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JANUARY 2010

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Rahav Segev

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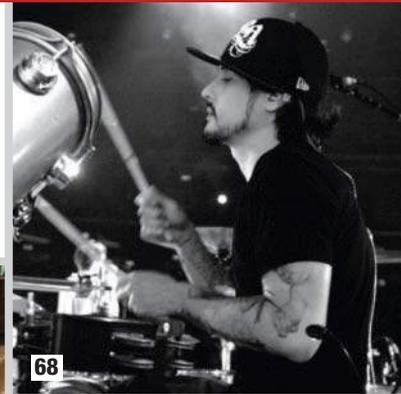
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MAKING IT WORK ON THE ROAD

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Courtesy of Zildjian



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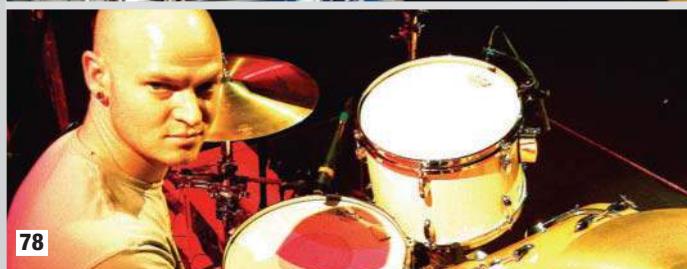
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# UNCOVERING "IT"

I've always been fascinated by the intangibles of drumming—the empty spaces between the notes, the seemingly inaudible yet crucial frequencies that make a particular ride cymbal or snare drum sound so sweet, the “oomph” factor of a perfectly tuned and properly muffled bass drum.... But there's one mystery that's puzzled me the most: What is that “thing” some drummers possess that makes their playing so much more powerful and emotionally stirring than that of many others?

The first time I noticed this “It factor” was when I attended a jazz convention about ten years ago. The event featured dozens of clinics, master classes, and concerts, by some of the most respected musicians on the planet. Everyone played great, and I was constantly being inspired to practice harder and to try new ideas. But when then up-and-coming drummer Brian Blade took the stage for a performance with the Joshua Redman Quartet, the room became *electric*. From the first cymbal strike, chills shot down my spine, and the hair on the back of my neck stood up straight. What I was experiencing was deep; it hit me in my soul. The same thing happened when I first saw Wilco's Glenn Kotche perform his brilliant solo drum composition “Monkey Chant,” when Billy Kilson floored me with some slick odd-meter grooves at a festival gig with the Dave Holland Quintet, and when Brad Wilk and Rage Against The Machine had me and a crowd of thousands bouncing in unison during their opening set at Lollapalooza.

So what is it about these and many other performers that makes them so extraordinary? I'm still searching for the definitive answer, if it even exists. But for now I've whittled it down to three essential traits—passion, presence, and positivity.

The most inspiring drummers have a high level of passion for what they do, and they always put forth their best effort, whether they're playing to a sellout crowd at Madison Square Garden or to two people at the dive bar down the street. It's not a question of whether being a drummer is what they're meant to do. They believe wholeheartedly: *This—this gig,*

*this song, this beat—is all that matters.*

Presence is tough to define, but you know it when you feel it. Think of the sensation you get when your favorite band first steps on stage; it's mesmerizing. Drummers who have great presence are able to keep their audience captivated—through focus, concentration, and staying in the moment—from their first note to their very last.

Positivity is perhaps the most crucial piece of the puzzle. A drummer can be passionate about the music and have a lot of intensity in his or her playing, but if there's a constant flow of negative thoughts flowing in the back of the mind (“These people don't understand me,” “I'm way too good for this band,” “When are we going to play for a *real* crowd?”), there's no chance of making a true connection with the audience. Great drummers project strong, honest, and positive vibes whenever they perform. This doesn't mean smiling, laughing, or acting like a clown (although that can sometimes work too). It's more about creating a sense of constant forward momentum that makes everyone feel good and emotionally involved in the music.

In this issue we feature a diverse group of drummers who bring these intangible “It” qualities to the stage, day in and day out. Their gigs may be vastly different—arena tours for Muse's Dom Howard, 2,000-seat theaters for Gov't Mule's Matt Abts, intimate jazz clubs for Branford Marsalis newcomer Justin Faulkner—but their intentions remain the same: to respect the music, to perform at the highest level, and to give their audience the most enjoyable experience possible. We hope you find a few useful nuggets in their stories that you can work into your own playing situations.

