce less tension, DW tried running the majority of the shell's plies vertically. For strength, these vertical plies are continually cross-laminated at 45° angles. The outcome, in the guise of X shells, is said to produce an even *lower* fundamental pitch than what you get with the VLTs.

THE SPECS

These eye-catching Collectors Series drums are created using hand-selected North American hard-rock maple finished in exotic natural to candy black fade guanacosta with satin chrome hardware. Drum sizes are as follows: 5x8, 5x10, and 6x12 Short Stack toms; 9x13 and 10x14 VLT toms; 13x15, 14x16, and 16x18 X shell floor toms; a 16x23 bass drum; an 8x23 woofer; a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 VLT snare; and a 10x16 Ballad snare. All of the toms are 8-ply (with the exception of the 8", which is 7-ply). The snare is 10-ply.

A KIT OF INNOVATIONS

DW's innovative 23" bass drum stemmed from a conversation between John Good and Rush drummer Neil Peart. Conceptualized to combine the depth and punch of a 24" kick with the response and dynamics of a 22", this drum is truly the best of both worlds. The shell combines the VLT and X shell configurations in a new hybrid shell called VLX. The core and innermost plies run vertically (VLT) and the remaining plies are cross-laminated (X), resulting in the lowest note DW has ever produced. The added built-in depth of the VLX shell is unmistakable and delivers a variety of deep tonal possibilities, even when the heads are tensioned tightly.

If the 23" VLX shell isn't enough, DW offers an 8x23 Woofer that attaches to the drum via "Doobie Bars." This drum sits in front of the kit and resonates freely so it can enhance the

low-end punch even more by harnessing common frequencies. Acoustically, you can feel the effect of the Woofer when you play. But its real benefit is best heard when the drums are amplified through a large PA system. A May-ATM25BD internal microphone mount with an XLR output built directly into the shell came factory-installed on our review woofer.

Short Stack toms are specialty drums that incorporate X shell technology, which allows the drums to produce deep, round sounds despite their shallow depths. The Short Stacks create a nice range of tones, are very easy to tune, and can sound much larger than their size would let on. I especially liked the harmonious interval range between the 6x12 Short Stack X shell tom and the 9x13 VLT tom. At both high- and low-end tuning spectrums, there was never a point where the intervals became too far apart.

Similarly, the 15" X shell tom had a wide tuning range, and it fit nicely in the mix with the entire kit. I've often found 15" drums a bit tricky to tune, especially when placed between a 14" rack tom and a 16" floor. But that isn't the case here.

The 18" X shell floor tom has enough low end to emulate a 22" gong drum when both heads are tuned just above wrinkling. Even at that low tuning, the drum maintains a solid sound that hits with authority and distinctly cuts through at any volume.

The 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 VLT snare is a favorite of Neil Peart, and it's easy to understand why. The VLT shell's lower fundamental tone allows the drum to maintain a full tone even when tuned tight. A piercing crack, a wealth of depth, and sensitive snare response make this drum quite versatile.

In contrast, the specialty 10x16 ballad drum, as its name suggests, is specifically designed to deliver really fat space-consuming backbeats with a deep, thuddy attack. This is *not* meant to be a versatile snare drum, and it requires some tweaking and tuning finesse to dial in the appropriate wide "pfft" sound. When the snares are disengaged, this drum can double as a shallow floor tom, since it comes equipped with legs.

THE RESULTS

These unique Collectors Series drums are very easy to tune, and their shell construction allows for a very wide range of sonic possibilities. When tuned to the shell's fundamental tone, the drums really open up. They possess warmth and depth, and they speak very musically. All too often when drums are tuned low, they lose their tone in favor of a thud or thump. But when *these* drums are tuned low, they maintain a solid attack while also holding a pure pitch, and they sound about two drum sizes larger than they actually are. This quality is great for gigging drummers, since you can get away with using smaller drums without sacrificing depth.

dwdrums.com



MEINL

SOUNDCASTER FUSION CYMBALS

by Anthony Riscica

Meinl's Soundcaster line has been expanded with the release of the Fusion series. These cymbals are made from B12 bronze alloy and have a loud and cutting sound that's designed for heavy metal, rock, and pop drummers. All Soundcaster Fusion cymbals have brilliant, unlathed, and machine-hammered bows and bells, with a thinner and closely lathed outer edge. This design is claimed to provide more wash and shorter sustain when compared to the original Soundcaster line.

CRISP HI-HATS

The first Soundcaster Fusion cymbals I pulled out of the box were the 14" hi-hats. On first strike, the word "clean" popped into my head. These hats have a sharp and defined chick sound when played by foot and an equally definitive stick sound when played closed. This tight sound is exactly what I hear in my head when I think of "fusion" hats.

THE LOOK MAKES THE SOUND

Like most dual-surfaced cymbals, the Soundcaster Fusion line has an interesting look. In this case the design is not purely for aesthetic reasons, rather it's the result of Meinl's effort to offer "glassy yet warm" tones. Combine the split-lathing appearance with the laser-engraved logos, and you have some very slick cymbals.

One characteristic of these hats that struck me as unusual was the amount of separation needed between the cymbals to produce a "swooshy" hi-hat sound. I felt like the cymbals were almost locked together until I let up quite a bit of pressure with my foot. Once I found the right amount of separation, however, I was very pleased with the loose, sloshy wash that they produced. They had plenty of volume, but they didn't overpower. They seemed to handle the entire dynamic spectrum—from soft to loud—very well. Even the tight, closed sound has projection while also being able to come down to almost a whisper. The hats

were definitely a highlight of the Fusion line.

CLEAN RIDES WITH CHARACTER

Next out of the box were the 22" and 20" Power rides. I was impressed by the controlled sound of the 22". For a big cymbal, it doesn't have that ever-expanding wash that keeps building the more you play on it. The stick sound was clean and sharp without being sterile. The lathed edge has a lot to do with this touch of complexity, as it provides warmth and character, while the unlathed brilliant center maintains the volume and cut of a heavier cymbal. This ride's overtones were deep and relatively warm for a B12 cymbal.

The bell sounds on the 20" and 22" rides were both very nice. Again, each was very clean and capable of being very loud, while not being irritating. The stick response on the bell and bow of the cymbals was great, too. I didn't feel like the stick was being thrown back at me, nor did I feel like the tip was sinking into the cymbal.

The 20" medium ride is a bit thinner than the 20" Power ride, but the overall construction is the same. Since it's lighter in weight, the medium has more wash and overtones but was still easy to control.

The stick definition also stayed in tact, but it was a little glassier than the heavier model. The bell sound was clean but produced some vibration through the body of the cymbal, which caused overtones to be heard. This ride proved to be a great general-application cymbal, as I had no problems using it in a wide variety of musical settings when recording it in my home studio.

CRASHES THAT BITE

When I first played the 16" and 18" Soundcaster Fusion medium crashes, they sounded a bit harsh. Even when I played them with a rock

band, they didn't exactly live up to Meinl's description of a "warm character," though they did project well on stage. Their thinner-than-normal weights did allow them to be a bit more palatable than most other B12 cast bronze cymbals I've heard. The initial wash of these crashes gives way pretty quickly to a controlled sustain of lower overtones. Of the two sizes, I preferred the 16" since it got out of the way quicker than the 18".

NOT SO TRASHY CHINA

The 18" China had a shimmering attack that didn't hurt to listen to. It cut extremely well, and the sound didn't distort when I really laid into it. What this cymbal lacked, in my opinion, were some of the lower overtones that make an 18" China trashy and deep. The entire Fusion line seems to be about a certain amount of cleanliness, and this cymbal falls in line with the rest of the series. But I prefer some more grit in my China crash, regardless of the setting. If you're looking for a pristine China sound, though, this would be a good way to go.

GLASSY SPLASH

The 10" Fusion splash is pretty thin and lightweight, and it produces a quick glassy attack with a lot of shimmer. For a splash, its decay spread well across the frequency spectrum. It also had a good deal of power, as it cut through at almost any volume. I was very pleased with this cymbal.

CONCLUSION

My overall impression is that Meinl's Soundcaster Fusion models are relatively affordable, crisp-sounding, professional-grade cymbals. When compared to other B12 offerings, they hold their own sonically, and they have much more visual appeal.

meinl.com



TOCA RAFAEL PADILLA SIGNATURE BONGOS

by Mike Ramsey



Rafael Padilla is a Southern California-based percussionist who's played with a diverse list of artists including Chris Isaak, Shakira, and Carole King. The Toca Rafael Padilla Signature Bongos are beautiful drums that proved to be much more unusual than basic bongos with a signature slapped on the side. So what makes these drums so different?

CLASSIC CUBAN DESIGN

The look of these drums reflects an old-school Cuban style. The wood has a beautifully rich gloss finish that allows the grain to show through, and all of the hardware is bright chrome. Traditional-style rims and the absence of extra metal weighing down the drums further adds to

the ease with which they can be held in the old-school position between the legs.

The skins on these bongos sounded great and tuned up easily right out of the box. Many bongo players immediately replace their drums' factory heads, but the bison skins on these are top-quality and are of the perfect thickness. The macho skin isn't too thick, and the hembra (larger drum) skin isn't too thin, which is often an issue with commercially made bongos.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

The Rafael Padilla bongos were a joy to play, with a very bright macho sound and a traditional voice

from the hembra. The only possible drawback from a playing standpoint is that the smaller drum sizes—mainly on the macho—will take a little while to get used to, especially for players with larger hands. But all in all, these are a great set of professional bongos with a unique sound and thoughtful design concepts. List price: \$239. tocapercussion.com

BRIGHT AND CRISP

The Padilla Signatures are noticeably smaller than standard commercially made bongos. This provides a brighter, crisper, higher-pitched sound, specifically from the macho (smaller) drum. In addition, their shells have a more pronounced taper, which makes them more comfortable to hold between your legs in the traditional style. These are two simple modifications, but they help improve the sound and the playing experience.

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WP Wang Percussion

wangpercussion.com

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AHEAD

BAMSTIX, ROCKSTIX, TIPSTIX, AND SWITCH STIX 5A

by David Ciauro

Well-rounded drummers know that diversity will set them apart from the pack. However, a drummer's stick bag is typically one place where diversity is lacking. Even the hardest hitters need to pull back on the dynamic reins once in a while and reach for an alternative speaking voice. Ahead's lineup of rods are sure to help rockers get in touch with their sensitive sides, while their Switch Stix enable an easy transition from full-on wailing to soft-spoken cymbal swells in one flip of the stick.

BAMSTIX

BamStix Heavy (BSH) are the beefiest of the bunch, with a .695" diameter and nineteen bundled bamboo rods. Although the diameter is similar to that of a marching stick, the alloy handles and bundled bamboo give this stick a fairly light feel. They are powerful and well balanced, providing a solid attack on drums and cymbals. Their larger size made rebound strokes (doubles and intricate ghost notes) difficult to execute cleanly. But these rods worked great for solid backbeat grooves on tunes that require a little less volume than what you'd produce with regular sticks.

BamStix Light (BSL) have a diameter of .620", which makes them slightly shy of a standard 2B (.630"). Like the BSH, they have a lighter feel than what you'd expect. Their fifteen rods create a less thuddy cymbal tone while maintaining a nice attack on the drums. Clean doubles and ghost notes are not as much of a chore as they are with the BSH. So of the two BamStix, the BSL are more universal in their appeal, while the BSH would be best for heavy-handed players. Both BamStix models list for \$23.95.

ROCKSTIX

Like their BamStix brethren, RockStix are 16" long and come in two weights: Heavy and Light. The different between these models is in the number of bristles, not the size. (Both are 620" in diameter.)

RockStix Heavy (RSH) are comprised of eleven bristles. They feel similar to the BamStix

Light, with the tonal differences between bamboo and broom making them sound unique. The RSH are fairly flexible, which proved to be beneficial when playing at lower volumes, when you can take advantage of their quick rebound. But at louder volumes their natural "give" feels wobbly when compared to the BamStix.

RockStix Light (RSL) use twenty-four bristles. These sticks have the best rebound of all our test models. And if you slide the sleeve close to the handle the bristles space out, which creates an almost brush-like effect without compromising rebound. They're very durable, but are geared more toward moderate to light hitters who play a lot of soft, intricate patterns rather than straight-ahead grooves. Both RockStix models list for \$23.95.

SWITCH STIX

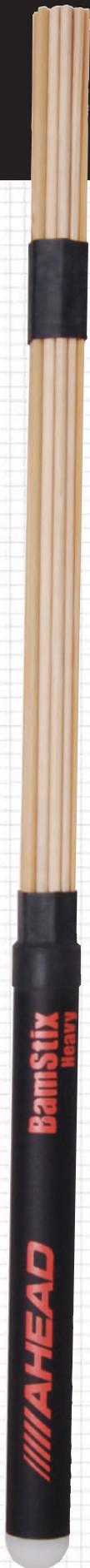
The Switch Stix 5A mallet/stick combination is essentially a modified version of Ahead's 5A model, with a mallet head on the backside. This stick is a great option for songs that require numerous textural changes. The mallet end has a heavyweight felt, which is a bit too hard for playing even, washy cymbal swells, but they produce a nice round tone on drums. List price: \$38.95.

TIPSTIX

TipStix (TPSX) are an alternate version of the RockStix Light. They have the same dimensions, with the addition of a plastic tip that sits at the top of the bristles. At lower volumes, the tip doesn't come in contact with the drums or cymbals because it's nestled in the middle of the broom bristles. At louder volumes, however, the tip cut starts to make contact. You'll hear the difference more on the cymbals than on drums, but it's a little inconsistent. If you want to make consistent hits with the tip (on cymbals especially), you'll have to adjust the angle of your wrist a bit beyond a normal playing position. Overall, these sticks don't sound drastically different from the RSL. If the bristles were a bit shorter on this model to allow the tip to protrude farther, then the TipStix might prove more versatile. List price: \$25.95. bigbangdist.com

BAM VS. ROCK

BamStix and RockStix come in two weights, Heavy and Light, and are 16" in length. Bundled bamboo rods put the "Bam" in BamStix, whereas RockStix use bundled broom bristles for a different tonality. The differences between the two models are akin to the differences between wood and nylon tips. The bamboo has a focused attack (and is surprisingly flexible), while the broom is a bit softer. All of the models employ Ahead's unique metal alloy handles, and they have adjustable sleeves that allow you to change the sound and feel by positioning them at different points on the shaft. Out of the package, the sleeves are set about 3" from the top of the shaft. You can get more rebound by sliding the sleeve closer to the mid-point of the shaft.





DJ DRUMS
7X14 DUPLEX MAPLE

Taiwanese company DJ Drums mainly focused on solid wood snares—until the release of this mammoth 7x14 21-ply maple snare. Within these plies hides a hollow center that's 7 plies thick and surrounded by 7 plies of maple on each side. The drum also comes equipped with 10-lug die-cast hoops and mini tube lugs that are insulated from the shell by rubber washers.

The result of these intriguing design concepts is a drum that projects well but that has a warm round tone. The drum came with Evans heads tuned moderately high. At this tighter tension, the drum produced a full, loud "thud" when hit dead center, with a quick decay. Rimshots gave off a nice crack that released more over-

tones, creating a little more of a natural drum sound. I ended up playing this drum tuned this way for a good 45 minutes before I realized how much time had passed, so I must have been happy with it.

I then experimented with tuning the drum down a few notches, which was made very easy by the die-cast hoops and the smooth lug action created by the plastic washers under each tension rod. The lower tuning let the drum breathe even more, and I didn't hear that almost-choked sound that was produced by the higher tuning. The looser batter head also thickened up the tone without losing projection. The rimshot still cracked but let off a rounder set of overtones that had an interesting voice. I'd buy this. **What's it cost? \$459.99**

To hear a selection of the products reviewed this month, go to the Multimedia page at modern drummer.com.



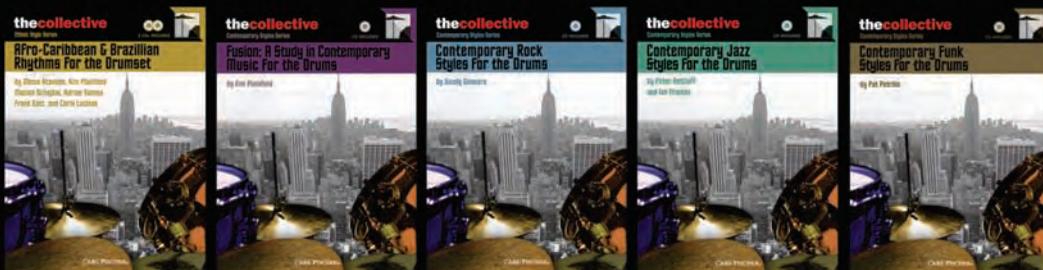
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MD PRODUCT SHOOTOUT!



Some of the most revolutionary developments in drumming technology over the past few years haven't been in the mechanical world of drums, cymbals, or hardware, but rather in electronics.

Mesh heads, soft rubber pads, realistic hi-hat controllers, and expanded sound modules have thrust electronic drums light years ahead of where they were just a decade ago. As a result, more and more drummers are switching over to using electronic kits for practicing, recording, and even live performances.

If you're a recent convert—or if you've been jamming on e-drums since their inception—and you have a pretty powerful computer, now might be the time to check out some of the advancements in drum sample software that are designed to trigger multi-sampled audio files of drums as they were recorded in top-dollar studios. These innovative programs have raised the bar on how realistic electronic drums can sound to the point where it's almost undetectable whether you're playing acoustic or tapping pads. Here's a quick roundup of half a dozen of these products geared specifically for drummers.



The Producer/Drummer's Choice

FXPANSION BFD2 \$399 (Expansion packs: \$50–\$249)

FXpansion's flagship product, BFD2, is one of the most powerful and versatile drum programs on the market. This software comes with 55 GB of sounds (recorded at AIR Studios in London), including vintage Gretsch, Ludwig, Rogers, and Slingerland drums; modern kicks, toms, and snares from DW, Noble & Cooley, Orange County, Pearl, and Trick; and a collection of cymbals from Zildjian, Bosphorus, Paiste, Sabian, and Wuhan. The main interface is set up like a virtual drumkit, so auditioning sounds and swapping out kit pieces is very intuitive.

You can tweak everything about BFD2's drum sounds (tuning, dampening, microphone levels and placement, panning, etc.), and a mixer page allows you to experiment with various effects processing (EQ, compression, reverb, distortion, etc.). So you can transform very natural and dry sounds into a fully produced mix that's master-ready for your band's next record.

BFD2 has some of the purest sounds of all the drum software we tested, and it was very easy to set up for use with different electronic drumkits. The biggest challenge with BFD2, however, is that the final drum mix is ultimately left up to the user to create. There are a number of presets that'll get you closer to what you hear in your head. But you'll need a little bit of music-mixing know-how to take full advantage of what BFD2 is capable of. You also need a very powerful computer and a fast external hard drive to run this software.

Notable BFD2 users: Sterling Campbell, Curt Bisquera, Shawn Pelton
www.fxpansion.com

NATIVE INSTRUMENTS BATTERY \$229

Battery has long been the software of choice for many professional drummers looking to trigger loops and samples on stage or in the studio.



The Professional Standard

The latest version of this program comes with over 100 kits of acoustic drum sounds, electronic tones, and ethnic percussion. Battery also allows for sample collections from various other manufacturers to be integrated into its library, and users can trigger their own sounds.

Battery's interface is laid out differently from those of the other drum programs we examined. Instead of using a drummer's-perspective layout, Battery is set up as a matrix of up to 128 cells that can be layered to create very dense, blended sounds. Each cell can contain single drum/cymbal hits or a complete loop, which allows you to use the program very creatively. We wouldn't recommend using Battery if you're looking to perform complete "realistic" drum tracks from your e-drums. While there are some really nice acoustic sounds in its library, Battery is a much better choice if you're looking to trigger a few unique electronic sounds or loops from a multi-pad controller, or if you're looking to build more abstract loops and beats for your band.

Notable Battery users: Brain, Chris Vrenna, Matt Chamberlain
www.native-instruments.com

TOONTRACK SUPERIOR 2.0

\$350

Toontrack got their start as a production company making game music, composing movie scores, and writing songs for artists.

They got into drum sampling after struggling to find a library of heavy metal sounds that they needed for a particular project. This resulted in their first product, Drumkit From Hell, which was created with Meshuggah drummer Tomas Haake.

Now the company has expanded beyond simply recording sample libraries, and has put out several powerful pieces of software designed specifically for drummers. Superior Drummer 2.0, a revamped version of their original sample player, dff Superior, is their top-of-the-line program. Like BFD2, Superior 2.0 is set up with two main interfaces: a virtual drumset window where you can easily swap out instruments, and a mixer page for balancing mic levels and tweaking effects processors.

The first sample libraries released for Superior 2.0 are the New York Studio Legacy Series. Volume 1 comes with 25 GB of sounds: GMS, Rogers, and Slingerland drums, and Sabian cymbals. The drums were recorded at New York City's famed Avatar Studios with session drummer Nir Z.

Superior Drummer 2.0 is a lot like BFD2 in that it allows you to do just about anything you want with the drum mix. It also works very well with all types of electronic drums. Superior 2.0's drums sound a little more "pre-mixed" out of the box than they do with BFD2. As a result, you don't have to spend as much time EQ'ing and adjusting mic levels to get a very professional-sounding mix.

For electronic drummers who "just want to play" but also like having the option to do some very detailed tweaks, this is a great program. The downside is that there aren't as many instrument choices as with BFD2. But Superior 2.0 will also play libraries from Toontrack's smaller EZDrummer program.

Notable Superior 2.0 users: Nir Z, Roy "Futureman" Wooten, Camille Gainer
www.toontrack.com



**Big Studio Sounds
With Maximum
Flexibility**

SONIC REALITY OCEAN WAY DRUMS (GOLD EDITION) \$995

This high-end sample library was recorded at famed Ocean Way Recording in Hollywood, California by platinum-selling producer/engineers Allen Sides (Alanis Morissette, Green Day, Eric Clapton) and Steven Miller (Dave Matthews Band, Pink, Switchfoot).

The Gold edition comes with 40 GB of 24bit/48k samples, while the full-scale Platinum HD version is 80 GB of high-resolution 24bit/96k samples that come preinstalled on an external hard drive. The Gold edition is geared more for electronic drummers and project studio owners, while the Platinum HD version is meant for more full-scale productions.

The sounds of Ocean Way Drums are very high-end, and each drum and cymbal was recorded with multiple mics and from a variety of positions. The kick drums in this library were the warmest and punchiest of all that we tested, and the snares and toms have that "big budget" vibe that you hear on many major-label recordings.

The most striking thing about these samples, however, is the huge room sound of Ocean Way. Sides and Miller did a great job of capturing the even and natural ambience that's made their studio so popular for drum tracking. If you're looking for that huge studio sound, this library has it. Just be aware that the user interface isn't as drummer-friendly as the others (it uses Native Instruments Kontakt Player), and the MIDI mapping is tailored specifically for Roland V-Drums.

www.oceanwaydrums.net



**Million Dollar
Room Sounds**

XLN AUDIO ADDICTIVE DRUMS

\$249.95

(Retro ADpak: \$149.95)

Addictive Drums is a great option for electronic drummers who want the sonic flexibility of bigger programs like BFD2 and Superior 2.0, but don't want to have to use an external hard drive to access the samples. XLN compresses their samples in a way that doesn't take up much disc space (3 GB) without sacrificing too much sonic integrity, so you can store and run the software directly on your computer. The basic program comes with three complete drumkits (Sonor Designer, DW Collectors, Tama Starclassic), a few extra snares and kicks, and a full set of Sabian and Paiste cymbals. For additional sounds, the company offers the Retro ADpak, an expansion pack that contains three vintage Ludwig kits (Ringo-style '60s Black Oyster, Bonham-sized '70s Blue Oyster, and a rumbling Keith Moon-sounding acrylic Vistalite).

Of all of the software tested in this shootout, Addictive Drums stood out as the one that was the easiest to use for creating extremely modified drum sounds. Many of the mixer presets are designed for that purpose. So if you're interested in creating hip-hop or pop radio-style loops that use a lot of compression, distortion, filters, or other effects, Addictive Drums is a good program to have. The more natural-sounding presets are good, too. But they might be a little "over-hyped" for some situations.

Notable Addictive Drums users: Trevor Lawrence Jr., Steven Wolf
www.xlnaudio.com



**The Beat Maker's
Sample Player**

TOONTRACK EZ DRUMMER

\$179 (Expansion packs: \$89)

EZDrummer is Toontrack's more compact drum sample player.

This program is designed especially for electronic drummers who want to be able to trigger really nice drum sounds from their kits without having to deal with too much mixing. The basic software comes with two kits: Pop/Rock and Cocktail. The Pop/Rock kit consists of some of the same samples of Nir Z's drums that appear in Superior 2.0. The Cocktail kit is a Yamaha Club Jordan set with a kick, snare, two toms, 14" Zildjian hi-hats, and a Mikaelsson custom ride.

Toontrack has taken a very creative approach to their expansion packs for EZDrummer. Instead of simply offering hi-fi sounds of brand-name drums, they've teamed up with famous drummers to sample their personal drum sound. These collaborations resulted in Drumkit From Hell with Meshuggah's Tomas Haake, Nashville with studio legend Harry Stinson, Twisted Kit with former Tom Waits drummer Michael Blair, Funkmasters with James Brown drumming duo Clyde Stubblefield and Jabo Starks, and Jazz with The Flecktones' Roy "Futureman" Wooten. Other creative EZDrummer expansion packs include the radical hip-hop sounds of Claustrophobic, the warm tones of Vintage Rock, and an extensive auxiliary setup in Latin Percussion.

During our testing, EZDrummer proved to be the simplest and most functional of all the programs. There aren't as many options for adjusting the drum sounds—all you have is a basic mixer to balance mic levels—so each kit piece only has one basic tone. But the drum sounds of all of the different kits are recorded and processed in a natural but refined way that makes them ready to be used for gigs, demos, or even final recordings.

www.toontrack.com



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Jan Persson/Redferns

TECH

Mitchell

by Mark Griffith

Mitch Mitchell was not alone in blending jazz and rock drumming styles, but he may have pushed the concept further than anyone who came before him.

Whether you call it fusion, jazz-rock, or rock-jazz, Mitch's playing mixed the improvisational ingredients and the rhythmic sense of swing from jazz with the audacity and power of rock 'n' roll. This combination meant that the art form of drumming would never be the same. Jazz drummers now had access to an expanded vocabulary that went beyond the traditional language of jazz and swing drumming. But for rock drummers it meant something different: The heightened sense of interplay that jazz drummers used to inspire and push soloists was now being utilized in their world. This expanded the drummer's role beyond that of a timekeeper, and the music benefited from the excitement that emanated from the drums.

The dexterity that came from Mitch Mitchell's experience playing triplet-based music (jazz and blues) gave his groove a unique quality when he played straight-8th-note material (rock). But if you listen closely you'll find that many of the early rock and heavy drumming pioneers had a dose of swing in their assertive time feels. No drummer, however, is more important than the great Mitch Mitchell in terms of merging this sense of improvisational swing with rock timekeeping. His "swinging straight-8th note" approach made the backbeats feel less static and inspired the time feel to have a buoyancy and a stimulating sense of adventure.

It's common to make reference to Mitchell's wonderful traditional grip when describing his jazz-influenced playing, but Mitch's greatness goes much deeper than a "cool grip." Citing his seemingly unstoppable tidal wave of rhythm, many have called him "the Elvin Jones of rock drumming." (In fact, in a 1982 *Modern Drummer* interview Mitchell mentioned drawing a great deal of inspiration from Elvin's drumming on Wayne Shorter's recording *Night Dreamer*.) Simply put, Mitch Mitchell was one of the most influential drummers ever to hold a pair of sticks.

The Original Experience

Mitchell's jazz-influenced approach to rock drumming was the polymetric thunder that underpinned The Jimi Hendrix Experience's musical soundscapes, driving them into the stratosphere. *Are You Experienced*, *Axis: Bold As Love*, and *Electric Ladyland* all feature Mitch inventing and orchestrating drum parts that frame Hendrix's performances with the aplomb of a highly skilled arranger. One listen to "If 6 Was 9," "Love Or Confusion,"

"May This Be Love," or "Are You Experienced?" immediately makes clear the creativity that Mitch used in crafting masterpieces that helped define rock drumming.

There were a plethora of ingredients in this renowned musician's recipe. He had a mean shuffle, as heard on "Burning Of The Midnight Lamp" and "Still Raining, Still Dreaming." He played tasteful, well-constructed solos, as on the fifteen-minute version of "Voodoo Chile" and on "Moon,

Turn The Tides." And he could really pop a backbeat, as he did on "Hey Joe," "Little Miss Strange," and "The Wind Cries Mary" (the latter of which was one of Mitch's favorites). Mitchell was explosive and raucous on the rocking "Spanish Castle Magic," and he swung thoroughly on "Manic Depression" and "Third Stone From The Sun." And what would "Foxye Lady" be without Mitch and Jimi playing those unison hits with the precision of a well-rehearsed big band? Mitchell even played great brushes, producing a thick sound on "Up From The Skies." But quite possibly his most memorable performance is the incredibly twisting rhythmic turns of the classic "Fire." A more exciting two minutes and forty-five seconds of drumming has never been recorded. Indeed, the original Experience recordings have created quite a vocabulary for us all to absorb and interpret.