To coincide with this month's live theme, we're posting a list on our Web sites of what we feel are the twenty-seven greatest live albums ever made. Go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) or [myspace.com/moderndrummermagazine](http://myspace.com/moderndrummermagazine), and let us know what you think.

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## GIMME 10!

In the September issue, Dena Tauriello gives some sound advice that can keep us focused while on the road. She speaks of things we should all do before, during, and after a performance. If you've seen her play, as I have, you can tell that she follows her own advice. As I look back at my thirty-plus (*many* pluses) years of drumming, I see where I learned the hard way. Rock on, Dena!

**Larry Smith**



I've been a reader of *Modern Drummer* since 1986, and I never felt compelled to write to the magazine until I read the "practical advice" given by Mark O'Connell in October's Gimme 10! Much of O'Connell's so-called advice is simply ridiculous, and quite frankly I'm surprised that *MD* even printed some of his recommendations. "Beat the crap out of" the drums? Anyone taking this advice might as well go ahead and book their appointment for carpal tunnel surgery. Oh, and you'll probably never require any muffling for your drums since you'll most likely be choking them with every strike.

Don't wear gloves because they "look horrible"? Yeah, Carter Beauford, Stewart Copeland, Bun E. Carlos, and Jason Bittner sure do look ridiculous with those gloves on! I recommend that all drummers try a pair of gloves for themselves and see what they think. I personally wear Zildjian gloves and love them. Not because they prevent blisters, but because they allow me to have a much lighter grip on the sticks, which lets me play longer and faster without any cramping or fatigue.

Cut class so that you can play drums? This is probably the most irresponsible advice I have ever seen a professional drummer give. My advice for all young drummers out there would be to do as well as possible in school and not cut any classes,

so you have something to fall back on if a drumming career doesn't work out. I believe the vast majority of your readers would agree with my advice on this subject.

**Chris Glenn**

## BUN E.

Thank you for the Update on Bun E. Carlos in the September issue. And I was very glad to see the Ludwig ad back on the inside front



cover, marking their hundredth anniversary with Bun E.'s signature snare. I'm a huge fan and a friend of Bun E.'s, and I'm happy that he's still working and influencing a whole new generation of drummers. The Tinted Windows project is great power pop, and Cheap Trick's new CD, *The Latest*, is a great addition to their discography. Bun E.'s drumming is spot on!

**Kat Almlie**

## MORE REASONS TO LOVE NEIL PEART

I just finished reading "Reasons To Love Neil Peart" in the October issue. I think all the reasons are very good, and I was surprised at how many people from various musical styles consider Neil a "certified drum god." His style and command of his instrument have influenced so many, me included. Like Chad Szeliga, I find myself sometimes wanting to be "just like Neil." Thanks for a great magazine—can't wait for more!

**Michael Gaffney**



Some have simply stated that if you want to succeed, aim high. Well, when I threw my hat into the ring of authorship and writing pieces for *Modern Drummer*, my lofty inspiration was none other than the mighty, multifaceted Neil Peart. His prose and poetry, along with the music he's created with Rush, supported me through my years of medical training and my passionate endeavors as a drummer. I am confident this unseen sustenance will continue with writing. A very warm thank-you to Mr. Peart for your years of generous, perhaps fortuitous, leadership.

**Asif Khan, MD**

*Modern Drummer* contributing writer

Perhaps because Adam Budofsky is the editorial director of this magazine, he feels he has license to express something bad about any professional musician. Buddy Rich, a world-renowned drummer, could get away with making comments like, "There are only two kinds of drummers, good ones and bad ones." But Mr. Budofsky, being a journalist, has not earned that privilege as far as I'm concerned. Mr. Peart's work has only one distinction that I can think of that you might find unpleasant: His drumming doesn't sound like every other copy-cat rock drummer's. His drumming and his band are inseparable. I'm no longer interested in reading a magazine that has anything negative to say about either.

**John Chanik**

Thank you for the piece on Neil Peart. It was interesting to hear how so many prominent drummers have been influenced by Mr. Peart or acknowledge his contributions to the drumming world at large. I enjoyed those "non-Rush fan" comments, as well as the ones from those who were "weaned" on Neil, as I was.

**Jamie (Dinko) Davies**

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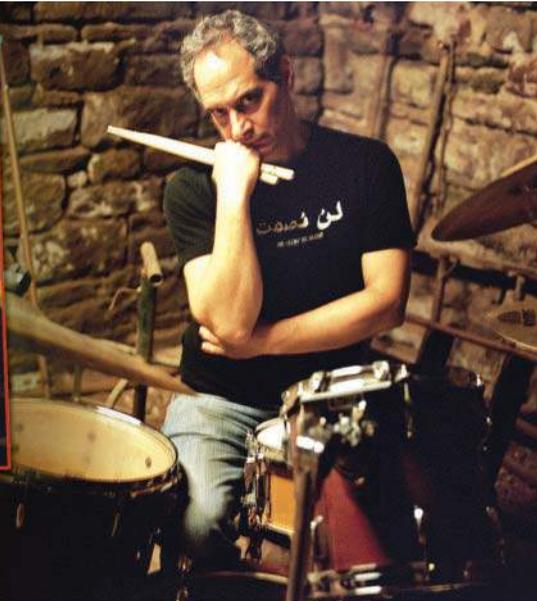
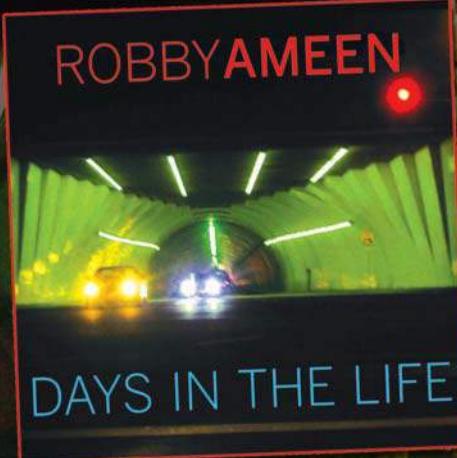
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# JASON BITTNER



Alex Salca

JB pumped out two flesh-melting releases in 2009: *Retribution*, by the thrash superstars Shadows Fall, and *Resurrection Through Fire*, by the cult hardcore death metal band Burning Human. **We asked the drummer to compare his approach to each double-bass-blasting project.**



**F**irst off, I'd like to say that my two recent recordings encapsulate the best work I've ever done. As you may have guessed, both recordings are in the metal genre. The Burning Human album, however, is rooted in hardcore (breakdowns, fast skank beats) and death metal (blast beats, fast double bass, aggressive vocals), while Shadows Fall is a more thrash-oriented band with a melodic side. Shadows Fall has plenty of aggression, but we also showcase melodic vocals and acoustic interludes. Burning Human is stripped-down, brutal aggression at all times!

As far as my thinking goes for each project, I have a lot more room to go for it with Burning Human than I do with Shadows Fall. The songs have a lot of space for me to express myself. But when I was working on *Resurrection Through Fire* I always kept in mind that it wasn't a drum solo record. Although there's a lot of aggression with the blast beats, double bass, and such, there's also a lot of groove inside the drum parts. There's even a song where I comfortably place an African nanigo beat at the end of a verse.

In Shadows Fall, first and foremost I have to adjust my thinking to the song, not to my own ego. We have a lot of catchy vocals and guitar parts happening, so I want to avoid stepping on some-

one else's toes. This doesn't mean I don't get to play a lot on *Retribution*. But it's because the songwriting called for it, not because I wanted to randomly throw double bass rolls all over the place. With Shadows Fall as opposed to Burning Human, I'm always as concerned with what the rest of the guys are doing as I am with my own parts. Since Shadows Fall is my "career" band, I always try to remember that the song comes first. Sometimes your ego needs to check itself at the door.

On the other hand, I don't want to paint the picture that with Burning Human "I'm going to play whatever the heck I want, and you guys deal with it." Simply put, we just don't have as many catchy choruses and parts to work around. So it enables me to stretch out a little more.