Experience The Disciples

Mitchell's strong influence is evidenced by the fact that many of today's drumming greats have had a terrific time interpreting his classic performances. Vinnie Colaiuta's version of "Manic Depression" from Kimo Williams' *Tracking* and "The Wind Cries Mary" from the Hendrix tribute *In From The*



Jan Persson/Redferns



Ron Howard/Redferns

Storm are a good place to start examining Mitch's continuing impact. From the same tribute recording, check out Tony Williams' take on "Spanish Castle Magic," "Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland)," and "Bold As Love." Simon Phillips turns in a stellar version of "If 6 Was 9" on David Garfield's *Tribute To Jeff Porcaro*, and his take on the classic "Freedom" from Steve

and Steve Ferrone, on the self-titled album by BFD, both pay tribute to Mitch's rolling and tumbling drumming on the beautiful "May This Be Love," creating modern takes on the Mitchell groove. You can even hear Mitch's strong influence on jazz drummers such as Adam Nussbaum; check out his takes on "Voodoo Chile," "Up From The Skies," and "Stone Free" with Gil

drummer Carlo Little playing in London, and the drumming die was cast. Mitchell began playing in various bands around England, including The Tornados and The Coronets, and, according to Pete Townshend, he even auditioned for The Who. In 1964, the drummer, still known as John Mitchell, began playing with the band The Riot Squad. Mitchell wrote that through his

When it seems that drums should be boring, and when the band starts muttering about "meat and potatoes," there is always Mitch Mitchell to remind us otherwise. —Stewart Copeland

Lukather's *Los Lobotomys* adds another dimension to Mitchell's classic performance.

Groovemeister Steve Jordan's rancid playing on "Wait Until Tomorrow" with John Mayer focuses on Mitchell's unique brand of funk, while Steve Smith's "The Fire Still Burns (For Jimi)" from Vital Information's *Show 'Em Where You Live* uses the classic "Fire" groove to spark modern jazz-rock excitement. Studio greats Abe Laboriel Jr., on Meshell Ndegeocello's *Bitter*,

Evans. But where did all this percussive inspiration and syncopated swag-ger originate?

The Early Years

John "Mitch" Mitchell was born on June 9, 1947, in Ealing, England, and like many other drumming legends he took tap dancing lessons early on. He went on to work as a child actor and starred in the 1958 BBC television show *Jennings At School*. As his interest in acting waned, Mitchell saw local

involvement with that group he "got to hear musicians Thelonious Monk, Coltrane, Oliver Nelson, and drummers like Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones, and of course Tony Williams, who changed my life." He continued, "I already loved and stole from Earl Palmer, Benny Benjamin, and Al Jackson."

Mitchell's early recordings show a firm foundation in blues-based British Invasion pop and include touches of classic blues drumming combined with

popular R&B and Mersey Beat traits. The several singles that Mitchell recorded with The Riot Squad are collected on the compilation *Jump!* These are an enticing listen, showing the seeds of Mitchell's loose time feel. Mitchell quit The Riot Squad in December 1965 to replace drummer Bill Eyden in Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames. Fame's band had a loose and swinging approach to music, and Mitchell's playing fit perfectly. He stayed in the group long enough to record the adventurous LP *Sweet Things* in 1966, which offers a vital look into the drummer's evolving style.

Fame broke up his band later in 1966,

leaving Mitchell free to audition for the then unknown Hendrix. When the pool was narrowed down to two drummers—Mitchell and Aynsley Dunbar—a coin was reportedly flipped, and Mitch Mitchell got the gig. British jazz great Phil Seamen replaced Mitchell with Georgie Fame, and Mitch and Hendrix proceeded to create music history.

Seeing Is Believing

While listening to Mitchell on the original Hendrix records is supremely inspirational, to actually see the drummer playing with Jimi was the real experience.

Thankfully, today we have several DVDs on which we can closely examine the illustrious pairing of Mitch Mitchell and Jimi Hendrix.

In 1967, The Jimi Hendrix Experience played at the Monterey Pop Festival, and the concert was filmed for television but not broadcast. If the trio's performance had actually been shown on TV, it probably would have had the same impact as The Beatles' 1964 debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Fortunately the footage has been made available over the years under various titles. The recent DVD *Live At Monterey* shows the full glory of one of the most elec-

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

Master engineer **EDDIE KRAMER** has helmed albums by The Stones, Led Zeppelin, and The Chili Peppers. Here he shares firsthand what it was like behind the booth for all three Experience albums. Robyn Flans reports.

WHAT ABOUT MITCH SET HIM APART AS A DRUMMER?

I guess the thing that most impressed me was the fact that here was this young kid who had a fair amount of experience in terms of playing with Georgie Fame, who I had seen before in the clubs of London, and he was essentially a jazz drummer thrust into the rock 'n' roll world. I don't think there was a drummer around who could have done what Mitch did. His jazz training really served him well, and because he played with the sticks held in the jazz manner, it gave him the ability to play with a looseness and finesse that other drummers probably didn't have.

HOW, IN YOUR ESTIMATION, DID THAT SUIT JIMI? I UNDERSTAND THEY WERE REALLY IN SYNC.

Yes. There were other drummers in England who had auditioned for the job, and certainly there were others who were capable. But I don't think any of them fit the bill in the true sense that Mitch did. I think this was a lucky break for both Jimi and Mitch. They found each other's ideas to be compatible. Mitch was able to sense where Jimi was going and keep up with him and challenge him.

Very few drummers could begin to approach Mitch's speed and ability to think. That's the idea I want to get across: He had this innate ability to think ahead and to challenge Jimi and to do things that were ridiculous. He would do a fill where you would think, *Oh no, there's no way he's going to land on 7*. It would be just outrageous. I remember very clearly that in the sessions he would do stuff and Jimi would just laugh because they were so silly. They would be outrageous but wonderful at the same time. And Mitch had this wonderful impish, almost childlike quality in his physical being and his playing. It was impudent and wonderful and clever and at the same time a very driving sort of force.

DO YOU THINK HE ACTUALLY PUSHED JIMI?

I think they pushed each other. It's obvious that Jimi had fairly specific ideas about what he wanted. For instance, the beginning of "All Along The Watchtower," I'm pretty sure it was Jimi's idea to turn the time around, and I know there were a lot of tense moments and yelling from Jimi to Mitch and Dave Mason, who was on the session. It was Jimi on acoustic guitar, Dave Mason on acoustic guitar, and Mitch. No bass. It was very difficult to get that front part. I think within a few takes, they got it. Very rarely did Jimi yell at anybody, but he did on this particular occasion.

BECAUSE MITCH WAS HAVING TROUBLE DOING IT OR CONCEIVING IT?

I think the conception was there; it was a matter of executing it, trying to do something that was opposed to his natural inclination—and Mitch was used to doing wacky things. If memory serves, it was Jimi's idea, and there was a little trouble with it. But once they got it, it was phenomenal.

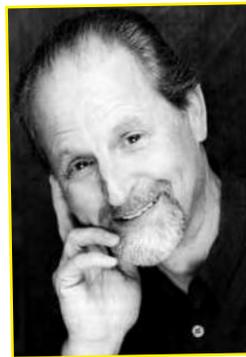
WHAT ABOUT THE SOUND OF THE DRUMS? WAS THAT YOU, OR A COMBINATION OF YOU AND MITCH?

I think any producer/engineer worth his salt would say that the sound really emanates from the artist first, whether it's the guitar amps or the bass amp or the drummer. Obviously Mitch had a very distinctive way of playing and setting up the snare and the bass drum and his cymbals. Obviously the sound starts there first. Then it becomes a question of how to capture it. This is his sound, and you don't want to mess with it too much. So it's really a question of the kind of mics you use and where to put them in the studio in relation to Jimi so you get good communication. Quite frankly, on the first album the drums were recorded mono, and you damn well had to get the sound correct. It had to be done with as few microphones as possible and have that nice light, airy feeling on the cymbals and sound as large as possible. By the second album, *Axis*, we were doing the drums in stereo, which offered me a little more room for expansion of Mitch's sound.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE MITCH MITCHELL TRACK?

"Little Wing" comes to mind. "If 6 Was 9"—that wonderful feel. There are obviously some signature things, but then you can go to "Up From The Skies," where there's some wonderful loose brushwork on the snare and the cymbals. Everything he did had this distinctive style, and you could say, "That's Mitch Mitchell." His brand of playing was very identifiable. It was a style that every kid who grows up listening to Hendrix goes, "Wow, the drumming is really sparkly." There was a wonderful integration of Mitch and Jimi.

And Mitch's style evolved over the years. When The Experience broke up for a bit and Jimi went and did that one-off thing with Buddy Miles and the Band Of Gypsies, which was a wonderful diversion for Jimi, it was great, because Buddy's playing was the complete antithesis of Mitch's. It's true that after Band Of Gypsies Mitch did a lot of thinking and had a lot to catch up with, because I think that strong R&B-driven band influenced his playing. You can hear it immediately. The Band Of Gypsies made a mark, and it was a brilliant album. And then you heard The Experience right after, in the last part of 1970, and it had elements of the funk that Mitch took from Buddy and incorporated into his own playing. That changed the direction and sound of the band. I thought it was very positive.



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trifling sets of live music ever recorded.

For drummers (not to mention guitarists) it doesn't get any more exhilarating than this. The dynamic shifts, the tightness of the band, and the sheer electricity of the performance reflect music at its peak. The blues standards "Killing Floor" and "Rock Me Baby" are hardly given standard treatment, and Mitchell's romping grooves are precise, with a wonderful sense of reckless abandon. But this band could do more than bash. "Like A Rolling Stone" and "The Wind Cries Mary" show Mitch to be a sensitive timekeeper, capable of grooving hard at a mere whisper. Still, when the band breaks into "Hey Joe" and the historic closer "Wild Thing," it's amazing that the vibrations don't trigger "the big one" in Monterey. This show was filmed very well, and there are many great shots of Mitchell displaying his magical skills behind his small set of Ludwigs. And with the help of the bonus features on the DVD, there are even more priceless shots of the riveting performance.

While the original Experience with bassist Noel Redding made the first three albums and appears on the

Monterey DVD, most of the DVDs available show bassist Billy Cox playing with Mitchell and Hendrix. Mitch would later recall the band with Billy Cox as a high point and the most potent version of the Hendrix bands, although he also recalled that the gigs were becoming "less exciting."

Mitchell's recollections notwithstanding, there is no evidence of this on the DVD *Blue Wild Angel: Jimi Hendrix Live At The Isle Of Wight*, where Mitch gets a lot of screen time. His signature melodic tom ideas and loose time feel are prominently displayed throughout. There are even many good close-ups of Mitch's hands where you can marvel at his rocked-up traditional grip. Also invaluable is the inclusion of three drum solos, despite the fact that Mitch was never a fan of soloing.

Further evidence of the drummer's genius abound. His unaccompanied intro to "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" shows the skill of an accomplished and sensitive soloist, and his use of double bass drums is quite creative. His solos during "Machine Gun" and as a segue between "Voodoo Child" and "In From The Storm" are

impeccable. The real excitement, however, is when Hendrix and Mitchell hook up on a rhythmic riff, as they do at the end of "Machine Gun," during "Red House," and on "Freedom." Mitch was there every step of the way, prodding Hendrix and pushing him further into musical neverland. The way that Mitchell fills around Hendrix's unpredictable rhythms is sheer magic.

This show provides particularly good insight into Mitchell's drumming influences. Check out the Latin bell patterns that Mitch implies during the slow four of "Machine Gun," the funky Motown four groove of "Dolly Dagger," and the ever-present riveted ride on Mitch's far right. This telepathic performance is among the band's best, with Hendrix, Mitchell, and Cox acting as one.

When Hendrix performed at Woodstock in 1969, it was also filmed exquisitely. But the camera work relied heavily on shots of Hendrix. In terms of the appreciation of Mitch Mitchell, the original DVD is not all that satisfying. The 2005 definitive double-DVD collection *Jimi Hendrix Live At Woodstock*, however, includes a second disc of black-and-white footage that was shot

MITCH MITCHELL

from Mitchell's left. This provides some phenomenal views of Mitch's ingenious performance. The drums are clear and punchy within the hefty backbeat groove on "Message To Love." On "Lover Man," Mitchell is an absolute steamroller, and his multidirectional solo on the fusion-inspired "Jam Back At The House" is simply astonishing.

The audio recording of *Jimi Plays Berkeley* is quite good, although—again—the video footage focuses almost exclusively on Hendrix. And if you can make it through the rest of the "film," *Rainbow Bridge* offers some very good playing by Mitchell, Hendrix, and Cox as well. Mitch also makes an appearance in the Rolling Stones' film *Rock And Roll Circus*, playing "Yer Blues" with John Lennon, Eric Clapton, and Keith Richards. His timekeeping with this supergroup is loose, bluesy, and very adventurous. Mitch implies a great number of time feels over an otherwise traditional blues performance and shows obvious excitement playing in a band of legends.

There are, of course, numerous official and unofficial live recordings of Hendrix on CD, and among these are some very special moments that must be mentioned. The thirteen-minute performance of "Red House" from *In The West*, for instance, is an absolute standout. The band played this tune differently every time (and there are many live recordings of it), but the improvisations on this version are particularly loose and exciting. *In The West* also features a staggering version of "Johnny B. Goode" from the Berkley concerts, which features Mitch at his straight-ahead rockin' best. The *BBC Sessions* are loose and offer some great live and well-recorded examples of the original Experience. And *Live At Winterland* is one of the most exciting Hendrix sets caught on tape.

Play On, Drummer, Play On...

When Hendrix assembled his Band Of Gypsys, with the great Buddy Miles on drums, Mitchell toured with another supergroup. Bassist Jack Bruce united guitarist Larry Coryell, keyboardist Mike Mandel, and Mitch for a tour in support of his recording *Songs For A Tailor*. While no official live recordings exist, many bootlegs have preserved this once-in-a-lifetime group and its energetic music. Given Coryell and Mandel's background in jazz-rock and fusion, this band provided a showcase for Mitchell's exceptional drumming in a very different context. Coryell remembers, "Mitch was a musician who had good taste. He was a jazz drummer who knew how to play rock 'n' roll when he had to. He had a very soft touch and played the drums like a musician, not like a brute. Most important, he was a great listener. On that tour, in Detroit, Mitch took one of the greatest drum solos I've ever heard, on, if I recall, 'Sunshine Of Your Love.'

"I hired Mitch and Jack a few years later for a jazz gig at Ronnie Scott's," Coryell goes on. "Mitch played really well. I remember that he took all the pay from the gig and gave it to his roadie. That's what kind of guy he was, just a real sweetheart. The last time I saw Mitch was when we played together with Jeff Berlin at the Nashville NAMM show about ten years ago. I got the impression that Mitch was still searching for something musically but he really hadn't found it. When it comes to the mixing of styles and the blending of jazz and rock, Mitch was one of the pioneers."

Beyond The Experience

After Hendrix's tragic death in 1970, Mitchell helped produce *The Cry Of Love*, an album that contained some of Jimi's final studio recordings and included both Mitchell and Buddy Miles on drums. Mitch also wrote a fantastic book called *Jimi Hendrix: Inside The Experience*.

In 1972, he recorded with a new group called Ramatam. This is typical 1970s rock music that unfortunately didn't really distinguish itself from the better bands of the era (such as Traffic, Blind Faith, and Black Oak Arkansas). But Mitchell delivered the goods in a funkier role than he'd filled previously and played rollicking grooves that provided an exhilarating counterpoint to average songwriting. The self-titled *Ramatam* is a fascinating listen, if only to focus on Mitch's playing.

Mitchell also returned to his roots as an English session musician, playing with Georgie Fame on Muddy Waters' *The London Sessions*. Like the Ramatam album, this is a fascinating but not completely successful recording. Mitch guested on Junior Brown's amazing *Long Walk Back* as well, which also features George Rains and the great Buddy Harman on drums.

The legendary recordings and precious video footage of Mitch Mitchell will forever provide inspiration to future generations of drummers. Perhaps Larry Coryell best sums up the drummer's influence: "Mitch Mitchell was a generous and soulful person who was always searching for something musically. He didn't want to be an 'ordinary' drummer, and he really wasn't interested in repeating something he had already done." Mitch set the bar very high for the future of rock drumming, and we are all the better for it.



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MITCH MITCHELL was the right drummer, in the right place, at the right time. MD asks some famous friends and disciples to describe the drummer's indelible influence on Jimi Hendrix—and on us.

CARMINE APPICE

Mitch and I went back a long time. The Jimi Hendrix Experience and Vanilla Fudge toured together in 1968, and we had some great times. I loved his playing.

being with Buddy Guy, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Jonny Lang, Brad Whitford, and Eric Gales—all playing the music he helped create. He said, "I'm glad to be here and watch all these great performers

Mitch wanted to play like Elvin Jones with Hendrix, and it was just a magical chemistry. —Chad Smith



He had such a great flow. He never seemed to run out of things to play, and he was one of the guys in the '60s that set a foundation of rock drumming that still exists today.

I recently saw Mitch on the Experience Hendrix tour. I asked him what it felt like

playing on the same stage. And I'm glad to be a part of it!" That was a humble statement, but that was Mitch. He was a really nice man and a *great* drummer! He never considered himself a rock drummer, up to the day he died—he always considered himself a jazz drummer—but we all

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MITCH MITCHELL

know different.

I loved Mitch. I lost an old friend, and the drumming world lost a great original. Now The Jimi Hendrix Experience is complete in rock 'n' roll heaven. God bless!

VINNIE COLAIUTA

Mitch was a big part of the amazing musical revolution of the '60s. At that time, music, the identity of music, and the identity of players were not squelched and homogenized. Mitch went into The Jimi Hendrix Experience playing the way that he played and brought a lot of heavy jazz-influenced drumming. The mixture of those elements was groundbreaking, and Mitch was a part of that whole groundbreaking thing. Because of that, I wouldn't be afraid to list him as an innovator.

What Hendrix did was so revolutionary, and Mitch was a part of all that. Those bands had a synergy and rapport. It wasn't just, "Okay, play a beat and I'm going to play on top of it." It was, "We're all going to talk; we're going to have a big conversation." They did it the way they do it in jazz. He was definitely an integral part of that. He was a very important drummer. Mitch was an original. I got to meet him way back when DW was very young, at one of their events, and he was an absolute sweetheart.

JASON BITTNER

Mitch Mitchell was one of my earliest drum influences. I'm thirty-eight and I grew up a child of the '70s, listening to my parents' record collection, which was all the Southern rock stuff my dad was listening to, like the Doobies and Allmans, and all the '60s stuff my mom had, which was Hendrix and Cream and The Doors. In my formative years, before I started getting into Neil Peart and John Bonham and all that, I listened to Keith Moon, Ginger Baker, and Mitch Mitchell. I thought Mitch was a great combination of Keith and Ginger—kind of. I think he had the crazy bombast that Moonie had, but he also had the jazz touch and the experience that Ginger had. All three of those guys totally stand alone, as far as their merits and individual style. Mitch had blistering rolls, which was what drew me to him first. The later footage with the two bass drums was even cooler, especially at that time, when I was a kid immersed in thrash metal.

They planted the seeds for extreme musi-

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MITCH MITCHELL

cianship because there was a lot going on between Mitch, Noel Redding, and Jimi Hendrix. They brought that whole trio thing together, which could then lead to bands like Rush taking it three steps further down the road—a precursor to a more extreme, if you will, style of music.

I wish I was able to see that band, but I wasn't even alive yet. At least I was lucky enough to see Mitch play in some capacity, even though it wasn't during his classic era. I was fortunate to catch the second date of the Experience Hendrix tour a few months ago, and when he

came on stage, he looked like he was having a little trouble; his tech had to help him up on the riser. But I'm so happy I can say that I did see the man play.

CHAD SMITH

Mitch was one of my guys because that whole English late-'60s, early-'70s rock thing was my thing. He had such an impact in a short period of time, mainly three records in three years. It's pretty impressive after all these years to see that the guys who influenced drumming

so incredibly were the ones who took it from the jazz thing to the rock thing. Mitch wanted to play like Elvin Jones with Hendrix, and it was just a magical chemistry. Mitch and Jimi were totally in sync, and Jimi said that Mitch pushed him and inspired him to play and that they played off each other.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience was a short spurt of genius creativity. You can't say more about The Experience than that it *exploded*. No band was more influential, especially on other musicians of the day. Everybody looked to what Jimi was doing—The Beatles, The Stones.... If you're a rock drummer, or any kind of drummer, those three records are required listening. That's why Mitch was so important and so influential. My brother and I listened to *Smash Hits*, which was the record that came out in America post "Hey Joe," and we did "Fire" at our first gigs. I was horrible, and I did the same fill every four measures, but it was so exciting. I got to try to make up for it when The Chili Peppers did it in our own way 'cause I could at least play a little better then.

ED SHAUGHNESSY

Mitch played a great style for Jimi and

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provided the exact type of drumming that Jimi needed. He was a very creative drummer. I did the very best I could to fill his shoes the night he was ill on the Johnny Carson show in 1968. It was an incredible experience. Jimi blew out the main cable, and we had to stop the show.

KEITH CARLOCK

We lost a true pioneer of drumming with the passing of the great Mitch Mitchell. His approach with Hendrix's trio was a huge influence on me. The open, improvisational jazz spirit, along with a daring, risk-taking rock attitude really connected with me. I always think of Mitch when I play in a more organic jazz-rock guitar trio situation. There's really nothing better than that era of music, when things were happening for the first time. Mitch was really creating something when he played. Unfortunately I never had the pleasure of seeing him live, but the recordings will be so important and special forever!

ZACH DANZIGER

There are drummers you like at different points in your life, and there are drummers that people tell you to check out. At a certain point you may not be ready to appreciate them or understand either their com-

plexity or their simplicity. In the case of Mitch Mitchell, I was very unaware of his stuff until my mid-to-late teens, when someone said, "You don't know Jimi Hendrix and Mitch Mitchell?"

I had heard of Jimi Hendrix, but I didn't know Mitch Mitchell. This happened with Tony Williams as well. It's a thing where you're told you should like someone, and many times you try to force it because you believe there's something wrong with you if you don't like them. Many times it comes around from pretending to like the guy's playing because you think you should genuinely be into it.

Mitch was one of those people where I said, "Oh yeah, he's really good; I really like that," thinking to myself, *I'm not digging this*. Same thing with Tony Williams. Then, maybe in my late teens, Tony Williams legitimately became incredible. I didn't go through a Mitch Mitchell phase, but I would put him up there as a drummer I would like to hear ahead of so many other guys.

Back in the '60s, there was a psychedelic looseness and rawness you could apply to rock 'n' roll that seems to be coming back a little in the past few years. Rock then became this very straight up-and-down, almost precision-based, athletic



Rob Shandhan

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MITCH MITCHELL

perfection, with everything even and without a lot of personality. But Mitch Mitchell had a sway and a jazziness. He was still beating the hell out of stuff, but with personality that involved deviating from the standard.

Mitch Mitchell, to me, is like a rock Elvin Jones. It's not all in its proper place by correct standards—whatever that even means—which for me is what drumming should be. He was part of a crop of guys who had a lot of power without being purely athletic players with tree trunks for sticks. There was a lot of sway, interpretation, and personality. It was cool that he didn't have barriers—sometimes he played jazzy things on a more rock drumkit and sometimes more rockish things on a jazzy drumkit—and I'm a big fan of that. I wish personality would come back into playing, where people don't feel they have to adhere to boundaries.

NEAL SMITH

When Ringo came and the British Invasion started, and people broke from the traditional way of holding their sticks and started using the straight grip, I

immediately changed as well. When Mitch came along, it was interesting to see that he had the traditional style of holding the sticks.

While I was with Alice Cooper, I actually got to meet four of my influences: Mitch Mitchell, Ginger Baker, Keith Moon, and Charlie Watts. We were lucky enough to party with Jimi Hendrix four different times. In later years, when the Cooper band moved to New York, we would go to some of the big clubs where some of the rockers would hang out, and I would bump into Mitch over the years as well.

The first time we saw The Experience, they were playing at Arizona State University in Phoenix, and coincidentally we were in Phoenix too. I was so excited to see them. The next night they played in Tucson. We went down there, and that night we went back to the hotel with them—just the three of them and the five of us, talking about music and life. One of the best times I've ever had.

I'm still amazed by Mitch's playing. Whenever there was an Experience album, I would grab it immediately, and it wasn't just because of Jimi, it was

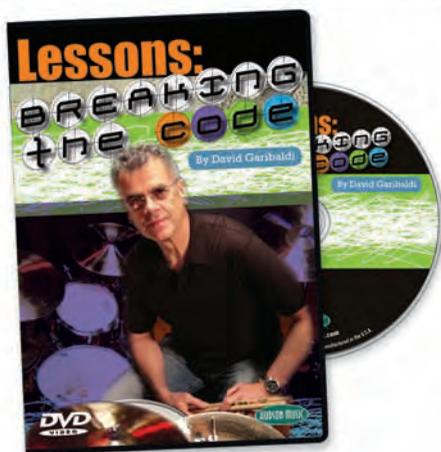
because of Mitch. I couldn't believe what he was playing, and Eddie Kramer produced them amazingly well. He knew how to produce a trio. There was a lot of room sound in there and not a ton of overlays. Of course, Jimi would play rhythm guitar and lead guitar and sometimes double up on either, but still, the bass and drums were the rhythm section behind that, and it was full.

Mitch's syncopation and attack were amazing. His fills too. He knew where to play. He was always incredibly tasty, and I loved his drive. His bass drum kept driving all the time. I loved his rudiments, another great thing about him. And his hi-hat work inspired "Killer" off our *Killer* album. I liked Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich from the standpoint that they would incorporate the different drums into their beats, and they wouldn't just use a hi-hat like a metronome. I could tell Mitch did those things, and it's all those subtleties, along with the power, that made him an amazing drummer.

Quotes compiled by Robyn Flans.

To read more drummer quotes about Mitch Mitchell, go to moderndrummer.com.

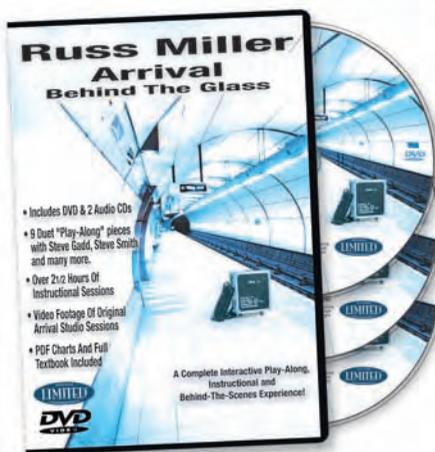
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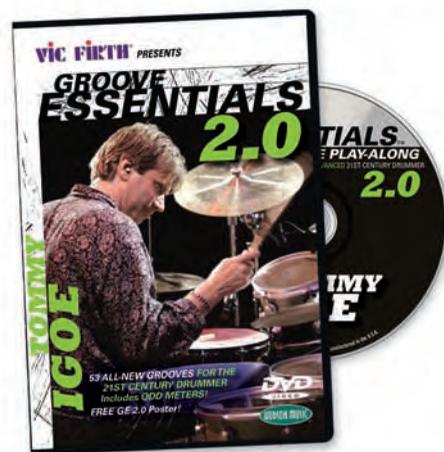
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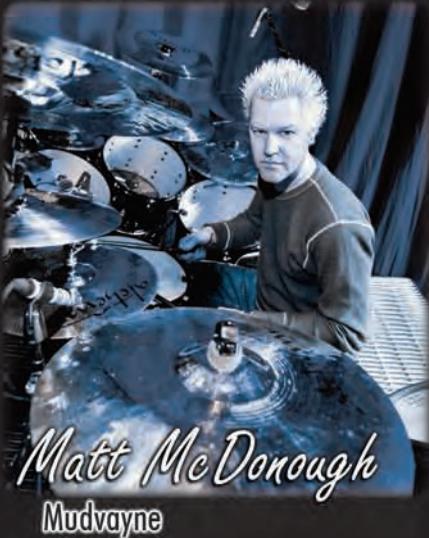
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ONE REGULAR GUY TO ANOTHER

Fiona Apple/Paul Simon drummer **CHARLEY DRAYTON** was a relative newcomer the first time he witnessed Mitch Mitchell's humanity.

In July of 1991, one early morning about 2:00 A.M., I receive a phone call from a friend who's at the China Club in NYC telling me that Mitch Mitchell has just arrived there. I tell my friend to keep him there; I'm on the way! Still in my pajamas, I put on my bathrobe and loafers and grab two copies of *Inside The Experience*, the book Mitch released the year before. I jump into a taxi headed straight to Broadway and 74th Street with hopes that Mitch will be in the mood to sign copies of his book—and that I can muster up the nerve to ask him. Only a few times in my life have I been too choked up to find the right words. On that night I only manage to introduce myself and ask for his autograph. Mitch gracefully complies.

It's now 2007, and as I walk down the steps backstage at the Beacon Theatre during the Experience Hendrix concert, a voice from the production office yells out, "Is that Charley Drayton?" It's the production manager, Andrew McKean, a friend I met in Seattle during another Hendrix affair in conjunction with the Experience Hendrix museum. As I stop on the steps, I hear a new sound in an English accent: "Char-ley Drayton—where is he?" And out of the production door comes Mitch Mitchell! I'm in shock. I can't believe that Mitch was even aware that those two words existed. He walks over to me like we're long-lost buddies and begins talking like he'd been waiting for this conversation to happen. Let's not forget that this is in the middle of the show. Next thing I know, I'm standing in the production office with Mitch for forty minutes as we chat away. At one point I say to him, "Mitch, something is wrong here—you're in the middle of a show, and aren't I the one who should be asking all the questions?" Needless to say, it's a huge night in my life.