As far as my attitude goes, I approach both bands the same way: I want to do my best! It is a lot easier for me to go to Burning Human practice with a challenging drum part that I've been working on and find a way to fit it into a tune somewhere, simply because I do a lot more writing, musically and lyrically, within that band. The process is not so easy with Shadows Fall, since I'm only 20 percent of the songwriting team, and we always keep the team in mind.

In terms of technique, both bands encompass the same metal drumming techniques and require the same amount of effort. The obvious thing that I had to work on with Burning Human was brushing up on blast beats and being able to play them solidly, consistently, and with conviction. It was challenging at first, but I really put a lot of time into it, and I think it shows on the record.

I've always considered myself more of a thrash metal drummer than a death metal drummer, so some of the Burning Human material was challenging to get right. And as always, I knew I'd be playing it live. There was no room for cheating or saying "That's good enough." On the Shadows Fall CD, there are some songs that have my signature double bass work, but it seems like some of the passages were twice as long as they had been in the past. This, in turn, required me to go back and work on my stamina and endurance with the faster tempos (190–220 bpm) during our writing sessions. But, ironically, the Burning Human recording and gigs actually made this a lot easier to accomplish, since most of those songs were in that same tempo range. In the end, I couldn't be happier with the outcome of both recordings. I'm extremely satisfied.



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# UPDATE



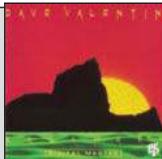
## ROBBY AMEEN

The debut CD by Rubén Blades' drummer will make you alter your definition of Latin jazz—and give you new reasons to hit the practice room.

**R**obby Ameen recently completed a three-month tour of the Americas, playing stadiums with his longtime employer, Latin superstar Rubén Blades. The drummer, who since the late '80s has logged serious studio and touring

### BREAKOUT BEATS

Flautist Dave Valentin's 1990 recording *Kalahari* finds Robby Ameen in Latin funk lockdown mode. Compared with the then-popular drumming saturations of Dave Weckl and Dennis Chambers, Ameen's supple syncopations sound like an organic Latin revolution. Firmly grounded in Latin tradition yet upending it with an original infusion of funk, soul, and over-the-waterfall groove, Ameen's drumming gives Valentin's music an incredible flow. The title track, cowritten by Valentin and Ameen, is a prime example of Robby's vibe: unexpected snare accents and hybrid bass drum rhythms rolled up in a liquid groove that defies easy categorization.



time with Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez (co-leading three recordings), Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Palmieri, Sting, Mongo Santamaria, Carly Simon, Paul Simon, Conrad Herwig (check out the upcoming *Latin Side Of Herbie Hancock*), and Cab Calloway, has also seen a reissue of his best-selling book and instructional DVD with bassist Lincoln Goines, *Funkifying The Clave*. All of this experience and more comes together to inform Ameen's burning debut CD as a leader, *Days In The Life*.

With a stellar NYC lineup that includes Wayne Krantz, John Beasley, Richie Flores, and Conrad Herwig, *Days* distills Ameen's twenty-plus years of playing experience into a funky, flowing Latin jazz journey. Though he's of Lebanese extraction (and has a BA in literature from Yale University), Robby is a master Latin drummer, and his compositions are equally demonstrative of his super skill set. Exploring both traditional Latin rhythms—such as clave, cascara, cha cha cha, montuno, guaguanco, and tumbao—and fusion hybrids, *Days* is also a study in odd-meter trickery, as in the agitated funk of "2's & 3's."

"2's & 3's" is in 4/4, but it feels like it's all over

the place," Ameen explains from his Manhattan loft. "I sat in on an Emil Richards seminar recently where he was breaking down Indian rhythms. He explained that it's all math and you eventually whittle it down to the lowest common denominator

until you get to twos and threes. For example, if you're going to do four measures of 8th notes, that's a total of thirty-two notes. You can end up with seven groups of two and six groups of three. Seven groups of two is fourteen, and six groups of three is eighteen, so that's your model. Then you just plot them out in any combination. It's infinite. For '2's & 3's' I played a paradiddle combination based on that idea. It's

like a partido alto funk thing."