On October 21, 2008, I arrive at NYC's Hammerstein Ballroom right before showtime at 8:00 P.M. and pick up my pass for the Experience Hendrix tour. I find myself whisked to a great position at the side of the stage, and I watch my good friend Doyle Bramhall play Hendrix tunes. Several minutes later, Mitch Mitchell wanders out and walks by me to his drumkit



on stage. He picks up his brushes and goes into "Up From The Skies."

I realize the energy now has me standing closer to Mitch's riser, so close that his drum tech, Mike Musburger, grabs me and says, "Sit here." I say, "No, I don't want to be in your way," but he insists and leans me down on the back of Mitch's riser, right against his second floor tom! Need I say more about what is going through my mind and body at that point?

I continue to watch the show from different locations, and near the end I return to a spot a few feet above the side of the stage. The show ends and I continue to

watch, looking down at all the musicians embracing each other after the four-hour performance. I hear a loud voice come from the stage: "CHARLEY!" Remember, I'm trying to be respectful of the musicians having their moment together without my being noticed or in the way. My ears and eyes try to follow the voice, and Brad Whitford from Aerosmith—can you believe that!—says, in a loud but friendly tone trying to reach my ears, "I told Mitch you were here, and he's been trying to find you all night. Get down here!" Once again, my first thought is, *What's wrong with this moment?*

I approach Mitch while friends, fans, and musicians surround him, and he steps away to give me a hug and that warm gentlemen's welcome...again! I'm in shock and trying to act like this is a normal situation. Just doing the hang with (my longtime friend) Mitch. Ha! Mitch says to me, "Please come to the hotel to



have a chat." Although I do have other plans to attend to that evening, some force of energy sends me to meet with Mitch. He's easy to talk to and seems quite at ease with me, sharing old and new stories. We speak about life, Jimi, musicians past and present, Mitch's love of jazz, his happiness at being surrounded by the musicians on the tour, drums, cymbals, sticks, brushes, and his deep love for his companion, Dee, who he feels has been his reason for being happy, healthy, and alive.

At one stage of our conversation I ask if he has ever met the drummer Jimmy Cobb. His eyes light up. I mention that I'm going to meet Jimmy the following evening at a recep-

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MITCH MITCHELL

tion celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Miles Davis's *Kind Of Blue*, and I ask Mitch to join me. He gets *really* excited about the thought of attending the event and begins to reflect on his early days living in NYC and hanging with Tony Williams. On one occasion, he tells me, he was at Tony's place on the Upper West Side. Early in the morning around three or four, the doorbell rang, and a moment later standing side by side with Mitch were Tony and Art Blakey! Mitch then turns to me, gently grabs both my arms, looks me in the eyes, and confesses, "I'm just a little guy from England hanging out with two of my idols. I couldn't believe it!" After a short silence, he says, "You know, I introduced Miles to John McLaughlin." My immediate reply was, "I'm so glad you did!"

That evening, it's an apple martini and an occasional cigarette, which I join him for. As we go deeper into our conversation, I pay Mitch a compliment about his brushwork during his performance of "Up From The Skies" that night. He pauses for a moment and says he has a difficult time receiving compliments about his playing during the tour because he's aware he's not in shape and that in recent times he has not been playing enough.

Later, out of the blue, Mitch shares a very personal thought with me, which I feel is important to share with readers who may have met him at an awkward time. "Sometimes I can be an arrogant prick, and I hope you never see that side of me," he says. This sends an important message to me: Mitch Mitchell is a human being, with a special gift that he's shared unselfishly with us, and he's not perfect, just like the rest of us! I respond by telling Mitch that if I'd been in some of the rooms he's walked into, with some of the people he's had to experience throughout his career in the business, I too would have to behave in a way that keeps negative energy at a distance.

Any musician who plays the drums—anyone who's passionate about music and how to play rock 'n' roll—cannot overlook the contribution Mitch gave to the instrument and the music. If he ever offended you, forget it—it's all about the music! Mitch deserved to be in the room with Tony and Art, because he too is a giant!

Play on, Mitch.
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MUSIC KEY	
open	R.C. Bell
H.H.	C.C. Bell
T.C.	*
S.D.	*
F.T.	*
B.D.	*
H.H.	Ghost Add'l Note
w/ foot	Tom

Legend has it that when The Jimi Hendrix Experience was formed, the guitarist entrusted the results of a coin flip to pick Mitch Mitchell over Aynsley Dunbar for the drum chair.

This amazing quirk of fate paved the way for one of the great guitarist-drummer collaborations in rock music. While Jimi was revolutionizing the sound and style of modern guitar playing, Mitchell was driving the band, playing off every Hendrix innovation with his own improvisational approach.

Mitch, who was influenced by the groundbreaking styles of Elvin Jones and Max Roach, brought a jazz drummer's mentality to Hendrix's hybrid of rock, funk, and jazz. His playing could be as explosive as Keith Moon's, but it was more controlled. It could be as dynamic as Ginger Baker's, but it was more unpredictable.

Anchored by the solid timekeeping of Noel Redding's bass, Hendrix and Mitchell pushed the boundaries of what guitar and drums could accomplish together. The results were captured on three great albums from 1967 and 1968. Here we take a look at Mitch's drumming on these historically important recordings, as well as a couple that appeared on posthumous Hendrix releases.

Are You Experienced (1967) "Purple Haze"

The first Jimi Hendrix Experience album hit like a bombshell in early 1967. It contained many songs that went on to become rock-radio classics. This opening track remains the band's most famous hit. Right out of the gate it established the strength of Hendrix's guitar playing and Mitchell's drumming. Here's Mitch's fill and groove from the song's last chorus. His sticking in the two 16th note-triplet ruffs is most likely R-R-L-R, which enables the last two strokes of each ruff to be strongly accented. (2:08)

1
♩ = 109

"Hey Joe"

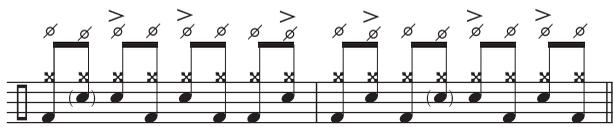
Jimi gave Mitch plenty of room to stretch out in many of his tunes. In this song, Hendrix plays a low rhythm riff while Mitchell solos over the changes. Mitch displays his lightning-fast single-stroke prowess on these 32nd-note fills. The R-L-foot triplet lick in the second measure is another of Mitch's favorite moves. (2:03)

2
♩ = 64

"Fire"

Few rock artists have created as many memorable song intros as Hendrix did. This song has one of his best, with enough holes in the riff to provide Mitchell the space to weave in his exciting fills. After four measures of fills, Mitch settles into a groove that includes a rhythmic setup for the song's first verse. (0:00)

3
♩ = 151



"Third Stone From The Sun"

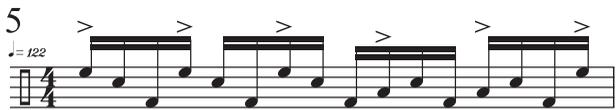
In the up-tempo intro to this track, Mitchell demonstrates his strong straight-ahead jazz technique. Note the sophisticated snare work and feather-light bass drum touch, which were unusual for a rock player in this era. (0:04)



Axis: Bold As Love (1967)

"Wait Until Tomorrow"

On The Experience's second album, Hendrix began to expand his sonic experiments while diversifying stylistically. Mitchell hung with him every step of the way by finding new ways to employ his prodigious chops. Mitch's R-L-foot three-note pattern is used in this song as a straight 16th-note fill rather than in its more typical triplet form. (2:39)

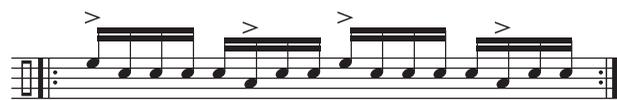


"If 6 Was 9"

Here's an excerpt from Mitchell's solo in the middle of the tune; it features a paradiddle sticking pattern. Mitch accelerates the repeating measure to create a smooth rolling effect. (3:02)



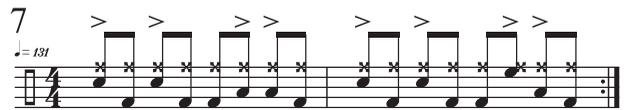
R L R R L R L L



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

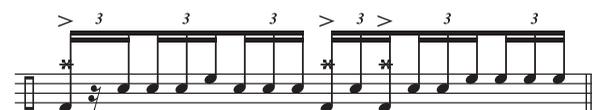
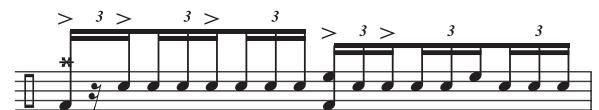
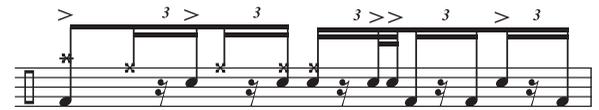
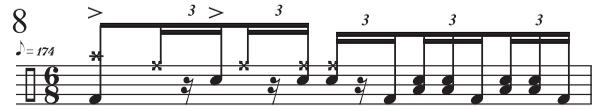
"You Got Me Floatin'"

On this track, Mitchell uses tom accents at the end of each measure of his groove to "answer" Hendrix's guitar riff. (0:47)



"One Rainy Wish"

This song features some nimble jazz work in 6/8. The sequence here spotlights Mitchell's signature rumbling fills. (3:02)



Electric Ladyland (1968)

"Crosstown Traffic"

Hendrix's third album was produced by the guitarist himself, which gave him complete control over his creative vision. Although many of the tracks are longer and more innovative than what came before, this double album also contains one of Jimi's best two-minute pop singles, "Crosstown Traffic." Mitchell's choice of a quarter-note hi-hat pattern for his groove helps to maintain the open space under Hendrix's vocal in the verse. (0:25)



"Voodoo Chile"

"Voodoo Chile" is a classic slow blues number. In this excerpt, taken from the intro, Mitchell's active bass drum work is reminiscent of John Bonham's style, which would debut on the first Led Zeppelin album less than a year later. Mitch loosens his hi-hat at the end of each measure to create a crescendo effect. (0:42)

10
♩ = 169

Musical notation for 'Come On (Let The Good Times Roll)' in 4/4 time, tempo 169. It features a paradiddle cymbal pattern with various accents and ghost notes.

"Come On (Let The Good Times Roll)"

Here's Mitch's paradiddle cymbal pattern, which Neil Peart would use to great effect years later. (1:17)

11
♩ = 153

Musical notation for 'Burning Of The Midnight Lamp' in 4/4 time, tempo 153. It features a slow, syncopated groove with a 16th-note snare-kick trade-off.

"Burning Of The Midnight Lamp"

This slow, syncopated groove contains an interesting 16th-note snare-kick trade-off on the fourth beat of each measure. (0:43)

12
♩ = 77

Musical notation for 'House Burning Down' in 4/4 time, tempo 77. It features open hi-hat accents, double snare hits, and a 16th-note bass drum flourish.

"House Burning Down"

Mitchell's open hi-hat accents, double snare hits, and 16th-note bass drum flourishes make this more than just another driving quarter-note snare groove. (0:34)

13
♩ = 123

Musical notation for 'Beginnings' in 4/4 time, tempo 123. It features a Latin naningo rhythm with a double paradiddle pattern.

First Rays Of The New Rising Sun (1997)

"Angel"

Hendrix died before he could put together a definitive collection of the material he recorded in the few years after *Electric Ladyland*. Most of these songs appeared on dozens of scattershot releases over the years following Jimi's death, but in 1997 the Hendrix family oversaw the release of a remastered collection of the best of the tracks. Based on notes Jimi had left, *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun* contains some fine songs and performances from both Hendrix and Mitchell. "Angel" is one of Jimi's most beautiful ballads. Open and closed hi-hat work, ghost notes, and a great little triplet fill at the end of the fourth bar are highlights from the drum pattern for the song's verse. (0:19)

14
♩ = 67

Musical notation for 'Angel' in 4/4 time, tempo 67. It features open and closed hi-hat work, ghost notes, and a triplet fill.

"Beginnings"

This song features several cool Mitchell grooves. Here's his take on a Latin naningo rhythm from early in the track. The pattern is based on a double paradiddle with a slightly altered sticking in the second grouping. (0:13)

15
♩ = 166

Musical notation for 'Beginnings' in 6/8 time, tempo 166. It features a Latin naningo rhythm with a double paradiddle pattern. The sticking is R R L R R L R L R R L.

You can contact **Ed Breckenfeld** through his Web site, www.edbreckenfeld.com.



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J.J. JOHNSON

JOHN MAYER'S RIGHT-HAND RHYTHM MAN
BRINGS A JAZZER'S EAR TO BIG-BEAT ROCK

Among today's pop stars, John Mayer is unique. Despite all of his fame and frequent appearances in the tabloids, a deeper listen reveals that the singer/songwriter/guitarist is a *real* musician. If he hadn't been lucky enough to be picked up by a record label and thrust in front of the public at large, Mayer would surely be working away as a musician in some other capacity.

Mayer's good enough to have pretty much any gig, so it stands to reason that someone like him would have only the best musicians in his touring band. J.J. Johnson certainly fits this bill, and he's one of the most musical and grooving drummers you'll hear on the pop-rock scene. Check out Mayer's recent DVD release, *Where The Light Is*, to get a taste of the dialog and affinity this band shares. You'll also notice a level of groove, energy, sensitivity, and interaction unexpected from a "pop star" and his band. As I said, these guys are *serious*.



Story by Paul Wells
Photos by Paul La Raia

Dig a little more into his past, as we have, and you'll find a career of remarkable drumming and creative relationships.

Johnson also holds the drumset chair with underground blues/rock phenom Doyle Bramhall II, perhaps best known for his work in Eric Clapton's band. The drummer's performance on Bramhall's album *Welcome* is simply brilliant. In fact, the LP as a whole has the kind of passion and energy rarely heard since the classic days of Hendrix, Cream, and The Who. Dig even deeper into J.J.'s history and you'll discover that he has a background of jazz study, which has shaped his sense of sound and sensitivity.

We spoke to Johnson as he was decompressing after months on the road with John Mayer. Back in Austin, Texas, his home base, he was playing various jazz gigs and getting ready to head back out on the road, reunited with Bramhall. J.J. started this interview by giving us an in-depth look at his varied roots as a musician and the important influences and mentors he's met along the way.

J.J.: I was born in San Antonio and spent my childhood and teen years there. My father is a big music fan, and there were always a lot of records being played around the house. Music was always around, and I was really moved by it.

When I was in junior high school, my buddies and I were getting into different rock bands, and we gravitated toward wanting to play music. Originally I wanted to play guitar. Some of my friends got

guitars and I kept asking for one, but I never got it, so I would sit around and watch my friends play. I started accompanying them by playing on boxes, and I began to really like the idea of playing drums. I found some other friends who had drums and started messing around playing and falling in love with it. It was something that came naturally to me.

Eventually I started playing in my school's concert band and in competi-

tions. My dad surprised me one day after I did really well in a contest by buying me a drumset. That was the beginning of everything. I was ecstatic. Now my buddies and I could move forward and start our bands. We were basically playing the rock that was around at the time, and meanwhile my dad was listening to Motown, blues, and jazz. I found myself playing with anybody who wanted to play music. This continued for a while, and my dad felt it would be a good idea for me to start studying with someone and get educated. We found a teacher at a local drum shop named Jeff Ryder, who really believed in me and was instrumental in my having a professional career.

MD: How old were you at this point?

J.J.: I was about sixteen. Jeff and I started with the fundamentals. Most drummers want to jump right in on drumset, but Jeff had me working on the pad with hand technique. Jeff was a stickler for reading. Because I started on the kit without reading, I was able to learn by ear. But Jeff made sure I wasn't just memorizing things. At the same time, I was becoming interested in other styles such as fusion and Latin. He also was taking me out to



jam sessions and eventually had me subbing for him on casuals and jazz trio gigs. **MD:** It sounds like it was a real apprenticeship. **J.J.:** Very much so. He was trying to expose me to a lot of different stuff, and I was soaking it all up. I started to realize that I could actually make a living doing this. Playing the drumset was an addiction. It's all I ever thought about. I was playing in four or five different bands as well as working casuals.

I wasn't interested in being a hired gun or a session guy at the time. I was into the journey of making music. If somebody called and I liked their music, I'd make it work. After I graduated high school I tried to figure out what to do. Most people go to college, but I wasn't clear on whether I wanted to go, or where. So I enrolled in some courses at a community college while working a hotel gig with a trio. At this point I met bassist Eric Revis, who turned out to be really influential on me. He's super-talented and the kind of person who commands a certain amount of respect. We started working a lot together, and he became another mentor.

At that time my focus was leaning toward playing jazz. Eric and I would talk about groove and note placement, as well as tone color and being detail oriented. I was getting seriously schooled, and lots of those principles have stuck with me over the years.

MD: Was he able to tell you specifics about technical aspects of the drums?

J.J.: Yes. He would recommend certain

RECORDINGS

John Mayer Heavier Things, As Is, Where The Light Is (CD/DVD) /// **Doyle Bramhall II** Welcome, Live At The Great Wall Of China (DVD) /// **Sugarland** Enjoy The Ride /// **David Ryan Harris** The Bittersweet /// **Charlie Mars** Like A Bird, Like A Plane /// **Neil Finn** One All /// **Charlie Sexton** Cruel And Gentle Things /// **Matthew Ryan** Regret Over The Wires /// **Jeff Klein** The Hustler /// upcoming albums with Matt Morris, Bob Schneider, U.S. Mail

INFLUENCES

Ahmad Jamal At The Pershing (Vernel Fournier) /// **Jimi Hendrix** Axis: Bold As Love (Mitch Mitchell) /// **Donny Hathaway** Live (Fred White) /// **Sly & The Family Stone** Stand! (Greg Errico) /// **Talk Talk** Laughing Stock (Lee Harris) /// **Elvin Jones Trio** Puttin' It Together (Elvin Jones) /// **The Band** The Band (Levon Helm) /// **Neil Young** Harvest (Kenny Buttrey) /// **Led Zeppelin** all (John Bonham) /// **Can** Future Days, Soundtracks, Ege Bamyasi, Tago Mago (Jaki Liebezeit) /// **Al Green** I'm Still In Love With You (Ali Jackson, Howard Grimes, Al Jackson Jr.), Livin' For You (Ali Jackson, Al Jackson Jr.) /// **Keith Jarrett** Birth (Paul Motian) /// **James Brown** In The Jungle Groove, Sex Machine (Clyde Stubblefield, John Starks)



records to check out and have me figure out what was making the music function. I can't imagine not having that experience. Eric was very convincing, and I trusted and respected him.

We carried on playing for a number of years and eventually started thinking about

where to go next. We were considering going to New York, but we went to see a concert featuring Nicholas Payton, Steven Scott, Chris Thomas, and Brian Blade, and these guys were *dealing*. This set off a whole new thing for us—New Orleans was the place to go. There was something

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- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 14x22 or 14x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

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- 3.** 24" K Light ride
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J.J. JOHNSON

happening there at that time, around 1991 or '92. That was the start of a lot of great times and intense realizations about music. Everybody was playing all the time. There were gigs, then after the gigs there were sessions at people's houses and shedding all day. It was a great environment to be around, and it was probably the most intense practice period of my life.

I was there for a while and played with a few people, and then suddenly everybody split. A lot of the musicians were being picked up for bigger gigs, and the local jazz clubs were closing. I hadn't really ventured out of the jazz scene, and I didn't have many gigs, so I went back to Texas to regroup. I got a few calls from people to come up to Austin to do some gigs, and that's how I ended up here.

There's a very active community of musicians in Austin. I started working a lot and playing some jazz, some rock, and a lot of singer-songwriter gigs. I guess people felt I was reliable and could make a situation work, often without much preparation. There were countless situations where I had to come in without anything written down or recorded and make my way through it. It's not the most ideal situation to be in, but I've learned so much from that. You have to just listen and try to make the right decisions in the moment.

MD: Is there anything a drummer can shed to help develop that?

J.J.: I think it comes from the experience of doing it. There are so many people around here, and I played with everybody I could. I started working with more established musicians like Charlie Sexton, who's another big inspiration and taught me quite a bit. He's obviously a talented guitarist, but he's a great drummer too. We made a record up in Woodstock around 1997, which was a great experience. It was a really cool recording, but unfortunately no one will ever hear it! As soon as we got back, we got the news that the label had been bought out and everything was canceled.

I ended up coming in contact with Doyle Bramhall II around 1999, and I became a big fan. He was living in LA at the time, but he would occasionally come into Austin. I thought he was really saying something musically and was someone who I would love to play with. His record *Jellycream* had been released, and he was looking to put a band together. Doyle and I kept running into each other and struck up a chemistry—we

have similar interests and senses of humor. When he asked me to play drums in his band, I was so excited! Initially Wendy & Lisa [Prince] were in the band, along with Chris Bruce. We toured for a while and developed a lot of trust and respect for each other. That's one of my favorite bands to have been a part of.

Doyle wanted to do another record, which ended up being *Welcome*. The experience of making that record was one of the most exciting of my life. I was still learning a lot, and everyone was so easy to work with. It was a very relaxed and inspired atmosphere. I remember it having a glow—there was something in the air at the time.

MD: Had you played any of those songs live?

J.J.: They were all written for that album.

We spent only a little bit of time in preproduction getting a skeletal idea rather than developing super-tight arrangements.

MD: It sounds like that record was a turning point for you.

J.J.: Absolutely. Performance-wise, we didn't do a lot of takes. It was recorded very quickly—maybe two weeks. I can't say enough about that record. I'm really proud of it. Everything is off the floor, except for a couple of shaker or tambourine overdubs here and there.

MD: Did you track to a click on that record?

J.J.: Nope, no click. It was liberating. We tried to capture the spirit of some of our favorite records. We talked about what we love about those classic recordings, and we decided to try to do an album like that. If there was any concept to the record, it was for it to be live and have a "go for it" energy.

After the record came out we toured for about a year, opening for Eric Clapton, and that was another great experience. We got to go around the world and play in big arenas for big audiences. After that run, I ended up spending more time in Los Angeles and started getting recommended for various things. I was getting a feel for what was going on there. It's another nice community of people playing good music. Shortly after, Wendy & Lisa recommended me to play drums with Neil Finn [Crowded House], and I went over to Auckland to work with him for about a month. We sat around and wrote and recorded some tunes. That was another amazing experience—I'm obviously a fan, and getting to work with him was eye opening and inspiring. I started to become aware of how music worked sonically and learned how some of those sounds were achieved.

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J.J. JOHNSON

MD: It seems like your sound has changed quite a bit since *Welcome*. Was working with Neil when you started thinking about a different sound?

J.J.: Yeah, we were experimenting and hearing how things sounded on tape. Neil would change things with effects and mixing techniques, and I learned to think about how the sound affected the music.

After that, I got offered some gigs with Joe Henry, filling in for Jay Bellerose, and I jumped at the opportunity because I really love what he does. When I got home, I had a message on my answering machine say-

ing, "Hey, it's John Mayer calling for J.J. Johnson. You came recommended by a few people, and I wanted to see if you were interested in playing in my band." I went in and played for an hour or so, just running through things, and that was it!

MD: Were you the only one he was auditioning?

J.J.: I had heard they'd auditioned a great number of drummers, apparently as many as thirty or forty. There was some chemistry going on from the beginning, and we just went from there. It's been a nice ride—over five years.

MD: Mayer's music has gone through a lot of changes over those five years.

J.J.: Yes, and it will probably continue to do so. He's really driven and super-talented. His work ethic is great, and he's true to his craft.

MD: He's a very strong guitar player, especially rhythmically. It sounds like he'd be a lot of fun for a drummer to play with.

J.J.: Yes, on a lot of levels. He's not just another pop star—he's a real musician and went through the same process we all did.

MD: As a guitarist and a bandleader, will he let the band dictate where a song or a solo is going, or does he like to be in charge of the direction?

J.J.: It's kind of up for grabs—whoever gets to the plate first. The great thing about this band is that if someone grabs the ball, there is enough trust and everyone will follow. And that goes for John or me or any other member of the group.

When I first got the gig, after the first couple of shows, John sat down with me to have a talk. He said, "Look, you have the gig...I want you to play! Don't just play the parts on the record. We're playing live music, and I want you to play this music how you hear it." He's listening to everything on stage—horns, keyboards...

Everybody listens, and every night is a very different show. There's no script other than respecting the integrity of the songs—every night is like that. Everybody respects the music, but we're all open for those moments of inspiration.

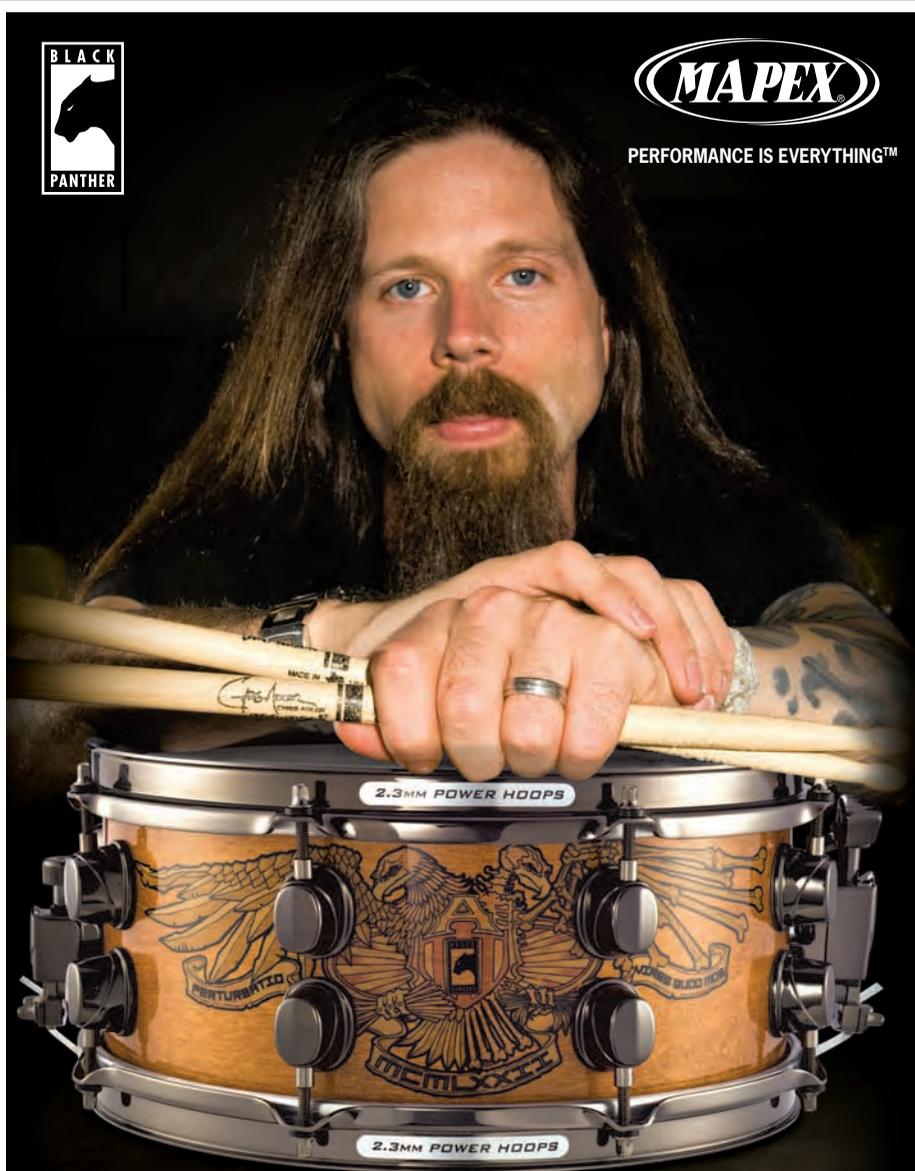
MD: Most musicians in the pop world want things to be the same at every gig. They need that consistency in presenting the show to the audience.

J.J.: Right, and I understand the validity of that concept. There's nothing wrong with those kinds of gigs, but John's gig is a place that I enjoy being. Some nights, I may try a different groove on a song just to see if it will work. John likes taking those risks—it's worth it.

MD: I want to talk about some technical things. What do you like to hear in your monitors on stage?

J.J.: First and foremost is John's vocal and guitar—he's the center of everything. Next would be bass. Then I start coloring the rest of the band into the mix, as well as a little bit of myself. Everybody in the band is contributing, so I need to hear everything.

With John, I use in-ear monitors, which were initially very foreign to me. They felt



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J.J. JOHNSON

awkward and at times still do. I've gotten more used to them, but it's not my ideal way to play music. It feels like I'm hearing a false signal—I play the drums, and the sound goes to a mixing board first, then back to me in the in-ears.

MD: Is it hard to get a blend of three guitar players in a monitor mix?

J.J.: Oh, yeah! [laughs] But we've had some great engineers come through. It's not a typical pop gig—we're a band of players, so it has to sound a certain way for everyone to be comfortable. Being able to hear each other clearly is a lifeline.

MD: Did you use in-ears with Doyle?

J.J.: No, just wedges. John's gig was the first time I used in-ears. Actually, I spent the first month with John using wedges and then made baby steps toward in-ears. I'm getting used to it but it's still strange. I will say this: I do believe it helps protect my ears. Playing the number of shows we've done over the years, I would probably have some significant hearing damage without them. Those gigs can get really loud.

MD: Do you use a click track on stage?

J.J.: We have a few things with sequenced percussion tracks, like tambourines and

shakers, and you need in-ears to make that work.

I also have a metronome off to my side to make sure we start the songs at the right tempo. The nature of playing night to night is that you don't always feel the same. I have that over there to help keep things in order.

MD: I'd like to talk about your sound. I'm a fan of your cymbal sound, which I'm guessing comes out of your jazz background. Or is it more of a '60s/'70s rock influence?

J.J.: My sound comes from all of those things. Number one: I consider whether a particular sound will work within the music. I want to serve the music first. The sounds of Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, Mickey Roker—those are the sounds that I'm a fan of. I'm influenced by the aesthetic of a gorgeous-sounding instrument.

At the same time, I'm also influenced by more rock-oriented things like Mitch Mitchell with Hendrix. It's a rock feeling, but the cymbal sound moves together with the kit and the rest of the music. You don't hear a loud, pingy ride.

There are so many cymbal choices available these days. Sometimes I may need a little more articulation and I'll make my selections based on that, but that big washy sound is definitely my preference, as long as it works in the music. You can't get a bigger sound out of a smaller cymbal, but you can get so much more out of a bigger cymbal. I've been using these sizes for most of my life. I had a kid ask me, "Do you play 17" hi-hats because Steve Jordan played them with John?" Well, actually, when I joined the band I was already using those sizes. Normally I use 16" hi-hats. That size and weight just feel comfortable to me. It's all in the way you play them. If I was beating the crap out of them, that would be one thing. You have the body there if you need to lay into them and make them more explosive. But if you need something lighter and quicker, it's all in how you attack the cymbal. I don't hear small cymbals.

MD: Let's talk about snare drums. On John's DVD, you're changing snare drums from tune to tune.

J.J.: Yeah, and that does come from Steve Jordan. One of the great things about [Mayer's LP] *Continuum* is that the textures and sounds varied for each song, and they became as important as the parts. I've started hearing how characteristics like a snare's diameter and register sit inside of a

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Phonic—you've gotta have that! It's such an all-around drum. Most of these drums are Ludwigs, by the way. I have a couple 6 1/2" wooden drums, and a couple 6 1/2x12 drums that sound really nice for that higher dry and snappy thing. I pretty much show up with those just to be prepared. And within that, some of those snares can be manipulated a little bit to home in on what's going on musically. I've learned my lesson in the past, showing up with just a couple of snare drums and then ending up thinking, Ah, I should have brought something else!

MD: On Mayer's DVD, it looks like you're playing mostly traditional grip.

J.J.: I started playing traditional as a kid and it just felt right to do. We were taught that way in my school band, and I just stuck with it. Also, many of the drummers I admired were playing that way. There were times when I experimented with playing matched grip, and it's important knowing how to play either way.

At this point, I'm not even conscious of my grip anymore. I just naturally pick up the sticks with traditional grip, but sometimes I end up in matched grip. Getting around the drumset is much more comfortable for me with traditional grip. There are a couple of tunes I've tried playing with John with matched grip, if it's a more wide-open thing, but I don't have much subtlety with matched grip.

MD: Do you play much jazz anymore?

J.J.: Yeah, in fact this past weekend was all jazz. I had a gig with a vocalist Friday night, and I played with a piano trio last

song, and I've found that you can't just use one snare drum to re-create an album like that. With John, we're jumping around so much stylistically, and there are so many different moods and songs...they all require those different snare sounds. I've spent time trying to match all of those characteristics to the songs, and each snare has a voice within each song. I almost feel like I can't play if I don't have that snare choice. I can't imagine playing a song like "Vultures" without that specific super-fatback snare sound.

MD: That tune is so sparse—it's basically just a clean guitar, bass, and the beat with that snare sound.

J.J.: The amount of space that the sound of the snare has is just perfect for that tune. All those things come into play—the length of the note and the tempo of the tune. It really establishes and defines the charac-

ter of each tune, and it helps me get into character. Now, even when I'm doing something locally in Austin, I can't even leave the house without two to four snares. I remember doing a gig and somebody said, "Man, how many snares did you bring to this gig?" And it wasn't even that many, but I guess people aren't used to seeing that.

MD: Ask the guitarist how many guitars and pedals he brought.

J.J.: Exactly! It's the same thing. I'm just trying to home in on what makes the gig sound the best it can sound.

MD: Do you have a specific family of snare drums that you always bring? For instance, if you got called for a quick demo session and you didn't know the music, what would you bring?

J.J.: First of all, I need my old faithful 8x14. Next would be a 5x14 Supra-



S

J. J. JOHNSON
John Mayer



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J.J. JOHNSON

night. I've had a long-standing relationship with a saxophonist named Elias Haslanger, and I played on some of his records. I feel like I'll continue to be a student of this art form for the rest of my life.

MD: Do you have a hard time switching between jazz and rock?

J.J.: The longer I'm away from playing jazz, the harder it is to settle back into it. More recently, it takes me a minute to get used to approaching the instrument in that different manner. For the past couple of years I've been concentrating on playing with a little more subtlety, even with John. I'm trying to let the sticks and the drums work for me, getting a full sound without having to make such huge strokes. Being able to get around the set quickly without disrupting the low dynamic is the kind of thing I'm practicing these days. I know how to lay into a drum, but it's hard to keep those quieter chops together.

MD: Do you find the opposite to be true? If you're playing a lot of jazz or softer gigs, do you have a hard time jumping back into rock?

J.J.: Occasionally, but the main problem with that has to do with the conditioning of my muscles. I need to make sure I'm

stretched out and physically prepared before I play a heavier gig. It's sort of athletic in a sense—if you just jump into hitting hard without being ready, you can do some damage. I've had some run-ins that made me realize there's preparation involved, so if I'm doing something louder, I do a lot of stretching.

MD: You're not working your arm muscles and upper body as much if you're playing softly. And you may not be working the leg muscles in the same way if you're playing heel down on the bass drum.

J.J.: Yeah, and the hi-hat too. In jazz, that hi-hat is driving the music more than the bass drum. Whereas with rock, the bass drum has a bigger role in driving the music.

MD: You probably use completely different drums on a jazz gig than you would with John Mayer.

J.J.: Yeah mostly, although I mix it up. There was one point where I was experimenting with playing jazz using the same sizes I use with John—13", 16", 24". I tuned them up pretty high and they sounded great. The bass drum especially was so different from using an 18" or a 20". But these days, usually I'll use 12" and 14" toms and a 20" bass drum. Maybe I'll start using the big

drums again—they're fun to play. It's funny to me that people have preconceptions about what jazz drums are. I think there are no rules, as long as it sounds good and feels good. Sometimes certain instruments can inspire other things to happen.

MD: Those bigger sizes can inspire you to play less and focus more on the pocket.

J.J.: Yes!

MD: What's next on your agenda?

J.J.: There are a couple of things next year that are pending. At the moment, I'm getting ready to work on a record by a band in California called U.S. Mail. There's a talented young musician around here named Gary Clark, and I think we're going to work on a record in the near future. I'm also going to continue doing some dates with Doyle, which I'm excited about. I'm excited about it *all*. I'm getting to do some things that I've wanted to do for myself, such as trying to finish writing some songs of my own that have been in my head for a long time.

MD: Any plans to make a solo album?

J.J.: I don't know. Right now, I'm just trying to follow through on writing on my own without any intentions. I'm just going to see what materializes.



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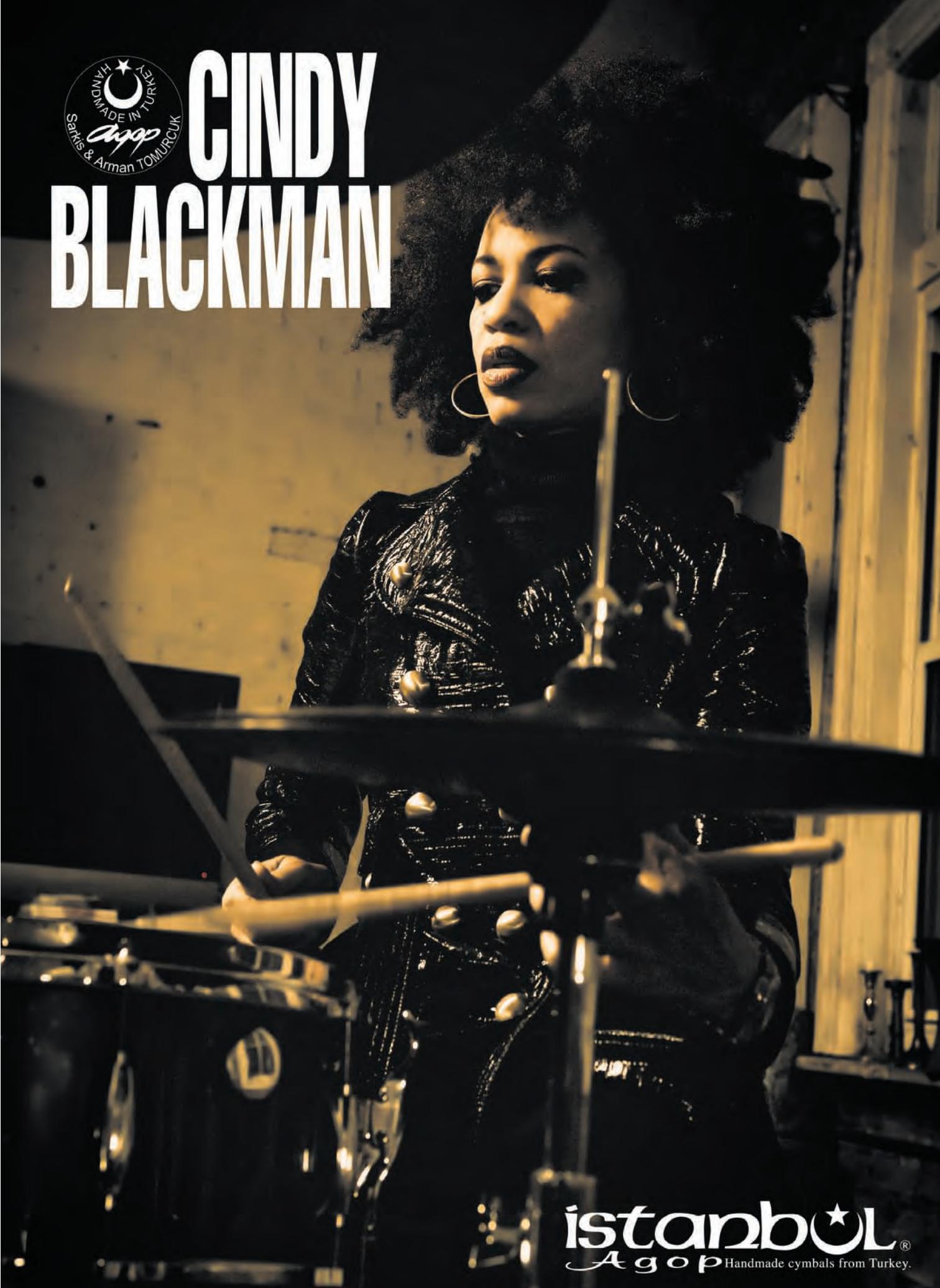
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Shannon Forrest has that "special quality" that every top recording musician possesses—in addition to the ability to add his own signature sound to any track he plays on. Some of us admirers have even been able to determine that it's Shannon playing on a cut before we look at the credits.

ON

AFTER YEARS IN THE STUDIO, THE FIRST-CALL NASHVILLE CAT IS HITTING THE ROAD—AND LEARNING IT'S A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME

Story by Billy Amendola
Photos by Rick Malkin

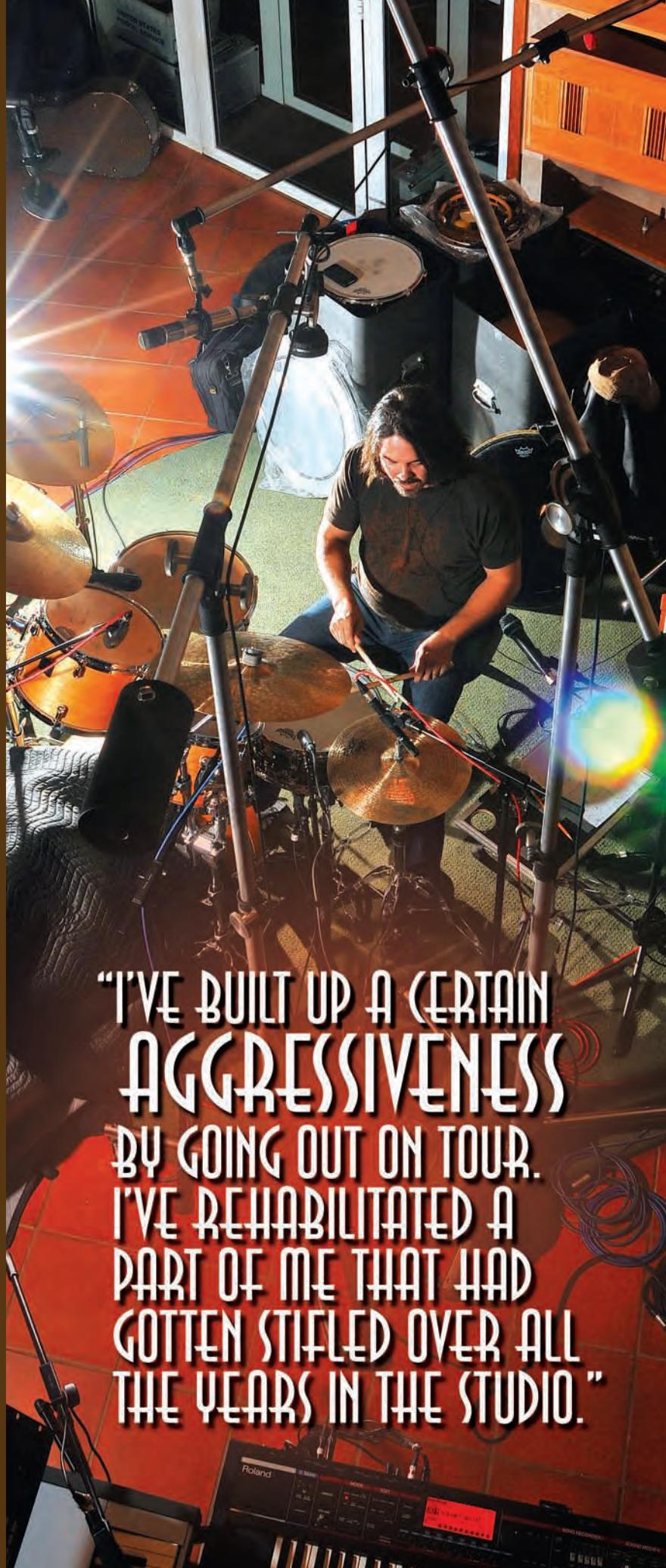


Forrest's studio experience started early. By age five he was playing around in his dad Otis's studio.

And soon after moving with his family from South Carolina to Nashville, at thirteen, Shannon began to record with household country/pop names like Ricky Skaggs, Brooks & Dunn, Martina McBride, Trisha Yearwood, Bonnie Bramlett, Lee Ann Womack, Toby Keith, Michael McDonald, LeAnn Rimes, Willie Nelson, SheDaisy, Gretchen Wilson, Faith Hill, Carrie Underwood, Sugarland, The Wreckers, Taylor Swift, John Oates, Kellie Pickler, John Michael Montgomery, Jessica Simpson, Jimmy Wayne, Darius Rucker, and Sheryl Crow. One particular session, for Crow's "The First Cut Is The Deepest," perfectly represents Shannon's unique position on the cusp of the country and pop recording landscape. "That was only an overdubbing thing," the drummer recalls. "I would like to have been in the studio with Sheryl, but it was still cool. They were looking for sort of a crossover mix to touch the country market."

In recent years, Forrest has continued to buck the deeply ingrained Nashville music culture by, for instance, putting his lucrative studio work on hold to go out on tour with superstar Faith Hill. And these days, at the young age of thirty-five, he's most excited to finally be in his own rock band, 80th Action. He's also become an accomplished engineer and producer, pushing the faders on Michael McDonald's recent live DVD and co-producing the ex-Doobie Brother singer's upcoming release, among others.

As I browsed the Internet while researching Shannon's career, I was surprised to find that there wasn't much information available. Was an important musician being overlooked by the greater music community? I decided to call my buddy and fellow Nashville session great David Northrop to find out, and with David's help I was able to track down the super-busy but largely unheralded drummer to ask him some questions about his craft. If you were unfamiliar with this unique player before, rest assured that after reading this interview you'll no longer be. *MD* is proud to introduce you to Shannon Forrest.



**"I'VE BUILT UP A CERTAIN
AGGRESSIVENESS
BY GOING OUT ON TOUR.
I'VE REHABILITATED A
PART OF ME THAT HAD
GOTTEN STIFLED OVER ALL
THE YEARS IN THE STUDIO."**

MD: So how does a rocker at heart wind up on so many country hits?

Shannon: I'm a fan of music. As a kid I was a huge fan of the LA pop-rock scene. Some of my formative listening was in that late-'70s/early-'80s period when the drummers you heard on the radio were people like Jeff Porcaro, Jim Keltner, John "JR" Robinson, and Steve Gadd. So I grew up studying those guys. Jeff was my biggest influence.

When I was eighteen I made "the" decision. I was already working here in Nashville. My dad was in the business, and I also talked to guys like [bassist/Toto member] David Hungate, who had some insight on the situation. He said, "If it was twenty years ago I'd tell you to go to LA or New York. But it's been hard out there to make anything happen." So I stayed here. Also, around that time Jeff Porcaro played on Dire Straits' *On Every Street*. He played so great, and that particular record kind of leaned toward a folksy, country kind of sound. For me, at *that* moment, it was like, You can *do* something with this music. And then, as you said, it's changed progressively. So being in Nashville, I decided to treat all music in the same regard—as long as it has soul and emotion.

My dad, Otis, was a piano player, arranger, producer, and engineer who worked in the traditional Gospel music scene. He'd had a professional studio built in South Carolina in the '70s, and I was *always* in it and got to work with some of his clients—I have recordings going back to '81, when I was nine. Then we moved to Tennessee, and he built a studio there and I started playing on most of his projects. A lot of the guys I work with—like bass player Glen Worf, whose list of credits is ridiculous—I've been playing with for over twenty years.

MD: Did you have any formal lessons growing up?

Shannon: I never took drum lessons. I did take piano lessons, and I had some music theory from the time I was five to age fourteen. I grew up with an arranger, so being able to read was a must.

MD: Do you do many sessions where heavy reading is involved?

Shannon: Not as many as I used to mainly because of economics. Most of the reading dates pay significantly less. I know some guys here who are ridiculous readers, but it's all so simple now.

something I could do comfortably, and I felt like, Why let that go?

But in Nashville, everybody has his or her shorthand, so you really need to understand how to read notation.

You're rarely going to see things writ-

"The nature of recording requires that I have many options available," says Shannon. "Most often I set up a very traditional five-piece kit with 18" and 20" crashes, a 20" ride, and 14" hats. The music will dictate whether I add or subtract from that. The photo below shows an arrangement I used on a recent session."



SHANNON'S SETUP

Drums: Yamaha Birch Custom Absolute, unfinished

- A. 5x14 Steve Gadd snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 9x13 tom
- D. 16x16 tom
- E. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste

- 1. 14" Twenty series hi-hats
- 2. 18" Signature crash
- 3. 20" Twenty series ride
- 4. 20" Dark Energy crash

Percussion: timbales, Roto Toms, gong, etc.

Hardware: Yamaha chain drive bass drum pedal with DW beater (loose tension)

Heads: Remo Coated Ambassador on snare batter, clear Ambassador on snare bottom. Bottom head tuned tight, top head to pitch, open. Clear or coated Ambassadors on tom batters, clear Ambassadors on tom bottoms. Tom bottom tuned slightly lower than top, little to no dampening. Gaffers tape folded into 1/2"x2" segments and placed at outer edge near hoop. Coated Ambassador (or clear Powerstroke 3) on bass drum batter, PS3 Ebony bass drum front head, small packing blanket or hourglass pillow placed inside, depending on desired effect.

Sticks: Regal Tip 8A, Jeff Porcaro model

Electronics: Apple MacBook Pro, M-Audio Firewire 410, Digidesign Pro Tools, Ableton Live

I always try to have the tune memorized by the second or third time I'm playing it, because I want to be playing it like I know it. I don't want to be following a chart. If I'm on a date where the producer is changing things or making arrangement changes, I don't even write them down, because I want to be executing that part in my memory. When I was a kid I would play on sophisticated stuff for my dad before I could read charts, and I would have to memorize it on the fly and be playing it right on the first rundown. That was

ten out just for you, but you need to understand how to write in case you need to. For example, a typical thing in Nashville is, if you have a bar of time that has two different chord changes in it, the downbeat being one, and that's getting a dotted quarter note, and then the next one an 8th tied to a half, people notate that with just a little accent mark above the second change. So you have to pay attention when you're listening to the tune, and hopefully you have your own ability to notate and decipher what these guys are writing.



RECORDINGS

Mecca Mecca /// **Maura O'Connell** Don't I Know
 /// **Brooks & Dunn** Steers And Stripes /// **Trisha Yearwood** Inside Out /// **Mindy Smith** One Moment More /// **80th Action** Go to myspace.com/80thaction

FAVORITES

Toto *Toto IV*, *The Seventh One* (Jeff Porcaro) /// **Led Zeppelin** *Houses Of The Holy* (John Bonham) /// **John Hyatt** *Bring The Family* (Jim Keltner) /// **Steely Dan** *The Royal Scam* (Bernard Purdie, Rick Marotta) /// **Dire Straits** *On Every Street* (Jeff Porcaro) /// **Eric Clapton** *Journeyman* (Jim Keltner, Phil Collins, Steve Ferrone)

MD: What made you want to play the drums?

Shannon: There was a guy at my dad's studio in South Carolina named Buster Phillips. He ended up moving to Nashville and playing on a lot of records in the late '70s. He had some personal struggles that kind of knocked him out of the loop; otherwise I think a lot of people would have known who he was. I've heard recordings with Buster from as far back as the late '60s, and he was a serious drummer, very reminiscent of how Gadd would use paradiddles to play a Latin groove. I don't think he had any idea what he was doing, but he was great. So seeing and hearing Buster and hanging out in the studio, I was drawn to the drums. At four years old I would sit in the drum booth with this guy. That had a big effect on me.

On the other hand, I had kind of a narrow exposure stylistically. I didn't get wind of any serious jazz other than some big band until I was eighteen, nineteen—I didn't even hear Led Zeppelin. When I look back at all the songs that I liked as a kid, nine out of ten times it was Jeff Porcaro playing on them. There was definitely something about his groove and feel that really spoke to me. He had that infectious time that could just make you move. So I was pulled toward that. By the time I was eleven, I'd just play along to Toto records

and whatever else Jeff was on. I also loved the Steve Winwood material with JR Robinson, and some Michael McDonald stuff that had Steve Gadd on it. And I'd just play along with those records over and over.

There was a period of time, after *Toto IV* came out, when I knew every time the hi-hat opened on that record, and how much. I played that album front to back, and I'm really glad that I did because I feel that makes an imprint on you. To me that record is so broad, with heavier rock elements in a couple of songs, and then real sophisticated things like "Rosanna." He was really laying it down, like, *This is how you play pop-rock music.*

MD: Do you still shed?

Shannon: Yes, especially since going out on tour with Faith Hill. Playing live was such a boost! Playing in the studio and then going out and playing a tour is definitely a different thing physically. There was about a two- to three-week period where I was getting bad cramps in my right hand, especially when I was playing the ride cymbal. The last three or four songs in the set turned into something like an Ike & Tina kind of thing—real high-energy stuff—and my hand would lock up and get bad cramps. We played for over an hour, and I would drink five bottles of water during

that time to stave off the cramps.

The great thing about that now is I've built up a certain aggressiveness. I think I've rehabilitated a part of me that had gotten stifled over all the years in the studio—just a little bit of reckless abandon. [laughs] Countless people have come up to me since I've been back from that tour and said, "Man, your playing is in another gear." And I can feel it! And now that's helped my live playing with my band 80th Action. *That's* really getting me back to practicing and reaching for new things that I wouldn't necessarily have gone for on sessions. It's building up that dexterity and articulation that you can't build up in three-minute increments.

MD: Speaking of sessions, do you have say over what the artist and producer are going to do to your drum tracks after you leave?

Shannon: Not really. I can get pissed about it after the fact if they change things a lot, because why did they hire me then? And this is not said in an egotistical way—you could go around and talk to any of the guys I work for—but when you hear something with my name on it, ninety-nine percent of the time you're hearing what I played. And if I hear it changed, I'll call them out on it and say, Look, man, why did you do that? I still don't have the final say, though I guess I'm lucky that the guys I'm working



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SHANNON FORREST

ally hire me for me.

To me, drums and music are about what they make you feel. And to me groove is synonymous with feel, and if you don't have groove then you don't have anything. If you're not making somebody move—even if it's a ballad—if you're not conveying some space and weight to the way that you're playing the time, it just won't feel right.

When you mess with the inner swing of your 8th notes and maybe lay that second 8th note back more toward a triplet and get what they call swing, that creates intensity.

MD: Which creates emotion.

Shannon: Exactly! If you're a drummer, that's the thing that will get you a gig before being able to read or play with a click track. Even as much as people want things to be straight up and down, if you walk in and can play a solid groove that's ridiculous, you'll get the gig. All that other stuff can be learned. All the guys that I love so much—Bernard Purdie, Jim Keltner, Jeff Porcaro, John Bonham, Steve Gadd, John Robinson, Carlos Vega, Vinnie Colaiuta—as vastly different as they are, there are certain fundamental things that

are very similar.

MD: How do you prefer to record your drums, especially since you're also an engineer? Do you like a big room or a booth, or is it different all the time?

Shannon: It's always different, but I love the mentality of dealing with acoustics. If you have a live room that can project, you can always tone that down. But if you have a small space that doesn't, you're pretty much screwed. But it depends. If you're doing some neo-soul-type thing, you can get into a space that's really dead and it's great because that sound is appropriate. But nine times out of ten, I want to hear drums explode in a big, open wood room.

MD: While we're on the subject, any advice regarding home studio recording?

Shannon: A small space with a low ceiling is the worst thing for recording drums at home. The deader you can make it, the better, because typically you're going to get nasty, boxy reflections. If you're in a house that's all drywall and it has an eight-foot ceiling, kill the floor or the ceiling. If it's got a wood floor, then put some kind of baffle up on the ceiling so you can knock down that real harsh cymbal reflec-

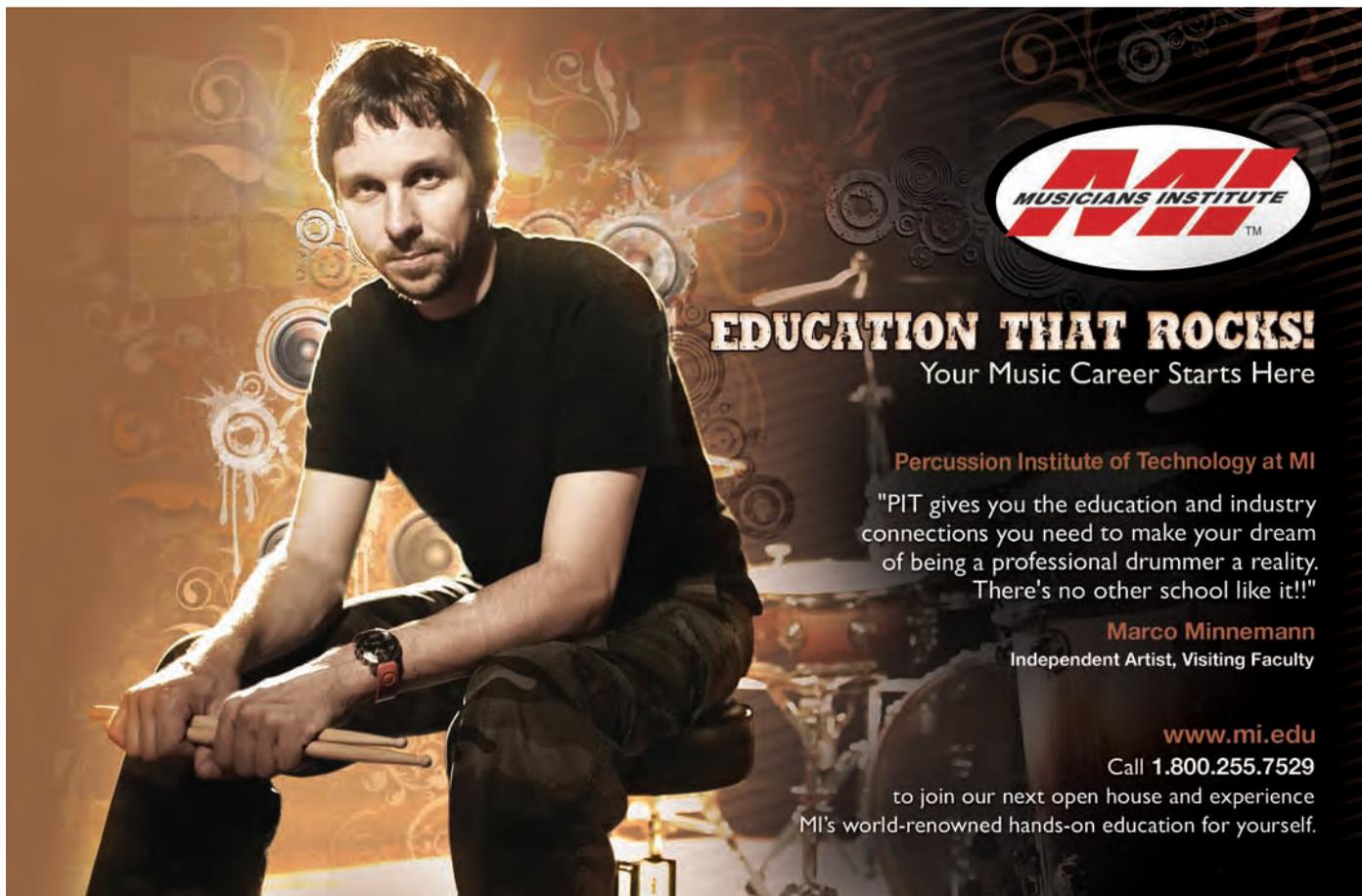
tion. Also resist the temptation to over-process things, especially if you're not the last one that's going to be working on it. If you're going to be the one that's mixing it and sending off a stereo mix back to whoever it is you're working for, then go ahead and treat it the way you think it should be treated. But if you're doing work for other people, be sure to give the mix engineer some room to compress or add after the fact.

MD: So in general it's best to record as dry as possible?

Shannon: Yes. You've got to adjust the EQ somewhat on the drums, especially the low mids. But don't cut out too much of that, because even though the temptation is to make stuff sound good by itself, what happens is, when that fundamental is taken out of the drums and then everything else is layered on top, the drums disappear a bit. And once it's gone you can't re-create what you took away.

MD: Growing up in your dad's studio, did engineering come pretty naturally to you?

Shannon: Pretty much. As a kid I was always in there helping my dad. Back then it was all 2" multitrack analog machines, and he would let me throw up a tape and



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SHANNON FORREST

either record myself or bring up something that he was working on and mess with the console. So I've been doing that almost as long as I've been playing drums—but not with the same intent, at least until the last seven or eight years. I'm very grateful to have this career, but I reached a point where I wanted to do more things musically outside of what I was doing. To facilitate that, it became, Okay, if I want things to sound a certain way, I'm just going to have to figure out how to do it myself.

MD: Do you play other instruments?

Shannon: I play enough piano to map out keyboard parts with a sequencer. I can't sit down and play songs, but I've trained my ears over the years, so anything I hear musically in my head, I can tell you what the chords are, and I can go over to a piano and play it.

MD: Your dad must be proud of the career you've carved out for yourself.

Shannon: Yeah, he is! But I've got to say, I've worked with a lot of people, and without any bias, my dad has one of the most brilliant musical minds I've ever been around. He has such a deep sense of harmony, and he's a world-class arranger. I

remember very distinctly, when I was about eleven or twelve and starting to play for him, he told me that, physically, everybody has the same set of limbs to work with. The real way that you can continue to progress as a musician is all mental, it's all about digging deeper into all the elements of it, even understanding other guys' instruments and the whole recording process. He used to sit me down when I was four, five years old, turn on the radio, and have me tell him all the instruments that were playing in the track. Looking back, that exercise really helped me develop my ear.

MD: You mentioned your band 80th Action. How did that come about?

Shannon: All I ever wanted to do as a kid was to be a session player. But the longer I did it, the more I was like, All I want to do is be in a band. I was this little kid playing with forty-year-old musicians, and at that time most of the kids my age were in bands. But I was already playing with all "the cats," and I didn't want to be in a garage band. So I waited and waited, until seven years ago, when I met a guitar player from Russia named Ilya Toshinsky.

I think we can make it work. We're going to try to work the college scene regionally, maybe some clubs in Nashville. I can work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and maybe even Thursday, then start playing live within a 300-mile radius on Fridays and Saturdays.

MD: How will you balance playing live with your band and doing session work?

Shannon: I'm building a state-of-the-art studio right now—a full-on 2,600-square-foot space with an SSL console and a production facility—that hopefully will allow me to do this.

MD: Musically, what are you going for?

Shannon: We want the music to always have a certain level of sophistication, but we also want it to be accessible. The plan was to write some tunes, play them live, and see how they feel and how people react to them. Then we'd tweak them and go in and record them. And that's what we've done so far. As far as being thirty-five years old and trying to be a legitimate rock star, I have my reservations. But I'm just the drummer sitting in the back, so maybe it'll be all right. [laughs]



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BLAKE RICH



BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

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ARDISON

by Gail Worley

As extreme metal moves into the future by incorporating elements from the past, the subgenre of progressive metalcore advances to the forefront of heavy metal's evolution. Leading the pack is Raleigh, North Carolina's Between The Buried And Me, featuring the dynamic drumming of Blake Richardson.

BTBAM's riveting live shows and complex, textured music—blending the ethereal elements of Pink Floyd and King Crimson with the modern fierceness of Mastodon and Meshuggah—are flawlessly captured on the band's recent concert DVD, *Colors* which features a front-to-back performance of the group's 2007 album of the same name.

At twenty-four, Richardson is already turning heads. BTBAM's music incorporates many extreme styles, including progressive, fusion, and speed metal, and the drummer's way of matching a variety of different beats to each riff, ranging from complex polyrhythms to scarily accurate blast beats, fits the group's style perfectly. People are already speculating: In a few years, could this guy be the next Dave Lombardo?

Blake joined BTBAM in early 2005, becoming the third drummer to work with founding members Tommy Rogers (vocals) and Paul Waggoner (guitar), bassist Dan Briggs, and guitarist Dustie Waring, with whom Blake had played in the death metal band Glass Casket. That year, Between The Buried And Me released its third album, *Alaska*, on which Richardson's transitions between metal genres (and *Alaska* touches on most of them) are fluid and perfectly executed. He also pulls off some sick technical stuff throughout. The group became even more ambitious on *Colors* (released in August of 2007), where Blake combines a great sense of phrasing and odd time signatures with jazz-infused metal grooves. In a song that can shift between 7/8, 13/16, 14/16, and 15/16, Richardson effortlessly flows between the time signatures while supporting the melody of the guitars and other instruments.

Looking at the intensely collaborative way in which *Colors* came together as a recording provides a microcosmic view of what this ambitious band is all about, and how Blake's drumming talents are integral to its success. "This band excels at writing very heavy, melodic chord progressions with tasteful leads over them," Richardson offers. "When we were writing *Colors*, everyone wrote riffs or sections on their own. Then we'd come together and practice for maybe a week. At that point someone might say, 'I've got these riffs knocked out. Maybe they could go into this part?'"

Here's where Blake literally becomes the glue holding everything together. "If one riff presents a challenging way of morphing into the next one, I'll usually have a few good percussive or rhythmic ideas for how to make one section flow into the next. That's definitely my forte: taking a wacky riff that you'd never think would fit in the song, and creating a transition that doesn't lose sight of the groove."

The band then recorded each section in Pro Tools, structuring the songs as they went along. "Because there were different tempos," Blake continues, "we'd have to record each riff or section separately and then assemble it all as if we were putting together a big puzzle."

The drummer suggests that this method of recording is more common than people realize. "Some may think it's a lazy approach to recording, but that's not the case at all," he insists. "Given the complexity of the material and what we were trying to accomplish, it was the best way to go about doing it."

With the album in the can, *Between The Buried And Me* began the intense process of learning to play their newly recorded songs together as a band for the first time. "There's so much going on that it's hard to jump right in and play the songs immediately," Richardson explains. "We all have to hear the songs many, many times to learn them and get the transitions down. When we mixed *Colors* we listened to it multiple times a day, and it's an hour-long recording. By the time we were a few shows into the tour, I had no problem playing any of these songs."

While it's a common grievance that pieced-together performances make it difficult to judge whether a drummer can actually play, just a few minutes of viewing the *Colors* DVD provides all the evidence necessary that Blake Richardson has the chops, pocket, and groove necessary to pull it off. Blake recently spoke with *Modern Drummer* to offer some playing tips and share stories of how he came into the fortunate situation he's in now.

MD: What drummers have inspired you to play the way you do today?

Blake: When I was thirteen and had only been playing for a couple of years, I saw Terry Bozzio do a clinic. My drum teacher recommended I check it out, though I had no idea who Bozzio was. So I went to see him, and it was the most amazing thing I had ever seen. His kit was huge, and he did all these awesome, polyrhythmic percussive things that I'd never even heard about before. As soon as I saw Bozzio play, I knew that drumming was what I wanted to do.

Dennis Chambers blows me away as well. I think he's one of the most incredible drummers ever. What I like about him is that he's always had a very explosive element. He's very good at playing smoothly, playing soft, and taking it back when he needs to. Then all of a sudden he'll throw out something that's just out of control. That's what I try to do with our music, which is very controlled, but you also want to let the lion out of the cage whenever possible. [laughs] Dennis has unbelievable speed that just comes out of nowhere.

MD: How did you develop your ability to play such intense and fast blast beats?

Blake: When kids ask me that question, I tell them they just have to sit down and practice, get into that pocket and work on it. It's hard to master, but once you do, it becomes sec-



ond nature. When you're starting out, you have a hard time locking in time-wise with your hands and feet, but you just have to sit with the metronome and hammer it out until you finally fall into it.

MD: Do you play those blasts with your heel down or up on the bass drum pedal?

Blake: It's more heel up than down, but really it's just *barely* off the ground. I try to do that flat-foot technique, which I like a lot. A lot of kids play heel up, but they're using a lot of the front of their calf and putting stress on the hamstring. But with a flat foot, it's basically moving your leg up and down using the entire leg instead of small muscle groups. You can also get a lot of power out of that, which is definitely my thing.

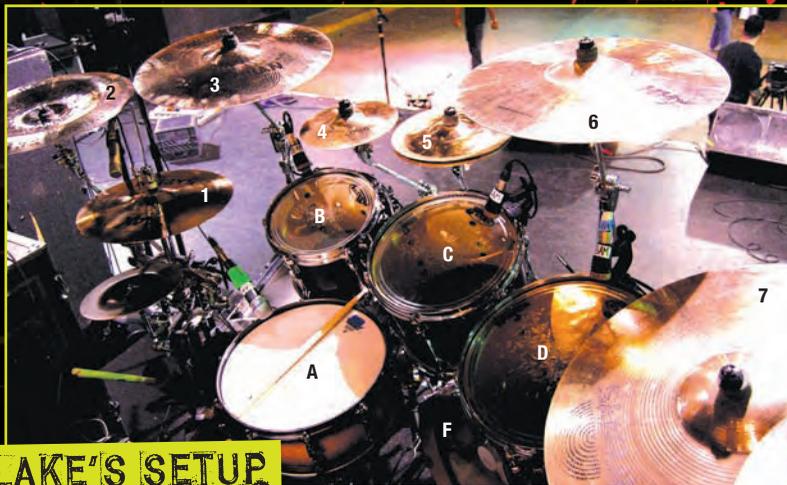
MD: Do you tune your drums a certain way to help you play these varying styles?

Blake: I don't tune them for each *style* that we play, but when I put new heads on I just try to tune each drum to the ideal note that corresponds to the drum's size without *necessarily* tuning them chromatically. An 8" tom is going to be high, a 10" a little lower, and so on. I see a lot of guys tune a 10" tom extremely low because they want that sound, but to me it just doesn't sound good. You need to try to tune the drum up as much as possible until it sounds ideal for that size. That's always been my philosophy.

When we recorded *Colors*, I tuned the toms a little bit higher, just to help bring out more attack. On previous records we'd go as low as possible, and there were many times where the toms got lost in the mix. This time we wanted to make sure they stood out. When we tuned the snare in the studio we also went a little higher for a bit more of a dry sound, so it doesn't have as much ring. And I keep the snares pretty loose, so they're as responsive as possible.

MD: It appears that you sit somewhat low. How does that help your double bass drum playing?

Blake: It helps a lot! I used to sit high, but I tried sitting lower after I had to borrow the kit of a drummer who had his throne set pretty low. When I played that way I liked it, and from then on I started sitting low. It frees up my legs more, so my whole leg can move. Rather than pressing down on a pedal, I can move my leg up and



BLAKE'S SETUP

Drums: Tama Superstar in Granite Fade

- A. 6x14 Warlord maple snare
- B. 7x8 tom
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 9x12 tom
- E. 14x16 tom (not shown in photo)
- F. 18x20 kick drums

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 14" AAX Fast hats
- 2. 17" AAX Extreme China
- 3. 18" AA Metal-X crash
- 4. 8" AA splash
- 5. 10" Mike Portnoy Stax
- 6. 18" HHX crash
- 7. 20" AA Rock ride
- 8. 19" AAX Extreme China (not shown in photo)

Percussion: bells, blocks, timbales, gong, etc.

Specialty drums: RotoToms

Hardware: Tama Iron Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat stand, Iron Cobra Rolling Glide single bass drum pedals with Iron Cobra soft beater (loose spring tension). Tama Roadpro cymbal and snare stands.

Heads: Evans Genera HD dry on snare batter, Genera Hazy 300 on snare bottom (no muffling). Evans EC2 on tom batters, Genera resonant black on tom bottoms (tape for muffling). Emad single-ply on bass drum batter, Tama logo head on bass drum front head (one feather pillow for muffling).

Sticks: Vater Fatback 3A wood with nylon tip

Electronics: Ultimate Ears custom ear molds, Fostex 4-track for sampling

Microphones: Shure Beta 57, Sennheiser 604, Shure 57, Shure Beta 52, Shure Beta 91

down and get more power that way.

MD: Can you offer *MD* readers a few tips for developing double bass drum technique?

Blake: I'd suggest just sitting down with a metronome and starting slow with 16th notes at 120 bpm. Work on that and then knock it up five or ten bpm every week, but make sure you're comfortable with it. When a lot of kids get their first kit, they sit down with a double pedal and just try to go as fast as possible, without being solid and smooth. That's the wrong approach; it ruins the whole point of playing drums. Start slow and work your way up.

Another good idea is to focus on staying relaxed, keeping your leg muscles loose. For years I've been guilty of tightening up my legs when doing intense and heavy double bass, which isn't good. You should concentrate on letting your foot do the work and not tensing up those muscles. Just try to fit into that pocket and then it will relieve itself; you'll groove it out and you'll be able to build more agility with your double kick playing that way.

MD: What musical styles did you study when you were coming up?

Blake: I started drumming when I was about eleven years old, and I was super into grunge. Soundgarden and Nirvana were my two bands—I was into them so much. Back then Dave Grohl would groove out and hit as hard as possible. That's all I did, and I broke *so* many heads and cymbals! I was definitely into the hard, groovy playing when I was first coming up.

When I got my first kit, my parents said I needed to take lessons. So I studied with a guy named Robert Crutchfield, who played drums and percussion for the Winston-Salem Symphony Orchestra. He was an *incredible* drummer. He specialized in jazz, which was really cool because I think a lot of that rubbed off on me. He had a very good way of teaching and was focused on teaching me as many different styles as possible. He was very good about getting you literature and rudiments to work on and recommending other drummers to check out. His philosophy was, don't limit yourself to just one style; branch out and learn as much as you can

BLAKE RICHARDSON

about different styles. He showed me the basics of jazz, Afro-Cuban, Latin, and all sorts of groove-oriented stuff. He helped open my eyes, because all I wanted to do was play Nirvana and Soundgarden songs. [laughs]

points in the band's material where you're required to play along with some type of sequence, all the while switching between very involved styles within a given song. How did you develop your ability to be comfortable playing along with sequences,

and drum placement are a big part of it too. I make sure everything is symmetrical—that's key. I have a crash and a China on both sides of my kit, and I want the crash on the right to correspond to where my crash is on the left. How you adjust

"BOZZIO DID ALL THESE AWESOME POLYRHYTHMIC, PERCUSSIVE THINGS THAT I'D NEVER EVEN HEARD ABOUT BEFORE. AS SOON AS I SAW HIM PLAY, I KNEW THAT DRUMMING WAS WHAT I WANTED TO DO."

MD: One thing I really enjoyed hearing you do with two bass drums was switching back and forth between duple and triple combos. For instance, a 16th-note groove would seamlessly morph into 16th-note triplets and back. Can you offer *MD* readers any tips on how to do this?

Blake: There's a part like that on the song "Prequel To The Sequel." After we got done recording and started playing out, I found this little double bass groove that I could add. It was one of those things where I really wished I had put it on the album. It goes like this: At the very beginning, the first riff of the song goes into the second verse, and it's just basic 16th-note double kicks. Then it does a triplet version of that. So it's a measure of 16th notes and then a measure of triplets. It puts a really cool dynamic to the song.

It's a pretty simple concept, but it is challenging to do different rhythms while maintaining the same tempo. You just have to sit down, get your tempo straight, and hammer it out as much as possible. A lot of times when kids do those fast rudimental patterns with their kick—maybe they're doing some slow, extra 16ths and then fast triplets—they'll do the triplets too fast and then the tempo gets off.

MD: When you're playing in this manner, are you counting or are you just feeling it?

Blake: There are certain sections where I have to count, but if there's a straight 5/4 or 7/4 or 7/8 riff that repeats, I'll just feel it out. When the guys are showing me a riff for the first time, say, they'll tell me what time signature it is and then I'll count it out in my head. We've played these songs so much by now, I don't even think about the time anymore, I just play it. But there are a couple of sections on *Colors*—say, a measure of 4/4 and then 2/4 and then 7/8 or 7/4—where I still have to count it out, because it's kind of crazy.

MD: It's quite astounding that there are

especially in a concert setting in the middle of intense tunes?

Blake: When we first started writing *Colors* we knew that we were going to add tons of percussion, strings, and other stuff to it. The band had never really been that ambitious before. And I always thought it might be cool to play to a click live and see what it would be like, because I thought it would bring a whole new element to our show that kids would really appreciate. So we sat down with the record and just messed around with it, and we started sampling. Whenever we play the *Colors* material live, we play to a click with all the samples and sequences.

On the first tour it was pretty challenging, because I'd never played to a click live before. I'd only used it for recording. It was definitely something I had to get used to. Now I've done it so much that I don't even hear the click anymore; it's become second nature and I'm just playing the song. The one thing I do love about it is that I never overplay. Usually the first song we play, I'll play it fifteen beats per minute faster than it should be, which totally throws everybody off. So the click makes sure I never do that.

MD: You have killer movement around the kit and great speed. Please offer tips for developing hand speed and for getting around a large kit as easily as you do.

Blake: Playing with a metronome has helped me build my hand speed, as has doing rudiments. It's important to learn the basic rudiments. Get those down by starting out slow, maintaining that tempo to make sure the patterns are solid, and then trying to go as fast as you humanly can for as long as possible until you have muscle failure. [laughs] If you do that a lot it'll help your agility and your speed. As well as your hand speed.

As far as getting around a large kit...practice! [laughs] Cymbal placement

your throne height and where you have your throne placed is an important part of it as well. If you have your throne too far back when you have a huge kit, it's going to be hard to make your way around it. But if you put everything tight and close you'll have a better feel for where everything is.

MD: What are you doing to stretch your abilities as a player?

Blake: Recently I've been getting into that Gospel-chops stuff. The drummer with The Mars Volta, Thomas Pridgen, is part of that movement. The stuff is just phenomenal, and it's definitely the sound I'm trying to go for now. It kind of goes along with the whole groove thing, and I'm just trying to feel it out and do what they're doing. The DVD *Shed Sessionz* features a bunch of guys who grew up playing in church, and they are total shredders. These are some of the most incredible drummers I've ever seen. They play some cool things like accent displacement and all sorts of little tricks that are so simple but sound so awesome when you put them with a groove. We're going to include that stuff on the next record for sure.

On *Colors* there are blasts beats, but primarily I tried to make the riffs sound like they should feel. If that required just straight grooving, then that's what I did. I didn't sit down and say, "Okay, this needs to be as fast and full of double bass as possible." Blasting wasn't really a big issue for me on *Colors*. I'll still keep that element in my style of playing, because I've always been into death metal. But grooving is pretty much where it's at for me right now. There are so many kids who get their first kit and all they want to do is practice double bass and blasting. When they're asked to play a Latin beat or groove, they have no idea what you're talking about. I would like to see that change.

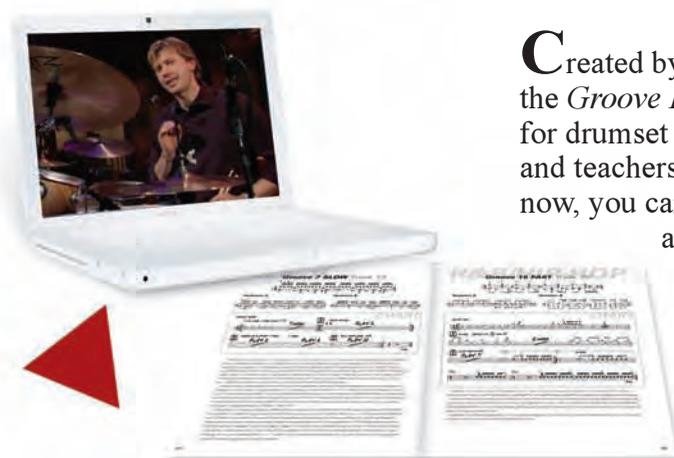


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Top-10 Rudiments

Part 1: The Single-Stroke Roll

by Bill Bachman

The rudiments are the alphabet of the drumming language. Once you've learned this alphabet, you'll have a large vocabulary of rhythmic "words" that will enable you to express yourself freely on the drums. My goals for this series of articles are to show how important the rudiments are to every drummer, dispel any negative myths about rudiments and their purpose, and help you develop great technique that'll allow you to execute any idea you can think of. Here's the bottom line: Rudiments create chops, chops create vocabulary, and vocabulary creates music.

I believe that many drummers have misunderstood the point of rudiments and their application. Most drumset players only focus on how to orchestrate rudiments around the drumset, rather than investing time mastering the technique needed to execute the figures. The real value of rudiments lies in the physical motions that are developed within each hand that can then be applied to various ideas on the drumset beyond a rudimental context. These motions allow each hand to make music freely without being boxed into playing a rudiment with some voicing (or orchestration) around the drumset.

I'd also like to dispel misconceptions about the ill effects of rudiments. Drummers have said things to me like, "All these rudiments and techniques will stiffen me up, ruin my groove, and confine my imagination." This couldn't be farther from the truth, given that the rudiments are learned using smooth and flowing motions. Amateur drummers often hold the sticks too tight and stroke everything out when they practice rudiments. But when you see mature rudimental drummers play, their hands are like poetry in motion. As for rudiments confining the imagination—that shouldn't happen as long as you're not *thinking* about rudiments when you drum. You want to be making music, not regurgitating patterns.

Playing rudiments properly is a challenge because they are so physically demanding—not so much in terms of muscular strength, but in terms of finesse and dexterity. Many repetitions are necessary in order to train your muscles and to develop the coordination required to play them effortlessly. But all of that practice will be time well spent, since once you develop the proper muscle memory you'll never have to think about the mechanics of the rudiment again.

In this series, we're going to work through my top-10 rudiments: single-, double-, and triple-stroke rolls, paradiddles, the six-stroke roll, flams, flam accents, flam taps, inverted flam taps, and drags. If you have command of these ten, then you can play all of the other rudiments (or hybrid rudiments), since the necessary hand motions are contained within these ten. (The buzz roll is not included in this series because it requires a unique stick pressure technique that's not involved in the other rudiments.)

The first rudiment we're going to look at is the single-stroke roll. The single-stroke roll should be played with full strokes (also known as free strokes or legato strokes), which means that the hands are holding the sticks loosely and are "dribbling" them on the drumhead. Resist any temptation to hold the sticks tightly or to stop the stick at the bottom of the stroke. Allow the stick to rebound back to the "up" position immediately after striking the head.

The technique needed to play this rudiment is pretty much the same at any speed, though different wrist-to-finger ratios will be required depending on the rebound (or lack thereof) of the playing surface. It's common for many players to favor the fingers at high speeds, but keep in mind that finger technique won't work very well on a relatively mushy surface like a floor tom head.

In addition to the exercises provided, be sure to practice this rudiment going evenly from slow to fast to slow over a one-minute period. Practice the exercises with the given stickings, use a metronome (or play along with your favorite tunes), and don't go any faster than you can play comfortably. If you practice these exercises as little as five or ten minutes a day, you'll be amazed at how much your hands improve by the time next month's rudiment comes your way. Note: Whenever you see a one-bar repeat sign, play the previous measure using the opposite sticking, beginning with the left hand. The only exception to this is in the last measure of each example. Good luck!

Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the touring drummer in Neal Morse's US-based progressive rock band, and a freelance drumset player based in Nashville, Tennessee. He is the author of the Row-Loff books *Rudimental Logic*, *Quad Logic*, and *Bass Logic*, the producer of the instructional drum DVDs *Reefed Beats* and *Rudimental Beats: A Technical Guide For Everyone With Sticks In Their Hands*, and the designer of Vic Firth's Heavy Hitter practice pads. For more information, visit billbachman.net.

1

R R R R ————— L R ————— L R L

R ————— L R L R L R ————— L R L R L R L

R ————— (L R) ————— L R ————— (L R) ————— L

R ————— (L R) ————— L R ————— (L R) ————— L

R — (L R) ————— L R R R (L R) ————— L

R R (L R) ————— L R (L R) ————— L

(R L) —————

Note: from here play the 2-bar phrases in reverse order to end up back where you started

2

R R R R R ————— L R ————— L R L

R ————— L R L R L R ————— L R L R L R L

R ————— (LR) ————— L R ————— (LR) ————— L

R ————— (IR) ————— L R ————— (IR) —————

R ————— (LR) ————— L R ————— (LR) ————— L

R ————— (IR) ————— L R ————— (LR) ————— L

R ————— (IR) ————— L R R R (IR) ————— L

R R (IR) ————— L R (IR) ————— L

(RL) —————

Note: from here play the 2-bar phrases in reverse order to end up back where you started

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Burning On Double Bass

Part 2: Warm-Ups, Fills, And Rolls

by Todd Vinciguerra



MUSIC KEY

		CC	CC	AdD1	CC
		*	*	*	*
T.T.	S.D.				
FT	B.D.1				
		B.D.2	R.C.		

Picking up where my previous article left off (January '09), this lesson begins with a chops-building warm-up exercise that progresses from quarters to 32nd notes.

Pay attention to note placement and the consistency of your sound. When you're ready to move on to the remaining exercises, begin by playing them as written. Once you can play them smoothly at various tempos, start experimenting with different phrasing ideas. For example, instead of playing with right-hand lead, try leading with the left. Or instead of playing the exercises on the snare and rack tom, add different toms and other sound sources. Get creative!

Progressive Warm-Up

Here's the basic warm-up. Make sure to use a metronome, and keep track of your starting tempo. Only increase your tempo after you've developed control at slower speeds. Once you learn it leading with your right foot, try left-foot lead.



Continuous Hand/Foot Fills

Examples 2–10 are 16th-note and triplet fill ideas that move between the hands and feet. You can use these exercises as fill ideas at the end of phrases.



Shifting Gears

These exercises combine different subdivisions for more advanced-sounding fills.

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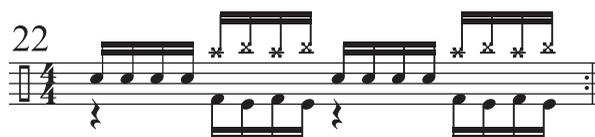
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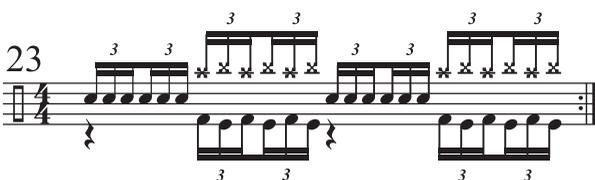


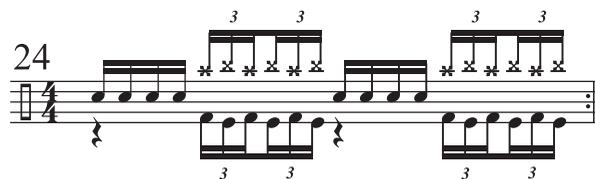
21 

Double Up

For more power and impact, try doubling the kick drum rhythms with crash cymbals. These fills work great at loud, climactic sections of songs. Have fun!

22 

23 

24 



Todd "Vinny" Vinciguerra is a freelance drummer, writer, and teacher. He's the author of *Beginning Independence For Rock And Alternative Drumming* and *Studies In Drum Set Independence Vol. 1 & Vol. 2*. For more on Todd, visit anotherstateofmind.com.



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Traditional Vs. Matched Grip

When Is It Time To Switch?

by Ian Froman

Last month I shared with you some of my opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of several foot techniques that many drummers use to play the hi-hat. This time I'd like to discuss an even more contentious topic—traditional versus matched grip.



The controversy over which grip to use when playing jazz is something that comes up for discussion on a regular basis with my students. For those of us who started playing jazz in the 1970s or earlier, we *had* to play traditional grip. As you read this article, you may feel like I'm "the pot calling the kettle black," because I'm an advocate of using matched grip for jazz playing even though I primarily use traditional grip. But even though I learned traditional grip, it doesn't mean that *you* have to in order to be a good jazz drummer.

A Little History

In case you don't know the origins of traditional grip, back in the day marching drummers carried their instruments using a strap that slung over the shoulder. This caused the drum to tilt

mental drummers (as well as drumset players) can now use matched grip. Most classical orchestral percussionists also play the snare with matched grip. And didn't Max Roach switch to matched in the '70s? What about the recent switch Jack DeJohnette made from traditional to matched?

There is strong evidence that jazz drummers can function beautifully using matched grip. When someone like Bill Stewart comes along and plays the way he plays, the argument is over in my opinion. Other great drummers such as Jim Black and Eric Harland are matched grip players, and they play with great sensitivity. So don't feel you *have* to change over to traditional grip when playing jazz.

Many students try to switch to traditional when first studying jazz. They say it feels better, or that they can play softer. But they have no formal training in that grip, so they don't even know how to hold the stick properly. Why would you shoot yourself in the foot like that? If you can already play matched grip, why wouldn't you use it? Is it because of some romantic notion that traditional grip makes for better jazz drumming? There's no lack of dynamic range with matched grip. And like I said, Bill Stewart and many others have dispelled that notion.

The idea that you can keep two grips at peak levels is something I also have a problem with. I've worked a lifetime on trying to achieve musical mastery with one grip, and I'm still working on it—thirty years later.

The Physicality Of It

Matched grip is more ergonomically correct. The sound is definitely more even. Doesn't this seem like an advantage over traditional grip, where your left shoulder slouches down and your elbow digs into your side? I'm finding that as I get older it's more difficult to maintain my left-hand traditional-grip technique. If I don't practice my one-hour routine on a daily basis,

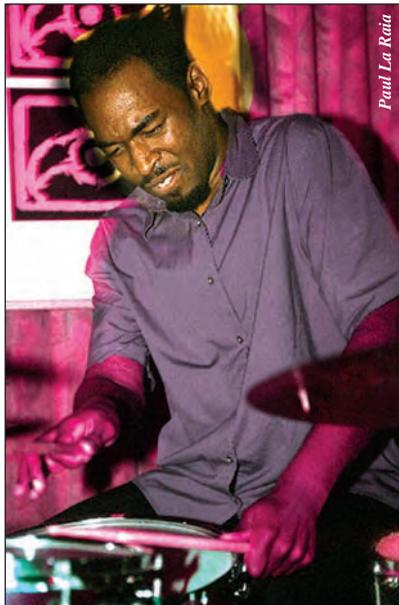
Andrew Lepley



to the right at nearly a 45° angle. In order to play on the drumhead with the left hand, a new grip had to be developed. This became what we now know as traditional grip. Times have changed, however, and so has drum technology. Modern marching carriers and snare stands hold the drum flat, so rudi-



Matched grip players Bill Stewart and Eric Harland (right).



Paul La Roca

it's like I never touched a stick in my life.

The notion that you can play softer and more delicately with traditional grip is false. After seeing a few hundred drummers in my life, I've never noticed any lack of control among players who use matched grip. Even when I demonstrate my position on this topic in a lesson, my matched grip—albeit weak—can play sensitively.

It's easier to move around the drumset using matched grip. It's less cumbersome to play the hi-hat with the left hand, and it's easier to play figures on a cymbal that's directly over your hi-hat. There's less arm movement involved in these types of motions as compared with what's required using traditional grip. This conservation of energy can then be used for creating rhythmic ideas—not trying to maintain a grip.

Matched grip can be distorted slightly to achieve different sounds. For example, if you want to play a buzzy passage on your snare drum with your left hand, you simply open the fingers and press into the head with the fulcrum. It's similar to the type of stroke you'd use for a buzz roll. To get the same sound using traditional grip, I have to turn my hand over, palm facing down, and open my fingers to let the stick bounce. When I use this technique it's difficult to regain the "proper" form of the grip, so I often end up staying in that position longer than I should, and not propelling the stick properly. With matched grip, after modifying your hand position to achieve a certain sound, you simply rewrap the fingers around the stick to regain proper form.

Rationally Speaking

I support the theory that psychological factors can have a strong impact on your drumming. However, I don't believe in the "traditional grip for jazz" argument. Too many teachers insist that their students play traditional grip—and most of these instructors have no formal training with it. If a student can play the drums with matched grip, then there's no need to switch to traditional grip when beginning to study jazz. It's difficult enough to learn the intricacies of jazz drumming. To embark on this journey with an inferior and uncomfortable new grip is simply wrong. The effort should be placed on achieving the right feel and sound for the music. Your choice of grip has nothing to do with that.

Now, if you have some sort of "calling" that is leading you to become a traditional-grip player, then that's another story. If this is the case, you have to be committed to switching over to traditional grip entirely. This switch will take years of daily practice that, in my opinion, isn't quite worth it. In fact, if I ever get the right amount of space in my calendar, I hope to make the switch over to *matched* grip.

In Conclusion

I don't want this argument to sound harsh, but I think the case for matched grip has never been stronger, especially for students in the early stage of learning to play jazz. Either way, use the grip you're comfortable with—and concentrate on the music. As long as you do that, your jazz drumming will never suffer.

Ian Froman is a New York-based jazz musician who also teaches at Berklee College Of Music, The Collective, City College, and New School University, and in his home studio.



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open	O	C.C.	R.C.
H.H.	⊗	⊗	⊗
T.T.	⊗	⊗	⊗
S.D.	⊗	⊗	⊗
B.D.	⊗	⊗	⊗
H.H.	⊗	⊗	⊗
w/foot	⊗	⊗	⊗

In my last article (October 2008), we looked at some triplet and 16th-note applications of a six-against-four polyrhythm. I'd like to continue in that vein with some more 16th-note ideas that incorporate the bass drum into the phrasing.

Just to review, we're substituting four 16th notes for every quarter note of a quarter-note triplet. So this...

...becomes:

One very easy but effective idea is to divide the 16ths between the hands and the bass drum.

The sticking and voicing can be changed to make the phrase more melodic.

Now try playing four 16ths with the hands, followed by two with the bass drum. These phrases sound like normal sextuplets.

To make it a little more adventurous, try this Vinnie Colaiuta voicing from the Frank Zappa tune "Token Of My Extreme."

The next logical step would be to play six 16ths with the hands and two with the bass drum. This has more of a three-against-four feel. (We'll further explore this polyrhythm in the next article.)

The following two-bar example utilizes all three combinations voiced around the drums. Have fun, and we'll see you next time.

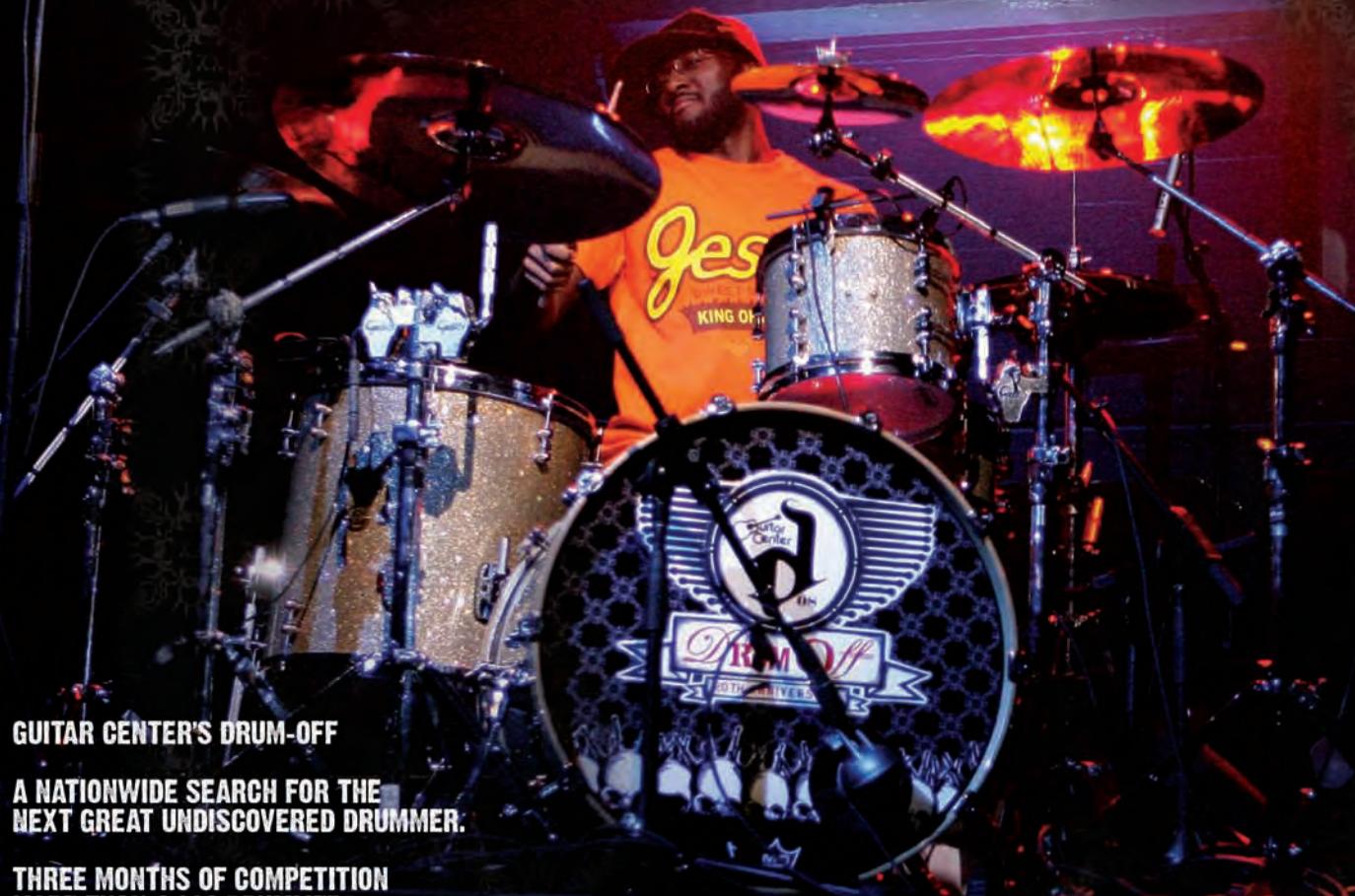


Paul DeLong is one of Canada's foremost drummers and music educators. He is currently playing with David Clayton Thomas (Blood, Sweat & Tears), freelancing, and teaching at Humber College in Toronto. Paul is also a clinician for Yamaha and Sabian.



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Economic Survival Tips For The Working Drummer

I'm no doomsayer stockpiling toilet paper, bottled water, and Spam, waiting for Armageddon. But I'm acutely aware that in the past year my gasoline and grocery bills have taken a significantly larger cut out of my income. Granted, gas prices have dipped for now, but there's no way to predict if and when they'll spike back up. If I'm to remain a working drummer, I need to proactively keep my expenses under control. Here are some tips that'll help keep me and you out there playing as much as possible.

Maximizing Rehearsal Time

Unless you have band practice at your house or apartment, you probably drive to a rehearsal space. Since you're burning gas to get there, you need to maximize the time you have in rehearsal to either work up new material or polish your existing repertoire.

Before you leave for practice, take advantage of some of the technology that's available. Use emails to send MP3s of new songs or song ideas you want to work on to other band members so they can familiarize themselves with the music. You might also want to discuss over the phone specific issues that you feel are reducing productivity during practice. Maybe someone always shows up late to rehearsal, or the keyboardist is constantly running scales when someone is trying to make a point. These might be issues worth discussing prior to arriving at rehearsal.

If you or your band mates have day jobs, there'll be certain

dynamics that occur when you get together to practice, especially if rehearsals are held on weekday evenings. Fatigue from the workday effects motivation and focus during practice. And because we're social animals, there'll always be a certain amount of chitchat. However, tiredness, being distracted, and shooting the bull can all cut into valuable practice time. So take on the responsibility to gently steer your crew back on course if your session isn't being particularly productive. You might have to take some flak for being the "taskmaster," but if the session turns out to be nothing but a social gathering or a place for your bassist to complain about his family, you're wasting time and money.

If you spend two hours at rehearsal, check your watch to determine how much time is actually spent playing your instruments. If you have to load in and out every time, how much time is eaten up with that process? Then there's the chitchat, maybe a disagreement or two, and a coffee/smoke break. You may discover that you're really only making music for an hour and ten minutes. If that's the case, you either need to become more focused or consider three-hour practices.

You might also want to consider longer practices on Sunday afternoons. Granted, you might be sleep-deprived after a late Saturday night gig, or you'll miss a ballgame on TV. But there are always trade-offs in life. If you can push through four or five hours of practice on the weekend, you might find that you're being much more productive than if you were getting together once or twice during the week.



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Downsizing

If you've visited a local car dealership lately, you've probably noticed that they can't give away trucks, vans, and SUVs. Back in the '80s I drove a cargo van. In addition to my mammoth drumkit, I usually had enough room to cart around an enormous PA system. In retrospect, it was a cocky move buying that gas-guzzler, since I had waited for hours in serpentine lines at gas stations when there was the supposed "shortage" in the 1970s.

If you're still cruising to your gigs in a vehicle that spends most of its time at the pumps, consider downsizing. I'm not talking about buying a Smart Car, but consider purchasing something smaller that's not drinking up your take-home pay.

Realize that if you go with a smaller vehicle, you may also need to downsize your kit. In a previous article (June 2008), I discussed the advantages of gigging with fewer drums and cymbals, and possibly smaller drums. Give it some thought.

Open Mics And Exposure

I've never gotten a paying gig that resulted from playing an open mic night. The club owner and the audience have enjoyed some free music, but basically I've waited around a couple hours to play four or five songs and enjoy a couple overpriced drinks.



Illustration by Jeff Harrity

Plus, the house drumkits are often cheap junk or have been horribly abused. If your intention is to get exposure for your band that would lead to some paying gigs, why would you represent yourself playing on drums and cymbals that sound awful? Plus, unless I use public transportation, I'm again burning fuel to get to the club. So you have to ask yourself: Is this supposed "exposure" worth the time and money?

Be wary of the concept of playing for

free in order to get "exposure." In many ways it's a con. If you're not being compensated in some way for the endless time you've spent honing your chops, plus the wear and tear on your vehicle and your body, you're getting ripped off. That time could be better spent working on a demo and putting together a good band bio and photo. Then you could approach the club owner with a promo package to help secure a paying gig. You could also use those materials to sign with an agent

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or management company who'll line up gigs for you.

If your band insists on playing open mics, call the club ahead of time to find out what's waiting for you there in terms of a drumkit. Or go to an open mic as an observer (maybe carpool with your band mates?) to see what gear the other bands are using. Take the time to find out what the club provides. Ask if you need to bring your own snare or bass pedal, and always bring your own stick bag.

Playing In Several Bands

A number of drummers I know have tacked together a rewarding musical life by being a "member" of several different bands at the same time. By earning income from various ensembles, they're able to stay solvent. Some even manage to gig full-time. If you plan to take this route, you need to be a quick learner and be able to retain what you've worked on in rehearsals. (You may also want to freshen up your reading/transcribing chops, so you can create charts of songs that you haven't had a chance to memorize.)

another for a gig on the same night. My advice is to honor your date with your first commitment, even though the second offering may pay more. Being dependable speaks volumes about your character, ethics, and integrity.

Negotiating For A Meal

I've been talking about fuel for your ride, but now let's move on to fuel for your body. If you're playing a gig at an establishment that serves food, see if you can negotiate a meal with your pay. I realize some of you might feel like a hobo asking for a handout, but groceries are getting pretty expensive. Most likely the club won't serve you surf & turf, but why turn down a sandwich and fries? That's at least one meal you wouldn't have to pay for out-of-pocket.

If the pay offered at the gig is really sad, see if the club's management would give you some gift certificates. That way you can come back to the club with your significant other for a dinner date that's at least partially covered by the certificates. While you're enjoying your meal, try to find the owner or manager. Throw out a

audience who are happy to lick their frozen treats while listening to music. On breaks I've often been approached for future gigs, usually at private parties.

Selling Equipment

It's possible that even with all the previous suggestions, you're still struggling when you reach the checkout counter at the grocery store or when you swipe your credit card at the pump. If that's the case, you might want to sell off your unused equipment. As drummers, we tend to look at our instruments as works of art—and they are. But do you really need to hang on to gear that you haven't used in a while? Do you have a snare that's collecting dust in a corner? Is that third djembe really necessary?

I've had good luck selling equipment on www.craigslist.org and on eBay. Back in the 1960s I bought a 16" brand-name crash cymbal. I always hated its sound, but I continued to cart it around in my cymbal bag until I realized how foolish this was. I recently sold the cymbal to a young drummer who absolutely loves it. He walked away happy, and I bought a

I recently sold a cymbal I didn't use to a young drummer who absolutely loves it. He walked away happy, and I bought a small bag of groceries and pumped a few gallons into my gas tank.

When you connect with a new band, find out if their intention is to play out and get paid. If they only want to jam and never leave the garage or basement, ask yourself if that's what you want. If you agree that you want to make some money in addition to expressing your passion for performing, is the material coming together at a reasonable rate so that you can get out and play gigs soon? Is the band and repertoire something that club owners would want? Finally, has it been established who books the gigs? You may also want to discuss the minimum dollar amount for which you'll perform.

If you do end up in multiple bands, be prepared to deal with some anger or hard feelings if you've already locked in a date with one band and then get a call from

few compliments about the food and about how much fun you had at your last gig there. This face-to-face interaction goes a long way in promoting a friendly relationship between musician and club management.

About a mile from my house there's an ice cream stand that books music on Friday and Saturday nights during the summer. I've played there with different artists and bands over the years. It's not Madison Square Garden, but the pay is decent, the hours are early and short (6–9 P.M.), and the owner always insists that you have something to eat. In addition to the ice cream, he serves simple but tasty food—burgers, fish fries, hot dogs, sausage 'n' peppers, and salads. The "exposure" is excellent, too. They have a ready-made

small bag of groceries and pumped a few gallons into my gas tank. It was a true win-win situation.

In Conclusion

Political activist Abbie Hoffman once said that the evening news was the greatest cause of free-floating anxiety in this country. Don't believe all the doom and gloom that you read or see in popular media. However, food is expensive and gas prices are unpredictable from month to month. If you can be mindful of how much money you're shelling out for those two things as you travel to and from rehearsals and gigs, odds are you'll still be out there gigging, following your bliss, and sending out your beats to the world for years to come.





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Playing With Drum Loops

Four Essential Tips For Developing Grooves Over Percussion Tracks

by Donny Gruendler



MUSIC KEY

H.H.	x	Shaker
S.D.	•	
B.D.	•	

Percussion loops are commonly used for rhythmic texture on recordings and during live gigs. Often they're also employed as a substitute for a monotonous quarter-note click track. In both cases, these types of loops are effective because they generate a particular feel and flavor for the groove without dictating the exact parts you should play. When playing with percussion loops, your job is to keep good time and let the flow of the rhythm influence your drumset part. Before we jump into the discussion of how to do this effectively, please go to the Education page at modern drummer.com and download the loop examples that we'll be using in this article.

Tip #1: Your groove should follow the percussion loop's accent structure. Just as drumset loops have a specific bass drum and snare pattern that you should follow, percussion loops have an accent structure that must be adhered to as well. If you neglect to follow this structure, your parts won't blend well with the loop.

Look at and listen to Percussion Loop 1 and try to figure out where the loop's accents fall within the beat. Are they on the downbeat, the upbeat—or are they creating a specific rhythmic figure?



1

So where are the accents? They're on beats 1, 2, 3, and 4. If you played a very syncopated groove (Example 2), it would clash with the quarter note-driven loop. The accents in the beat are in opposition to the percussion's accent structure.

2

Try a groove that's based on the downbeat, like Example 3. Notice how this pattern blends perfectly with the percussion's accent structure.

3

Tip #2: Determine the pitches of each accent. Once you've figured out the accent pattern of the loop, listen to the pitch of each accent. Ask yourself, Is the accent a high- or low-pitched tone? In Percussion Loop 1, beats 1 and 3 are low-pitched and beats 2 and 4 are high-pitched.

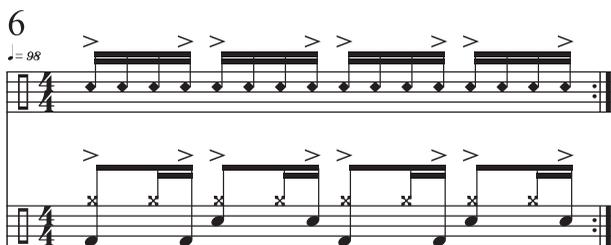
4

Tip #3: Decide where you can voice those accents on the kit. Once you've figured out the pitch patterns in the loop, match similar tones with various components of your kit. For example, low-pitched accents could be doubled with the bass drum, and high-pitched accents could be played on the snare.

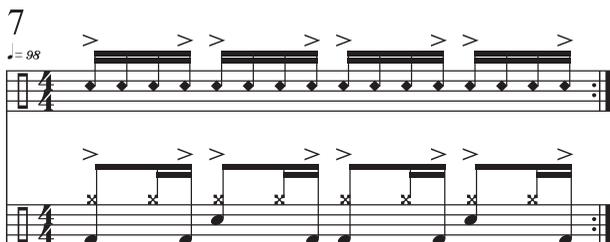
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Before we go any further, let's discuss how to voice accents in loops that don't have any pitch variations, like tambourine and shaker patterns. Percussion Loop 2 is a common shaker pattern that has accents on the downbeats and on the "ah" of each beat. There are two options for voicing these types of accents on the drumset.

Option 1: Voice accents that fall within beats 1 and 3 on the bass drum, and accents within 2 and 4 on the snare.

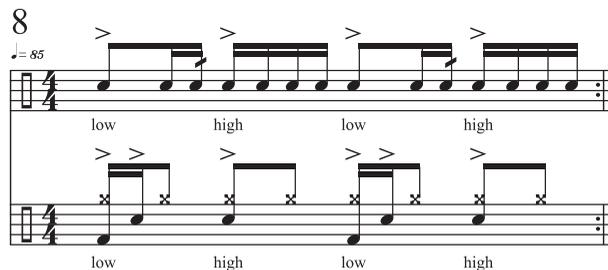


Option 2: Play a familiar drumset pattern that has a similar accent structure over the percussion loop. The pitches don't have to align perfectly, as in the bass drum notes on the "ah" of beats 2 and 4 in Example 7.



Tip #4: Identify holes or rests in the loop that should or shouldn't be filled with your groove. Percussion Loop 1 consists of a repeated pattern of an 8th note followed by six 16th notes. Notice how there's a gap in the loop on the "e" of beats 1 and 3? You could play something in that space. Unlike with drumset loops, this will not detract from the flow of the pattern.

Drumset loops are used to fatten up a track and to provide unwavering momentum. Percussion loops are used more often to help generate a particular feel and flavor, rather than a specific drum part. So you have more freedom to play *around* the loop. Here's one way you could fill the gaps in Percussion Loop 1.



After you've worked through the preceding examples, try applying my four essential thoughts with other percussion loops. I've posted a few extras on moderndrummer.com for you to check out.



Donny Gruendler is a professional drummer, Musicians Institute faculty member in Los Angeles, and the author of *Carl Fischer's Playing With Drum Loops—How To Work With Drum Loops, Samples And Backing Tracks*. His DVD *Creating And Performing Drum Loops* is also available through Carl Fischer.



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Alex Solera

Tower Of Power's DAVID GARIBALDI

RECOUNTING THE EVOLUTION OF FUNK DRUMMING

by Ken Micallef

David Garibaldi, whose explorations in linear rhythms with funk-rock pioneers Tower Of Power extended the soul-funk advances of James Brown's seminal drumming pioneers, is truly one of the most innovative drummers in history. Even today, forty years after the band was founded, Garibaldi's drumming on TOP tracks like "Soul Vaccination," "Squib Cakes," "Ebony Jam," and "What Is Hip" can stun an unwary musician who thinks he can always find the "1." But unlike drummers who use flash as a means to an end, Garibaldi's drumming always seamlessly assists the music.

"My goal was to have a signature in my playing, like all of the drummers that I loved," Garibaldi says. "The James Brown guys, Greg Errico, Bernard Purdie, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Sonny Payne—these are players with really distinctive playing styles that you can recognize. And they were the drummers I wanted to be like. To me, the goal was not to have their licks, but to have an identifiable sound."

David famously achieved his identity on a 1963 Slingerland kit bearing clear Remo Emperor or Pinstripe heads. "When the drummers I just mentioned play," he insists, "they put a vibe in the music."

Garibaldi's own legendary vibe is all over Tower Of Power's upcoming CD *Great American Soul Book*, which comprises covers of well-worn R&B tracks like "Backfield In Motion," "Heaven Must Have Sent An Angel," "Your Precious Love," and "Me And Mrs. Jones," all performed with the group's signature

brass-blowing style. Garibaldi is also overseeing TOP's *East Bay Archive* series, which documents live performances, rehearsal tapes, and off-the-cuff moments from the group's earliest years.

Though Garibaldi was only twenty-three years old when he recorded TOP's debut album, *East Bay Grease*, his gritty style was already fully evident. *Bump City* arrived in 1972, followed by *Tower Of Power* ('73), *Back To Oakland* ('74), *In The Slot* and *Urban Renewal* (both in '75), *Ain't Nothin' Stoppin' Us Now* ('76), and *Live And In Living Color* ('76, soon to be reissued with extra tracks). Tower disbanded in 1979, marking the end of their classic period. And though they reunited in '88 and have continued to record and tour ever since—Garibaldi rejoined the group in 1998—it's this classic period that he remains particularly proud of.

"We were really going for it then," David explains. "Some of it we didn't even edit. We didn't try to mask anything. Now I hear a lot of mistakes, a lot of things conceptually that I would never do today. And I can hear things that I was reaching for that I never got to. But the cool thing I remember is how serious we were, and that made the sessions really exciting. We'd walk out of the studio on top of the world. We came out with some really cool music. It built our confidence. So when I listen back to that music, I get inspired. It was wonderful." Here are David's recollections of recording some of the most famous modern funk tracks of our time.

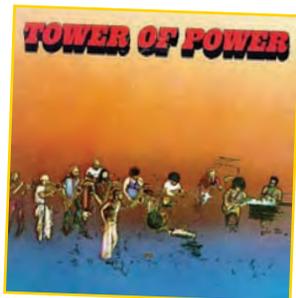
"Soul Vaccination" Tower Of Power

That came from listening to Latin music. I really liked Ray Barretto and Eddie Palmieri—especially Palmieri's album *The Sun Of Latin Music*. I loved those grooves, but there was no 2 and 4, which was the meat of R&B at the time, except for the funk of James Brown, which was getting away from that. So I decided to try to make up some beats that were not 2 and 4 but that still had some sort of

repetitive pattern. It evolved from that, the combination of James Brown and Latin music.

Everything I learned, I was putting on the drums back then. I would practice rudiments, and fooling around with the Swiss army triplet turned into "Soul Vaccination"—a Swiss army triplet played as 16th notes. It made a three-bar cycle because it's a three-note rhythm in a 16th-note pattern. It

would repeat after three measures. I just took one of those measures and looped it with some extra notes at the end so that it would come around to the beginning.



"The musical climate in the Bay Area wasn't about tradition in any way. We were just breathing what was in the air and reaching out for something different."

I didn't have much discipline back then; I tried to make it as difficult as I could for myself because I could do it. That's how I thought about drumming. "Squib Cakes," "On The Serious Side," the end of "Man From The Past"...all those songs with the really complex drum stuff represent how I thought about drumming. I play it a lot differently now.

When I lived in LA, no one wanted to hear me play that way. I didn't want to sound like everybody else just to work. But in the eighteen years I spent away from the band I learned to appreciate playing in a much simpler way. When I returned I didn't want to play all that stuff again, but then it became fun and I changed things around to represent more conceptually where I am at now.

"So Very Hard To Go" Tower Of Power

That's probably a first take. I remember Greg Errico was at the session. We would hang out a lot. He might have even suggested my trying a groove like that.

"Ebony Jam" In The Slot

If you listen to the opening couple of bars, where it's just the drumbeat, that's the basic way that I played it. I didn't have a special way of approaching the hi-hat, it's all integrated into the flow of everything. When we recorded it, the song went pretty fast—too fast for me to remember everything. And because we recorded it so quickly, I didn't compose a lot of parts to it. I went with what was there in the moment. We didn't play it a lot live, so I never developed a deep concept for the song like I did with some of the other tunes.

"On The Serious Side" In The Slot

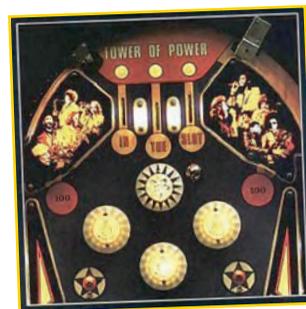
The whole idea is built around Rocco Prestia's bass line. Rocco doesn't like that song because, he says, it sounds like math. I didn't

like playing it straight, so I came up with that twisted, backwards groove.

"Vuela Por Noche" In The Slot

That came from a little jam that [guitarist] Bruce Conte and I were doing at rehearsal. We stayed one afternoon late with the legendary, late Bay Area bass player Dougie Rauch. We were playing this jam together based on the Latin music we all loved, trying to come up with stuff that was unique and different. At that time I knew nothing about Latin music, I just liked it and always went to see those guys play. So I just made up stuff based on what I thought the Latin musicians were doing. I learned about Latin later, but sometimes I would write melodies, and a lot of it came from all the rhythmic stuff we were doing. I would have all these grooves, and we would put it in the songs.

The whole musical climate in the Bay Area was not about tradition in any way, shape, or form. You could hear stuff any night of the week that you'd never heard anyone play before. We were just breathing what was in the air and reaching out for something differ-



ent. It was as if all of the music then was jazz: It was all based on improvisation.

"Oakland Stroke" Back To Oakland

I came up with that on a Remo practice pad set. We were writing songs at [tenor saxophonist] Emilio Castillo's house one day. I came up with that groove, and we'd play it at rehearsal. We recorded it for *Back To Oakland* when we needed one more song. That was the only thing that was close to being considered, so we built the song around that drumbeat. It became the bookends for the recording. It's a combination of a James Brown beat and my interpretation of samba. I was learning to play samba then, so I took the samba bass drum part and put it in my right hand. Everything else is built around that. They crafted it all around the drum groove.

"Can't You See (You Doin' Me Wrong)"

Back To Oakland

That overhanging hi-hat part? Whenever I heard long notes I would just try to phrase with what I was hearing. Maybe it came from blues drumming. I listened to everything in Oakland, and I had friends who played all different kinds of music. I was checking it all out. Tower Of Power comes from everything that was going on in the Bay area. Those were our roots. There was jazz, Latin, rock, blues, plus all the great funk music that was happening. Everything that we were hearing was in the mix of how we were putting our music together. I love big band music—Basie and his drummer, Sonny Payne, for example—and I studied those records and played in big bands. So when I joined Tower, that's how it all came out. I learned how to phrase section and ensemble figures, how to play behind soloists, how to play with dynamics...our music is a mix of all those different styles and approaches.

DAVID GARIBALDI

"Squib Cakes" Back To Oakland

When [organist] Chester Thompson joined the band in '72, we took on more of a jazz vibe. We'd been doing an instrumental called "Check It Out," which was never officially recorded—though it's on our recent release *The East Bay Archive, Vol. 1* (Tower Of Power Records), which features a live performance of it from a gig in Boston. Anyway, I was listening a lot to Bernard Purdie and to Sly Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On*. Sly did all of the drumming and rhythm section work on that. He was so creative. I took a lot of that stuff and shaped it into my own way of doing it. The "Squib Cakes" hi-hat thing, Bernard Purdie would do stuff like that, but he'd play it on the "e" and the "ah" of the beat. I tried it on the "and"; instead of the 16th notes, I played it on the 8th notes.

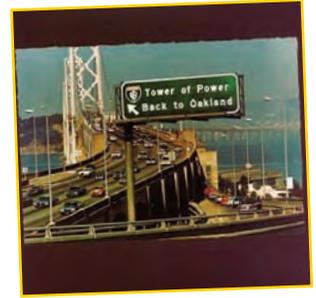
It took us several days to get that track. In those days we didn't have much skill in the recording studio. We'd be able to play the beginning of a song great, but we'd get to the end and screw it up. It wasn't digital recording then, so you had to start over again. Finally we got that take in its entirety.

Also on that album is the ballad "Just When We Start Making It." There's a drum roll on the end that goes into the out-chorus, which was an organ solo. We had to splice tape at the end of the drum roll because we could never get the whole song complete in a single take.

"Man From The Past" Back To Oakland

That was when "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" was popular. "Man From The Past" was inspired by that, but the end of the song is a whole other twisted groove using toms and all kinds of stuff. That was more of a crazed deal there. You'd have to see me

play it. I remember sitting in my apartment in Oakland with a drummer friend of mine, Harvey Hughes. We used to sit and practice together, taking turns making up beats. One guy would play, the other guy would say, "Try this...put this over here..." and we would switch. That was one of the beats we made up.



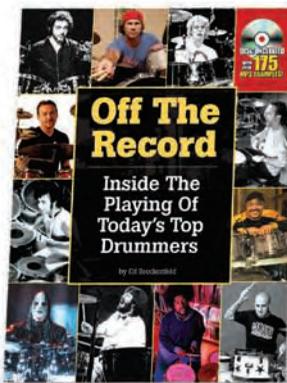
"Star Time" Great American Soul Book

That's a tip of the hat to Melvin Parker, Jabo Starks, and Clyde Stubblefield. I transcribed the drum grooves of those [original] songs, then I practiced the main grooves, and then it evolved. In the "new day" part, the opening groove, all the conversation between the snare and kick is anchored by my playing only quarter notes on the hi-hat. The bass drum is mostly playing 8th notes ("1 &," "& 3 &"), and the 16ths are supplied by the snare drum. Melvin Parker would play just quarter notes on the hi-hat and add all the funk with the other limbs. "Say It Loud" has a groove like that. To me that was always a cool way to play funk and groove really hard. But nobody does that now because of all the difficult coordination patterns that are popular to play.

Tower Of Power always built the music around the band arrangements, around the rhythm section parts. Sometimes I would have a crazy groove and we would arrange everything to that. I just try to orchestrate everything so it covers what I'm hearing, and play it just like a big band. I think of myself as Sonny Payne playing 16th notes.



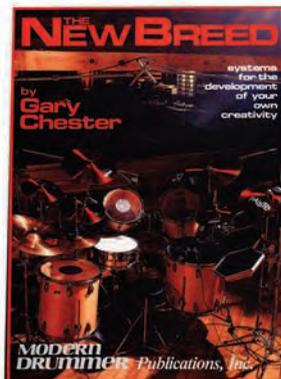
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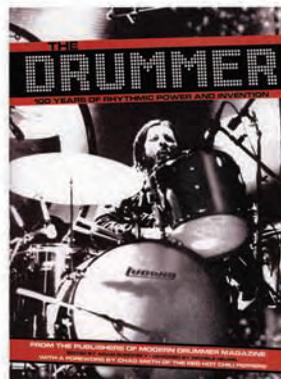
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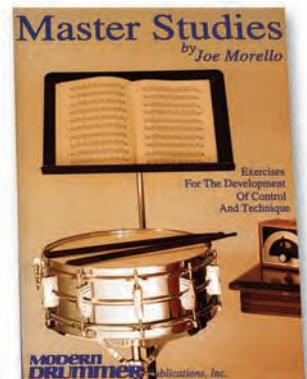
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by Joe Morello

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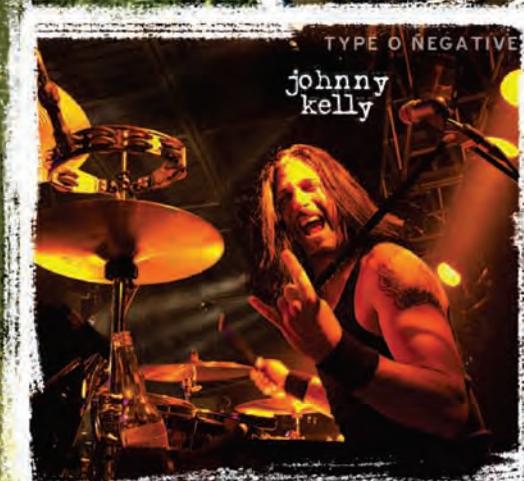
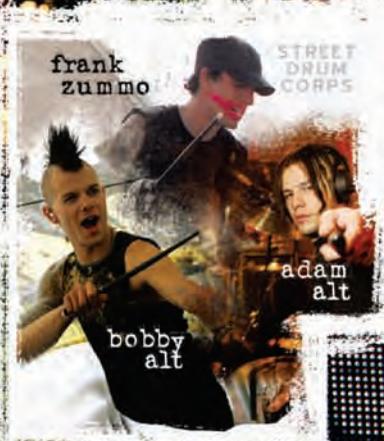
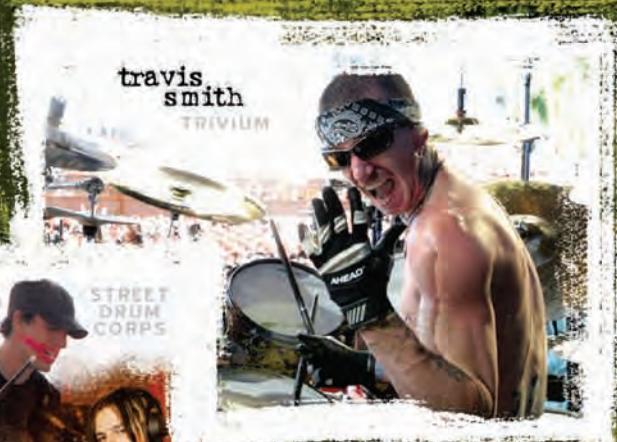
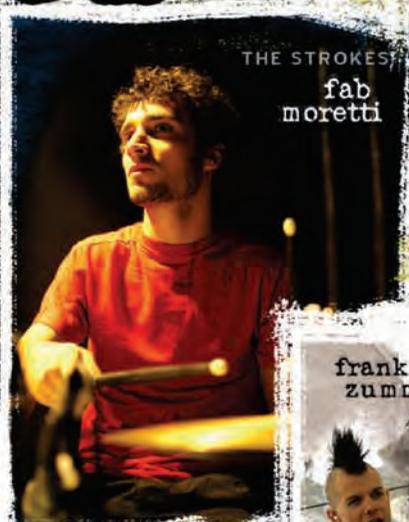
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MORGAN AGGREN

The Swedish Drummer With A Rep For
WONDROUS COMPLEXITY Really Has Only
One Goal: Transforming Listeners' Reality

Story and photos by T. Bruce Wittet

Every decade, Swedish musicians cross the waters and find new, enthusiastic audiences. In the '70s, synthesizer wizard Bo Hansson tooled an unsolicited soundtrack for *The Lord Of The Rings* to great acclaim, and singing sensations ABBA followed soon after with a string of enormous hits. The '80s saw Roxette score four US number-1s. In the '90s, Ace Of Base sold 30 million copies of its debut album, and the hugely popular Hives helped revive garage rock. And in 2004, former ABBA tribute band A*Teens placed each song of its Greatest Hits album in the top-twenty somewhere in the world. As it turns out, however, few Swedish drummers have made much of a dent abroad.

Then there is the curious case of Morgan Ågren, a monster drummer by anybody's reckoning. As frantic in his aberrant use of all four limbs as he was freaky in his assault on a multi-tom/three-bass drumkit, he came into the Montreal Drum Fest a dark horse.

The funny thing is that ten years before, Morgan had gone west and received his badge of honor, passing the ultimate test for drummers with flying colors by teaming up with one-of-a-kind composer/guitarist Frank Zappa. Had Zappa not suffered an untimely death, he would have undoubtedly signed Morgan Ågren as his next full-time drummer. Already he'd gotten into the habit of summoning Ågren and his musical collaborator Mats Oberg to join his band for pivotal American concert dates. Zappa clearly recognized the talent and creative passion we'll examine today.

Morgan's thing is part crazy, part calm and considered. He's a drummer for both the thinking man and the primitive man. And he had both groups out of their soft seats and applauding at the climax of his stunning Drum Fest set.

That duality is a particularly appealing aspect of the drummer. Fielding our questions, he'd reflect and then gently express opinions, sometimes gesticulating and exclaiming adamantly. Similarly, on stage you get hushed dynamics and blistering barrages—totally Jekyll & Hyde. It doesn't quite add up, and it's not quite right as rain, but it's thrilling to behold—inspiring even. Perhaps that "dark horse" label we've applied to Ågren's Montreal showing is a bit inaccurate; it would be more accurate to say that he's in a one-horse race. And that's not at all surprising once you discover his drumming mentors.

Recently Ågren revealed much to *MD* about his unique approach, then followed up with further explanations via phone calls and emails. Just entering his forties,

he's as excited as ever about playing the drums—and thrilled about scoring a DW and Sabian endorsement, particularly because of the "fit." But even though endorsements are a big deal for any drummer, Swede or not—we hear about many players who feel compelled to journey to the States for such perks—Morgan sees it slightly differently. "With my goals," he says, "I see no reason to relocate. I run my own band in Sweden, where I also ran my own record company. In America, I would be a session musician competing for the Madonna gig or having to play pop music. In Sweden it's easier to do my own thing. Mind you, although Sweden has a lot of good musicians, it's still not a place for inspiration in terms of live concerts and



special bands. When I was younger, I focused on the drummer, but as I get older I start to listen to the whole band—and that's missing in Sweden. I listen to a lot of music that doesn't even have drums.

"The Mats Morgan Band is known as a collection of virtuosos," Morgan continues, "but I've never felt we do it for that reason. You get virtuoso bands where everybody

MORGAN'S SETUP

Drums: DW Jazz series in Super Tangerine Glass Finish Ply: 6½x14 snare, 6x14 snare, 8x10 tom, 8x12 tom, 14x14 floor tom, 16x16 floor tom, 14x18 bass drum, 16x22 bass drum, 14x24 bass drum (with 8x22 Woofer)

Cymbals: Sabian
14" HHX Groove hats, 21" Encore ride, 22" heavy Legacy ride, 20" HH dark crash, 19" HH dark crash, 20" Ozone crash, 20" Ozone crash on top of a 19" HH Dark crash

Other drums/percussion: timbales, RotoToms, gong, GigPig, bells, blocks, etc.

Hardware: DW, including 9000+ cable hi-hat (with 5000 footboards) and 9000 bass drum pedal (with 5000 footboards and plastic beater, medium pedal tension)

Heads: DW by Remo coated Ambassadors; tuning: 6x14 snare high, 6½x14 low, toms high, 24" bass drum very low, 22" medium, 18" very high; no muffling on any drums except 16x22 bass drum

Sticks: Vic Firth American Classic Rock with wood and nylon tips, Vic Firth pepper mill ("of course!")

Electronics: Boss Loop Station, Mac, Digidesign 003, Tore Seem, Focusrite preamps

Mics: DPA, Sennheiser

has fabulous technique, yet the music has no nice melodies or chords. I would rather have people feeling things and being touched by the music, not raving about our chops. John Coltrane could play fast; same with Allan Holdsworth. But with them I don't hear 'fast,' I just hear music. There's nothing bad about going fast on your bass drum pedal, but I'd rather grab people by



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Jason Bittner



creating moods. It's the most incredible thing to see in people's faces that something powerful has happened, not because of our technical prowess but because something has suddenly transformed inside them."

The Artist: Free Or Constrained?

Once, when Morgan Ågren was seven, he followed his musician father up the steep stairs onto his tour bus—and entered a different world. "I decided then and there," he recalls today, "that this was

I play. I know what mood I'm trying to convey and, in a way, I'm aware of what I'm doing. But I'm attaining a state of consciousness in which I just feel. It's not easy to get there, but when I do, I know it was worth the effort."

At age forty-one, Ågren's visiting his optimum state with increasing frequency and decreasing effort. Twenty years ago, the experiences with Zappa must have jump-started him in the right direction. "You know, I was ready to play with Zappa when I was twenty," Morgan says.



going to be my life; this was my calling. Later in school, in writing or art class, I'd write about my dad's band or paint them performing on stage." Gradually, pen and ink were usurped by sticks and heads, brush and palette by brushes and cymbals. But the artistic bent remained, and to this day Morgan is apt to depict what he does as "painting with the drums." At one point he described to *MD* an analogous activity: the artist throwing buckets of paint at a canvas. It's all improvisation, Morgan suggests, and it arises from the passion to create.

MD suggests that some listeners, unable to detect a level of technical control, might see what Ågren describes not as art but as mere abandon that expresses only the primal impulses. Morgan begs to differ... "No, I don't see it that way. I don't think when

"He invited us to come and play with him in '88. He needed a keyboard player and drummer. But then he got sick. I'm not sure what he liked about Mats or me. He invited us on stage at the beginning of one of his concerts. I didn't even have my sticks, and Mats, who is blind, wasn't prepared and hadn't prepared the keyboards. We just improvised and Zappa started smiling. He seemed so inspired!"

It wasn't as if Ågren had pandered to the maestro by studiously copping the signature licks of each of his stellar drummers, from Jimmy Carl Black to Aynsley Dunbar to Vinnie Colaiuta. In fact, only one Zappa drummer looms large in Morgan's world view. "Terry Bozzio was my main influence," Ågren admits. "Even though he's doing great things today, and has done so consistently through his



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MORGAN ÅGREN

career, my roots are in what Bozzio did with The Brecker Brothers' *Heavy Metal Be-Bop* album. It's my Bible—that and Frank Zappa's *In New York*. Terry's thing

What I'm trying to say is that when you 'hear' something with your mind, you're halfway there. My motivation was the desire to do particular things. When I

RECORDINGS

Mats/Morgan Band Trends And Other Diseases, Thanks For Flying With Us, Heat Beats Live/Morgan Ågren Tourbook 1991-2007 (DVD+CD), On Air With Guests /// **Fredrik Thordendal** (of Meshuggah) Sol Niger Within /// **Fläskkvartetten/Fleshquartet** Goodbye Sweden /// **Jimmy Ågren** Glass Finger Ghost /// **Simon Steensland** Fat Again /// **Tina Ahlin** 12 Sångare av Allan Edwall /// **Kaipa** Keyholder

INFLUENCES

Magma Live (Christian Vander) /// **Univers Zero** Heat Wave (Daniel Denis) /// **Art Zoyd** Le Mariage Du Ciel Et De L'Enfer (Art Zoyd) /// **L. Shankar** Pancha Nadai Pallavi (Zakir Hussain) /// **Hermeto Pascoal** Mundo Verde Esperanca (Marcio Bahia) /// **Captain Beefheart** Lick My Decals Off Baby (John French and Art Tripp) /// **Frank Zappa** Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar (Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **Ronald Shannon Jackson** Pulse/Puttin' On the Dog (Ronald Shannon Jackson) /// **Mahavishnu Orchestra** Visions Of The Emerald Beyond (Narada Michael Walden) /// **Brecker Brothers** Heavy Metal Be-Bop (Terry Bozzio) /// **Meshuggah** Nothing (Tomas Haake) /// **Bill Bruford** One Of A Kind (Bill Bruford) /// **Allan Holdsworth** IOU (Gary Husband)

is not a show-off thing; it fits so well with the music."

The next name Morgan pulls out of the hat is a legendary French dynamo, Magma drummer Christian Vander. "He is one of the most unusual drummers, and he's at the top of my influences. I was so impressed with him, I even persuaded *Modern Drummer* to write about him; I recorded my interview with Christian Vander and it came out as a feature.

"I was totally into Tony Williams and Elvin Jones, just like Christian Vander was," Morgan elaborates. "Tony in particular expressed the power and force of music. For many years, though, Gary Husband was my main influence. With him, it sounds like things just happen...almost independent of him planning them. That's so refreshing. Ronald Shannon Jackson is another. Nobody mentions him. His album where he plays drumset and recites poetry is amazing. When I first heard him, he was the complete opposite of the then fashionable funky studio-clean drummer.

"Long before that," Ågren continues, "it was Buddy Rich, who I saw on Swedish television when I was ten. That was a shocking experience and something I'd never heard before: His drumming kept ringing in my head for months. And then I would try to play to his CDs, which is probably when I first developed some real technique. I didn't think about left hand or right hand or how many beats to play.

heard Buddy Rich play, I ran to my set and played. Of course I could not play the things he did, and technical questions arose. I wanted to do as he did, and I attempted what I thought I was hearing. Later on I had a few teachers, and we did paradiddles and stuff. But I would say that everything I did later on was the result of a bunch of very good albums I heard very early, and musicians with whom I played when I grew up. And it helps if you like the music a lot. Inspiration was the key to who I am now and how I play."

If Morgan likes the music, he finds it easy to assimilate and replicate. "If I got into situations of having to learn somebody's music I didn't like," he explains, "it was always harder. I read incredibly slow, so slowly that if you put some music in front of me and I haven't heard it first, I'm almost paralyzed—I mean really slow! If I have time to go through it, it's okay, but if I have to sight-read it's as if I go blind: I get totally confused, lost, and frustrated. People say that Frank Zappa's music is very difficult, but it came very easily to me because there are so many nice melodies to hang onto."

Bass Drums Aplenty

Ågren describes his rationale for using three bass drums. It has nothing to do with tap dancing or flurries of notes. It's all about pitch and tonal opportunities.

"I have an 18" for that jazz sound," he starts. "It's placed to the left side of my hi-

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MORGAN ÅGREN

hat. It's tuned very high for that Elvin Jones 'boing' tone. It's double-headed and unmuffled, and I love it for traditional tone and for electronica parts. The middle bass drum is 22" and it has a pillow in it and a little hole so I can get a short sound with attack; it has a May internal mic and it also has a DW Woofer in front to add that Bonham 'boom' and low end. The sound tech can turn it off and on to adjust the ring of the drum. I also have a 24", which has the May system mic modified for a drum with double heads and no Woofer. So it's a great range from the tightly tensioned to the 24" with the heads very loose. I thought I would have problems with the 24"—you know, the usual excessive ring—but I did a clinic tour for DW in Sweden when I got the drums, and the 24" sounded great with no hole and just the internal mic."

All Morgan's drums are from DW's Jazz series, a choice that harkens back to his youth and early influences. Shells are thin and rims are die-cast. "I like the heavy die-cast rims," he explains, "because when you hit the thinner hoops, it's as if they scream out in pain! Die-cast rims give you stability. I do hit hard, and my sticks are substantial. And I really like the new DW heads on the jazz kits, made by Remo. They're only single-ply, but they've got more stability, they wear better, and they're as sensitive as Ambassadors. It's nice to have heads as versatile as these new ones because occasionally I'll get tired of my wide open, ringing heads and I'll want to go for a sound like Drumbo—you remember, the guy with Captain Beefheart? And sometimes the Emperor and Pinstripe heads, which make all toms sound like mini bass drums, are okay; it's good to change one's sound from time to time. That applies to the floor toms too. I'm thinking that Christian Vander often had several floor toms tuned very high. If I get an extra one to add to my 14" and 16", I can have a really high one, a medium one, and a really low one. That's my philosophy with tom tuning anyway: Don't have this standard pitch drop." Morgan sings a standard rock fill with toms spaced an interval of a perfect third apart. "I'd rather have great extremes in pitch from tom to tom."

Ågren has stated that, aside from an occasional tutor, he's self-taught. How



does a DIY player learn intricacy and speed on three bass drums? Well, the first step would be matching up his right hand and right foot—perfectly in sync. That flies in the face of traditional instructional methods that presume that since the right hand and right foot naturally jibe, it's more productive to coax them to execute independent, non-overlapping patterns.

Morgan considers the point, but responds characteristically: "I didn't devise all these patterns as a means of exercising feet and hands; I created them because I thought they sounded cool. That's what always motivated me. And the result, technically speaking, is that I have a sort of MIDI cable connecting my right foot and right hand! Even if I'm rolling double strokes with the hand, I have no problem matching the fast doubles with my foot."

Ågren has a short attention span for technical issues. Strange that a drummer steeped in a pool of wicked chops should be almost anti-drummer in his distaste for

sacred stickings, rudiments, and flavor-of-the-month fills. The feeling is compounded when you check out Morgan with Glenn Hughes, Kaipa, Mats Morgan, or Zappa's Universe, in which you hear brute drumming energy, brute power drumming, and brute chops.

To really understand Morgan Ågren, bravely take the plunge and listen to any of the albums listed in his discography. Or try this: Seek out one of the more accessible Magma albums, say *1001 Degrees Centigrade*, on which pagan chants and militaristic drums lead into an oasis of pretty melodies, sparkling Fender Rhodes, and the dark wash of Ågren hero Christian Vander's treasured old Turkish cymbals. Listen intently and you'll get it. Morgan Ågren's music too embodies wild man and rational man. That duality is the essential state, the driving wheel, for this Swedish wonder drummer.



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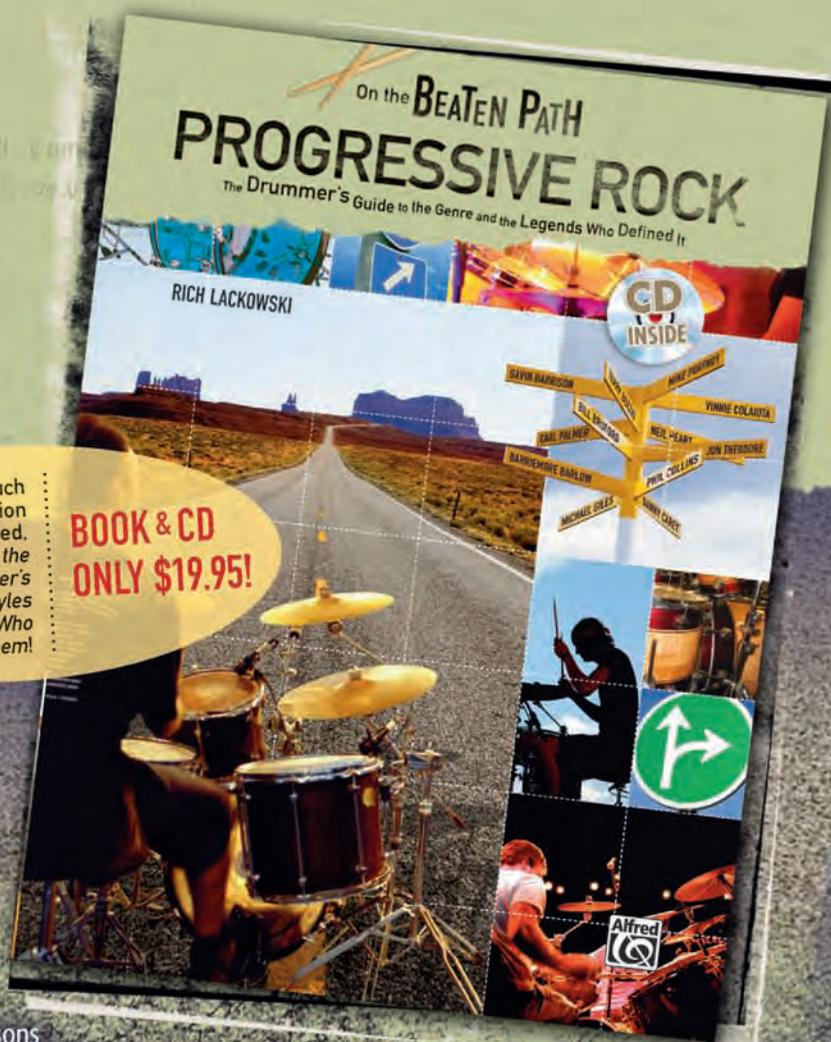
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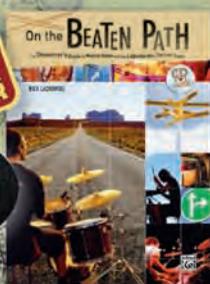
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Like many professional drummers striving to maintain a career as a session musician during a time when the music industry is in constant flux, New York City-based session master Nir Z (Zidkyahu) spends a lot of time producing, engineering, and tracking drums for various projects in his personal studio. Of course, when “big dog” producers such as Steve Lillywhite need somebody to throw down some intense beats for a rock star like Chris Cornell (*Carry On*) or to find the perfect pocket with a pop singer-songwriter like Jason Mraz (*Mr. A-Z*), Nir is often the first guy to get the call. (Nir also played on singer/guitarist John Mayer’s breakthrough hit, *Room For Squares*, and he appeared on prog-rock legends Genesis’s 1997 CD/DVD *Calling All Stations*.)

When he’s not tracking big-budget records in the finest million-dollar drum



rooms in New York, Los Angeles, and Nashville, Nir will most likely be found in his Brooklyn studio’s control room editing MIDI grooves for the innovative drum software Superior Drummer 2.0, or out in the live room adjusting mics on his GMS kit for an afternoon recording session. On the opposite side of the space, Nir has set up a Hart Dynamics electronic kit, which the drummer uses to create the MIDI grooves that he’s been tweaking.

Initially it may seem ironic that a sea-

soned drummer—who’s spent years gaining complete control over his time, feel, and sound on acoustic drums—is now a major advocate of using a drum sample program like Superior Drummer 2.0, which gives anyone who buys it instant access to pristine sounds that were recorded in some of the finest studios in the world. After all, this current technological advancement is causing many drummers to react with suspicion, similar to the way acoustic pianists felt forced to embrace





1



2

MIKE 'EM LIKE A PRO

1) Nir's over/under snare miking technique using a pair of Shure SM57s.
 2) A long boom stand brings a coincidental pair of Shure SM81s into the overhead position above the kick.
 3) Sennheiser 421s are placed two or three finger widths from the tom heads.
 4) A double-miked kick using a Shure Beta52 and a Yamaha Subkick.



3



4

synthesizers in the '80s in order to remain relevant in modern music. But, as Nir says with a slight smile, "This is the way of the future, buddy."

After checking out the basic studio lay-

Although a good chunk of his focus these days is on electronic drum technology, Nir remains one of the most sought-after studio musicians around. So what's the secret to becoming a successful ses-

session player? "It's very important to have the correct balance between the snare, hat, and kick in your grooves," Nir says. "Try recording yourself with just one mic, and listen to how everything blends together. Play four bars with everything at a loud volume, and then immediately bring

drum machines, you *have* to have that kind of control in order to be a pro session player."
 To hear some tracks that Nir recorded at his studio, go to www.nirz.com.



out, which also includes a small isolation booth behind the control room ("for a tighter drum sound") and a basement full of vintage and modern drums, Sabian cymbals, Evans drumheads, Pro-Mark sticks, and an assortment of percussion, we asked Nir if he's had to adjust his drumming technique to accommodate playing on electronic pads. "At first it was really intimidating," he admits. "My goal has always been to deliver energy when I play—the sweat—even on recordings. But when you play on electronic drums there's a limit to how much sound you can produce; you can't respond to the music by just hitting the pads harder. You also have to memorize *where* you hit the pads in order to trigger the samples with the proper dynamics."

it down soft for four bars. Once you have control over that, drop one limb down while the others stay loud. It's very unnatural to do this, but it helps develop dynamic control.

"You also need to learn how to play around the click," Nir continues. "There are three stages to playing with a click: dead on, ahead, and behind. The challenge is not only maintaining one of those placements but also being able to flex the time a little. For example, can you play ahead of the click in the verse and then make it feel a little behind the beat when you play a fill into the next section? Phil Collins did that really well with Genesis, so there was always a bit of drama when he played fills. And now that everybody uses technology and



DOWN IN THE CELLAR

Nir's studio basement houses racks of modern and vintage snares (top) as well as vintage Slingerland, Rogers, and Ludwig drumsets.



RECORDINGS



FRANZ FERDINAND
TONIGHT: FRANZ FERDINAND

★★★★★
Back in '79 Blondie, The Stones, and The Kinks taught us that a band could boogie to the beat of a spinning disco ball and still bring the ROCK. Over the years a host of indie bands have confirmed this, from The Dambuilders to Blonde Redhead to CSS—even the Chili Peppers dabbled on *Stadium Arcadium*. On Franz Ferdinand's third album, we're again reminded how simpleminded that old war chant "Disco sucks!" really was. **PAUL THOMPSON** kicks off FF's return to the dance floor (after a rockier sophomore disc) with "Ulysses," which starts with a swifty cross-stick pattern but ends with a bombastic, pure-garage tom fill. Later he's ready with big *I-mean-it* beats ("Bite Hard"), a relaxed and easy "Some Kinda Wonderful" feel ("Send Him Away"), and playful hi-hat/electronic choreography ("Live Alone"). Good work. (Domino/Epic)
Adam Budofsky



ALTERED ANGULAR

★★★★★
Throw Steve Khan and Tribal Tech into a blender, mix well, add equal amounts of Weckl and Bruford, and toss in a dash of Colaiuta for flavor. On *Angular*, the tasty guitar/bass/drums trio known as Altered serves up a powerful compositional blend of instrumental electric fusion with a jagged edge—nothing smooth about this collection. Drummer **STEVE HOLMES** (of House Of Drumming fame) commands attention with his forceful yet jazzy approach to this tricky batch of heady material. (alteredjazz.com)
Mike Haid



MARSHALL GILKES
LOST WORDS

★★★★★
Gilkes is an impressive rising jazz trombonist/leader with a pure focused tone, nimble chops, and an engaging sound that embraces straight-ahead with shades of classical. Versatile in-demand drummer **CLARENCE PENN** zeroes in on Gilkes' wavelength. Quickly shifting gears, Penn delivers tight ensemble parts with exacting articulation, then bursts free with fierce, popping swing. From tender to growling, Penn orchestrates the unpredictable arrangements. Notable work also from **John Cowherd** on piano, **Michael Rodriguez** on trumpet, and **Yasushi Nakamura** on bass. (Alternate Side)
Jeff Potter

ENCORE

by Ken Micallef

MILES DAVIS
KIND OF BLUE 50TH ANNIVERSARY REISSUE

A hard-swinging master of minimalism, Jimmy Cobb provided a subtle rhythmic halo on *Kind Of Blue*, the best-selling jazz album of all time. Throughout, Cobb's ride cymbal propels the music, its huge sonic shimmer guiding the musicians with great dynamics and PRAT (pace, rhythm, and timing). A primer in modal jazz, *Kind Of Blue* remains a classic for good reason, and this ultra-decked-out package featuring a DVD documentary, a 60-page coffee table book, an extra CD's worth of tracks, a poster—even an LP version of the album—is an enormously classy and cool way to experience it.

JIMMY COBB ON KIND OF BLUE
How were the drums recorded on *Kind Of Blue*?

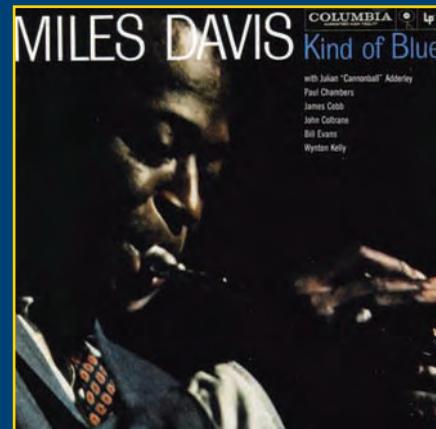
The engineer at Columbia's 30th Street studio knew every spot on the floor that sounded good for the drums. They put a mic close to the ride cymbal so you can hear the ping and the cymbal knock. The wood against the cymbal.

Did you check the playbacks?

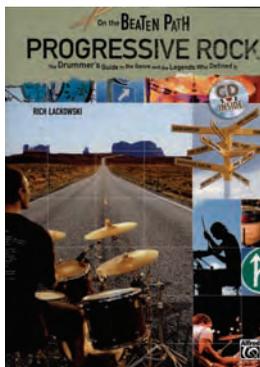
Yes, I just wanted a clear sound that wasn't overshadowing everything. I wanted it to sound like me playing the drums.

How did it feel to replace Philly Joe Jones?

When I first got into the band I was playing some of the same things that Philly Joe was. But the music was changing; Miles stopped playing a bunch of changes and started playing just scales and a few chords. But I was glad I didn't have to play like Joe!



MULTIMEDIA



ON THE BEATEN PATH: PROGRESSIVE ROCK

BY RICH LACKOWSKI

★★★★★

BOOK/CD
LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED
\$19.95

There has been one constant in progressive rock's evolution from a subgenre rooted in classical and jazz to its present-day form where heavier bands are considered part of the pack: The drumming has been consistently awesome. Capturing the essence of prog drumming in an educational book isn't

easy, but Rich Lackowski does a fine job in this latest installment of his *On The Beaten Path* series. Biographies of standout drummers (Peart, Portnoy, and Colaiuta, among others) and transcriptions of their signature performances give readers a two-pronged crash course. And by devoting pages to unheralded members of the old school (Jethro Tull's Barriemore Barlow) and star pupils of the new school (former Mars Volta drummer Jon Theodore), Lackowski proves himself a true aficionado and a trusted source.

Patrick Berkery

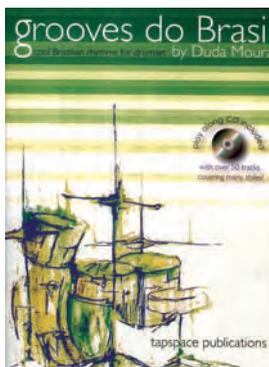


JAZZ CLASSICS

BOOK/CD LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE
\$14.95

★★★★★

The lack of a credited author should hint that this is a pretty stock affair, offering no instruction. The volume does, however, provide authentic examples of big-band jazz charts, and the adequate play-along CD tracks are well chosen. At only ten tunes, it's a bit lean, but the material is on target. Generic but useful. (Hal Leonard) **Jeff Potter**



GROOVES DO BRASIL

BY DUDA MOURA

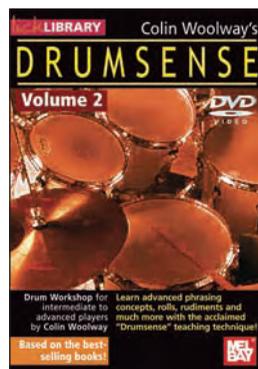
BOOK/CD

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED
\$19.95

★★★★★

This brief but effective sampling of Brazilian drumset grooves ranges from the familiar traditional to modern hybrids not as commonly covered (samba-reggae, samba-funk). Preceding the transcriptions are helpful breakdowns of the grooves' native percussion roots. The demo/play-along CD is the package's

virtue, featuring Duda Moura's spirited group fronted by dual acoustic guitars. The authentic feels speak volumes. (Tapspace Publications) **Jeff Potter**



DRUMSENSE VOL. 2

BY COLIN WOOLWAY

DVD LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE \$19.95

★★★★★

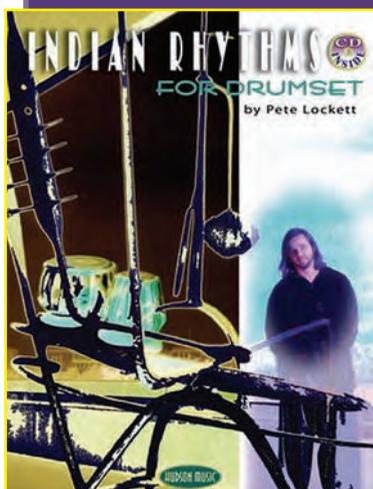
Based on Woolway's *Drumsense* method books and highlighting rock drumset beats and fills for the beginner, this DVD falls short in several areas in terms of a newbie's comprehension level. From the opening exercise, Woolway assumes that the viewer understands how to play and count 8th notes. And unfortunately there's no enclosed booklet or online PDF downloads

to help him or her get there. The production quality is top-notch, however, including split-screen views of foot pedals. But beginners should invest in basic lessons before plunking down the bucks for this DVD. (Mel Bay) **Mike Haid**

WORLD BEATS

by Robin Tolleson

These three new instructional treats will expand your thinking. And yes, the stretch will be good for you.



INDIAN RHYTHMS FOR DRUMSET BY PETE LOCKETT

★★★★★

BOOK LEVEL: ADVANCED \$24.95

As a way of subdividing rhythms, either to simplify a difficult part or enhance a groove, the Carnatic rhythmic tradition of Southern India holds intriguing possibilities for drummers. A welcome sight, then, is Pete Lockett's book *Indian Rhythms For Drumset*. Lockett explains the traditional Indian vocal syllables used for counting irregular rhythmic groupings, and then how these phonetics can be spread out on the drumkit. An understanding of the roots of Indian phrasing could bear fruit for drummers in virtually every genre. Includes a CD containing MP3 files of 200 exercises plus three play-along tracks. (Hudson)

A MODERN APPROACH TO PANDEIRO

FEATURING MARCUS SANTOS

★★★★★

DVD LEVEL: ALL \$30

The two-hour DVD *A Modern Approach To Pandeiro*, featuring Marcus Santos, covers everything from the physical make-up of the drum (unique with a tunable head) and its social history in Brasil, to grips, tones, technique, and its relation to its American cousin, the tambourine. A relaxed host, Santos discusses muffling methods, different slaps and rolls, the application of rudiments such as the flam and drag, and more. (marcussantos@playpandeiro.com)

ALL ABOUT HAND PERCUSSION BY KALANI

★★★★★

BOOK LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE \$17.95

Even if you claim to be solely a trapset drummer, you should have a basic knowledge of hand percussion. (And rest assured, there *will* come a day when you're handed something to shake, slap, or scrape, or when you'll want to join a jam but there's no kit in sight.) In the book *All About Hand Percussion*, Kalani divides the instruments into groups by metal, wood, and shakers/rattles, shares the history along with notated examples of each, and provides audio and visual instruction on an enhanced CD. (Alfred)



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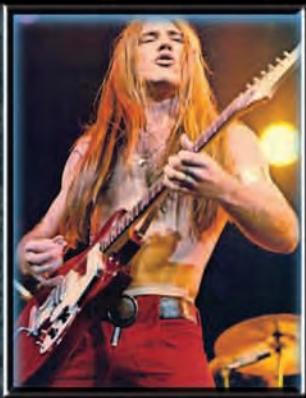
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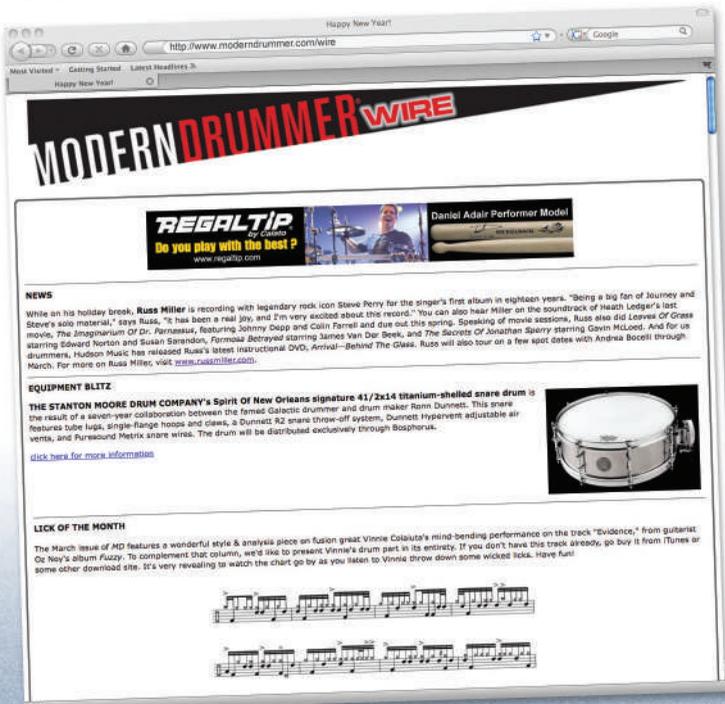
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MODERNDRUMMER
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William F. Miller

June 21, 1961–December 12, 2008

Last December 12, *Modern Drummer* editor in chief William F. Miller passed away after a long and noble bout with cancer. He was forty-seven years old.

Bill began his career at *Modern Drummer* as an intern over twenty years ago, and after a few months came on board full-time as an associate editor. He was appointed to the position of features editor following the departure of longtime *MD* staffer Rick Mattingly, and after the death of *MD* founder Ron Spagnardi in 2003, he took over the top post on staff.

Bill was raised in Elgin, Illinois, where he showed promise on the drums early, participating in the Elgin Youth Symphony up until his college years. Later he attended Northern Illinois University, then transferred to the University of Miami, from which he received a bachelor's degree in music. After moving to New Jersey to work at *Modern Drummer*, he regularly played in local rock, folk, and jazz bands, and continued studying the drums, including lessons with Joe Morello.

While at *Modern Drummer*, Bill worked with many writers on features and other articles for the magazine, and also gave advice and guidance to top player/authors whose books *MD* published. Among them were Bobby Rondinelli's *Encyclopedia Of Double Bass Drumming* and Bill's close friend Billy Ward's *Inside Out: Exploring The Mental Aspects Of Drumming*, as well as Ron Spagnardi's *The Great Jazz Drummers*. Bill was also known for his incisive interviews with drummers ranging from Phil Collins and Omar Hakim to Billy Martin and Stanton Moore.

Bill Miller is survived by his parents, Clifford and Isabel; his wife, Sarah; and his son, Clifford. An online memorial to him is currently being established, featuring quotes from friends and



associates. We've decided to include just a few of them here because they give particularly good insight into Bill's talents as an editor and his long-lasting impression as an individual.

Please allow me to convey my sadness at Bill Miller's passing, at much too young an age. We went back quite a way, Bill and I, and he was always much too generous in praise of my work. One of my favorite memories of him is receiving the MD Hall Of Fame award in 1990, on stage at the Bottom Line in NYC—a great evening and a real honor. He was in top form. We shall all really miss him, and please add my voice to the chorus that you will be receiving in praise of Bill, whose life was cut too short.

Bill Bruford



Bill at a recent outdoor gig (left), and with his son, Clifford.

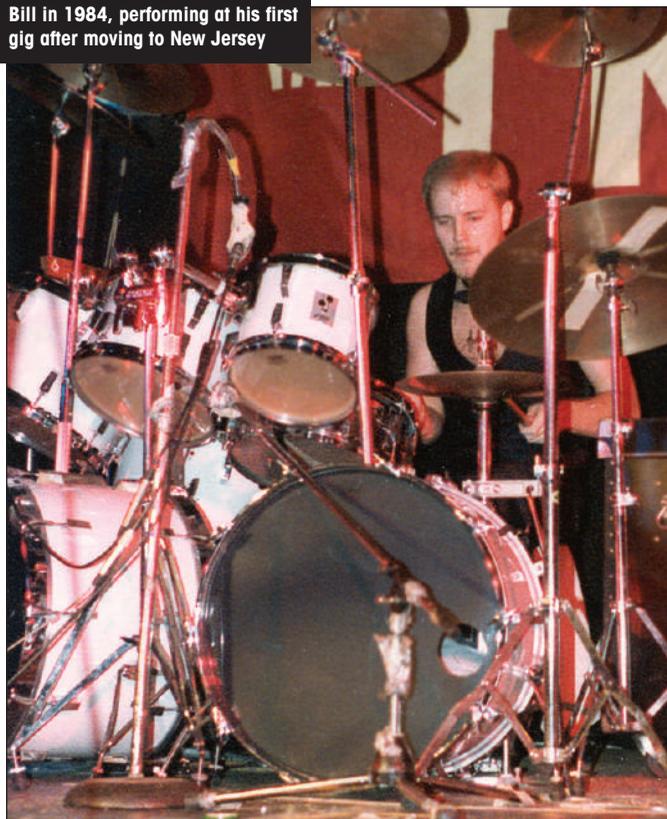
I am heartbroken upon hearing the news of MD editor in chief Bill Miller's passing. I spoke to him as recently as October and he never let on how ill he was. He always made time to talk to me on the phone about articles and educational endeavors. I credit Bill Miller and the team at MD for helping me establish myself as a drum clinician. His work as editor of this magazine brought us all together as a drumming community, and I will miss him very much.

Jim Riley, drummer/musical director for Rascal Flatts

Bill was not only an editor, but a mentor and guru to all of us freelance contributors at Modern Drummer. I was rather young and in college when I first started working with Bill as a contributor, and I think he saw potential in what has now blossomed into a ten-year relationship with MD. I'd like to believe he had some keen foresight: After college, I served as editor in chief of Southern California's largest regional music magazine for five years. Now I'm an adjunct professor of journalism at two colleges here in Southern California. Bill very graciously wrote a letter of recommendation to my graduate program and was always tracking my successes, taking an interest in what I was doing. My personal encounters with Bill were few and brief, but always meaningful. I pray for his family, and for all at the Modern Drummer office, his other family.

Waleed Rashidi

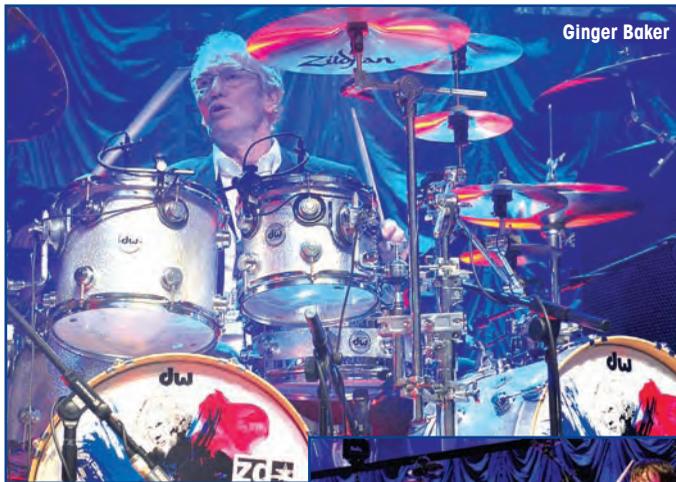
Bill in 1984, performing at his first gig after moving to New Jersey



ZILDJIAN DRUMMERS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

At Shepherds Bush Empire in London this past December, Zildjian held its third Drummers Achievement Awards, both to honor **Ginger Baker** and to commemorate the company's 385th anniversary. The event was packed with fine music and was also something of an unofficial tribute to the recently passed **Mitch Mitchell**.

After British comedian Al Murray warmed up the audience, **Keith Carlock** played several Cream tunes, plus Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression" to honor Mitchell. On bass with Carlock was the great Tony Levin. **Simon Phillips** came on next, also backed by Levin, and played a blend of material by Cream and another of Baker's old bands, The Graham Bond Organisation. After Phillips dedicated "Spanish Castle Magic" to Mitchell,

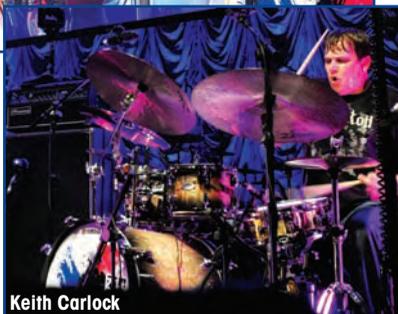


Ginger Baker

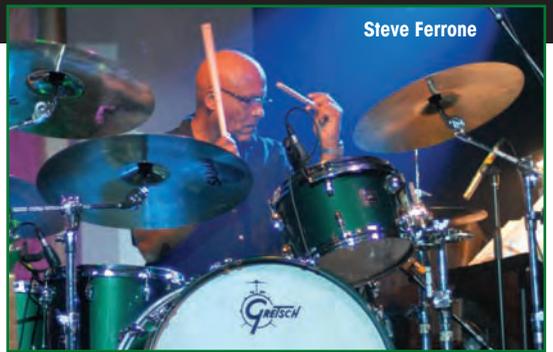
the drummer invited Carlock back for a set-closing version of Blind Faith's "Can't Find My Way Home."

Following a performance by **Steve White** & Trio Valore with special guest Jon Lord, **Bob Henrit** (Kinks, Argent) set up a video tribute for Baker that included a message from Eric Clapton. When it was **Charlie Watts**'s turn to present

Ginger's award, he simply said "The best" and brought up the man of the evening. As Baker sat at his kit, he was joined by Cream bassist Jack Bruce and a horn section. After a few standards and Ginger's own "Cyril Davies," Baker announced that he and Bruce would play a number they hadn't done in forty-two years, "Traintime," and the Cream classic tore the roof off Shepherds Bush. The evening ended with a free jam of African tribal rhythms by Baker, Afro-beat master **Tony Allen**, and percussionist **Abass Doodoo**.



Keith Carlock



Steve Ferrone

GRETSCH 125TH ANNIVERSARY BIG EVENT

Where have 125 years gone? Last November, Gretsch, the oldest family-owned drum and guitar maker in the country, celebrated its 125th anniversary in high style at New York City's Highline Ballroom. The evening, dubbed **The Big Event**, featured a varied bill of seasoned Gretsch artists and newer acts.

First up was the Florida indie rock band Colourslide, featuring drummer **Steve Julian**, winner of the Next Gretsch Greats competition for unsigned artists. Then came the South Carolina "psychobilly" group David Lee & His Mercenaries, with **Eric Pullen** on drums. And in a rare club showing, Grammy-nominated Fountains Of Wayne, with drummer **Brian Young**, entertained the crowd with its sly power pop. Capping the show was a set of rock, funk, and blues from an all-star house band with **Steve Ferrone** at the throne, G.E. Smith on guitar, and musical director Chuck Leavell on keys and lead vocals.

Between acts, a DVD presentation provided insight into the history of the company, and owners Fred and Dinah Gretsch welcomed the audience and thanked the many people who helped make the event possible. Kaman Music Corporation, which distributes Gretsch drums, then surprised Fred and Dinah with a unique anniversary-model snare drum, and guitar distributor Fender offered them a one-of-a-kind anniversary guitar.

On display, for attendees such as jazz drummer **Bill Stewart**, bass star Will Lee, and Gretsch aficionados from around the country who'd registered online to attend the event, were special-edition 125th Anniversary Gretsch drumkits, provided by Steve Maxwell Vintage & Custom Drums of NYC. And Fred and Dinah Gretsch had a surprise of their own up their sleeve: They presented Gretsch artist **Cindy Blackman** with a cake for her birthday, which she was celebrating that evening.



Brian Young

CASCIO INTERSTATE DRUMMERFEST 2008

A wide-ranging but thoroughly inspired roster of timekeepers anchored Cascio Interstate's DrummerFest 2008 in New Berlin, Wisconsin, last November, making sure the 1,000-plus fans in attendance left with ears happily stuffed.

Johnny Rabb got the crowd going with a display of his groundbreaking sticking techniques on a Roland electronic system. True to form, he showed off his mad skills without breaking a sweat. Rascal Flatts' **Jim Riley** followed with a set that showcased his versatility. From a whisper to a roar, from feather-light jazz to boulder-heavy rock, Riley provided yet another plug for the great music program of his alma mater, North Texas State.

The third drummer on the program was progressive ace **Marco Minnemann**, who arrived with a stunner of a kit that featured multiple pedals, stacked cymbals, and a gong bass drum. Who could follow Minnemann's mesmerizing blend of chops and independence? In two words, **Dennis Chambers**. All of Chambers' many assets—including precision, speed, and filthy funk—were trotted out to the obvious delight of the crowd.

The final performance was a collaboration and trade-off between the artists. Dynamics were the name of the game here, as the fifteen-minute finale began at full volume, shrank to a whisper, and then, you guessed it, ended with a bang.



Dennis Chambers



Jim Riley





IN MEMORY OF
BILL MILLER

JUNE 21, 1961 - DECEMBER 12, 2008



SHRINK-TO-FIT KIT

Our latest Kit Of The Month comes from John Boeve, in response to the article by Ben Meyer in *MD's* December '08 issue about creating a hybrid percussion kit. After rocking a massive kit for thirty-five years, John no longer wanted to schlep it around Austin, where he moved to five years ago. "I hooked up with an excellent group of guys playing electrified acoustic with four-part harmonies," he explains, "and they demanded a drummer to be super simple yet tasty. So I've realized that sometimes you need to re-create yourself in order to survive in the music scene.

"I built this rig out of new and old gear," the drummer continues. "The kick is a 20" Slingerland from the '60s that I cut down and mounted on a board using no spurs. I engineered my own tambourine/kick using a cheap pedal and some miscellaneous parts. And I made the remote hi-hat from a \$60 hi-hat stand and \$10 worth of bicycle brake cable. It's funny how we come full circle in our life of drumming and start using the pots and pans that got us started in the first place!"



Photo Submission: Digital photos on disk as well as print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Hi-res digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to billya@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.

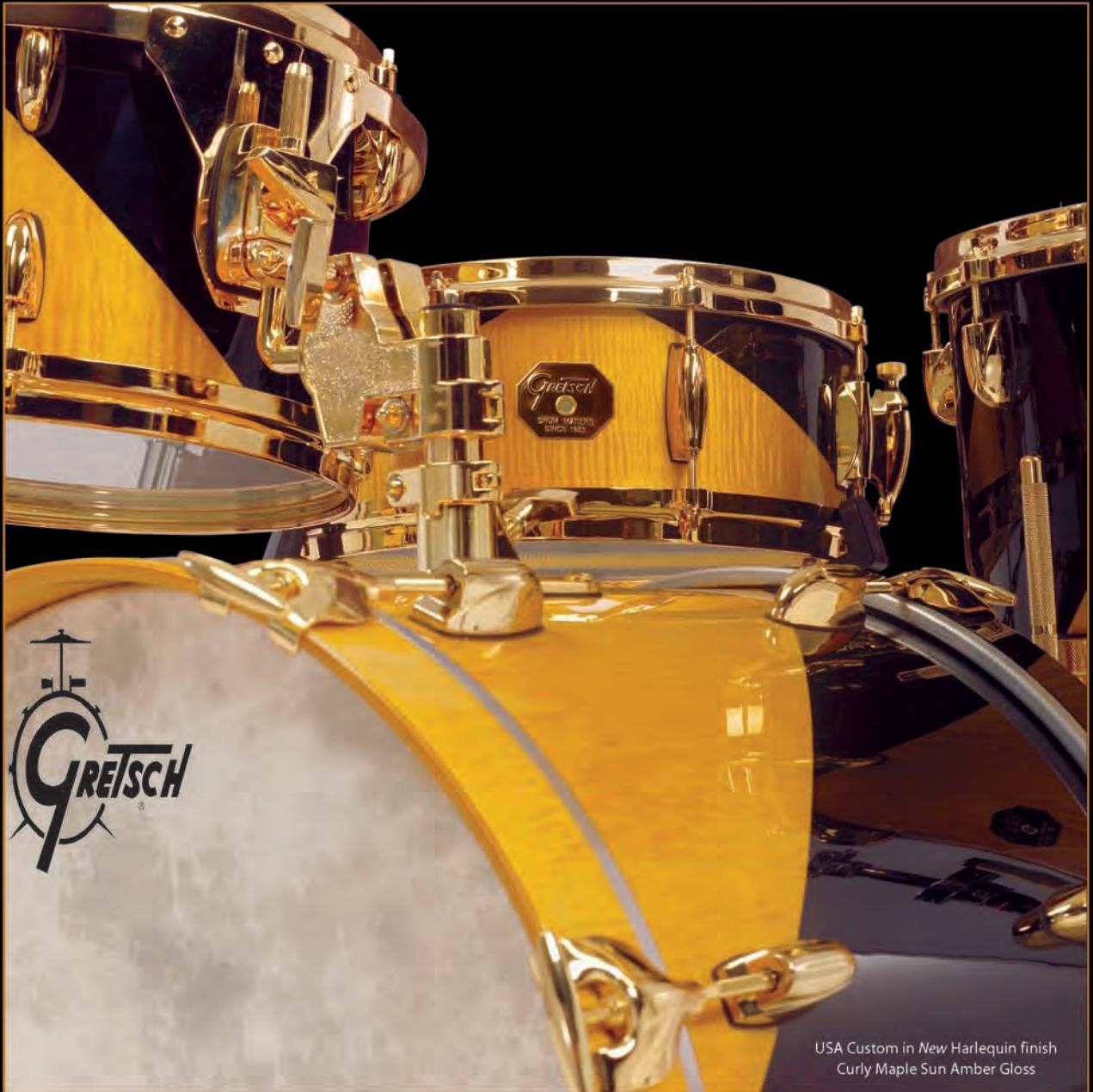


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