Further *Days In The Life* time twisters include "Una Muy Anita" (4/4 cha cha cha), "Sound Down" ("an Afro-Cuban 6/8 with straight-ahead jazz," Robby offers), "Ceora" (a slow-motion guaguanco), and "Baakline" ("an Arabic dumbek groove played in 7/4"). Ameen also creates a metal-meets-New Orleans hybrid in "Skateboard Intifada," projected via warring cymbals and rabid double bass drums within a polyrhythmic approach.

"I'd been listening to a lot of Meshuggah," Robby says. "They often keep one pulse going while placing the backbeat in a variety of ways. The metal intro is the cymbals keeping straight time, but in the funkier New Orleans part the hi-hat is more than a timekeeper." Indeed, Ameen often breaks up his pattern on the hats so that it's never static. "We go through three or four different time feels that are subdivided. The dotted 8th is the quarter note, so it can go in a lot of different ways. But the whole tune is in 6/4. Within that, the dotted 8th will cycle around. It takes a few bars to resolve. It's like two over three. It's all straight 8ths, but it's swinging and with a lot of different time feels."

Whether Robby is playing Latin, funk, or straight ahead, a pronounced sense of air, an awareness of the space between the notes, permeates his drumming. It's down to his broad influences and a focus on feel, he explains. "It's about playing feel more than it's about dead-on drum machine perfection," Ameen says. "My favorite drummers—Elvin Jones, John Bonham, Richie Hayward—are so much about the feel. Yogi Horton too. His grooves were about the big picture and the longer four- or eight-bar phrases you hear in dance music. You really felt this whole cycle thing happening in Yogi's drumming.

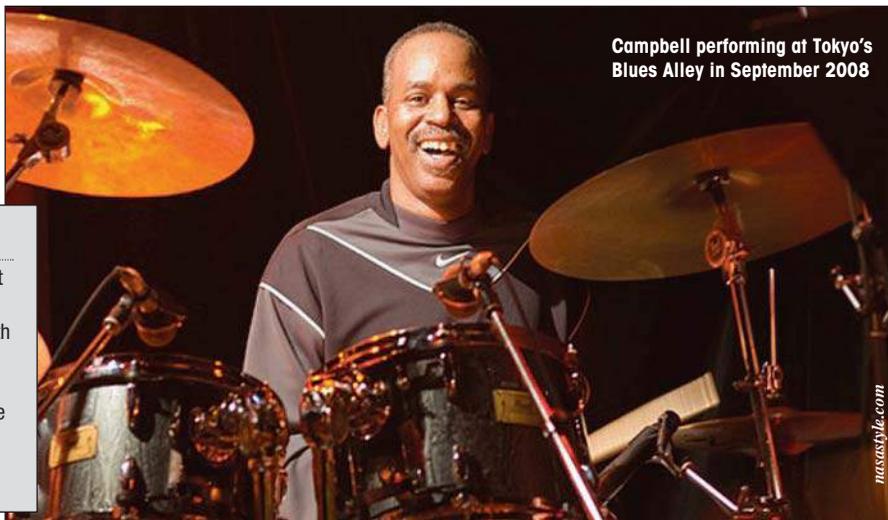
"And when I studied with Ed Blackwell in high school," Robby adds, "he was very much into this dance on the drums. He would play patterns he labeled unorthodox stickings. If he played a triplet from a rack tom to the snare, for instance, instead of right hand to rack tom, left hand to snare, Ed would play right-hand tom to right-hand snare. That unorthodoxy would add this little motion to the pattern. It would sound different and *feel* different. I do that sometimes. It's about the overall picture."

Forever learning—practicing in his basement, where his multiple Pearl Reference kits are jammed up against water pipes and centuries-old flooring timbers—Ameen is not above getting mental to achieve his goals. Working closely with El Negro gave him special insight into mastering the fearsome left-foot clave. "I came to left-foot clave much later," Robby explains. "I originally learned it from El Negro playing the tumbao pattern [8th note on the "&" of beat 2, quarter note on beat 4] on the bass drum with left-foot clave. But when you learn something as a system, the body becomes a machine, so removing any one part throws it all off. That's when I learned to leave the right foot out. I worked up everything with my hands over the left-foot clave, then I brought in the bass drum. I found that doing the clave alone with the left foot was easier, then I added the bass drum where I wanted it. So you're not relying on the two-foot system. Again, it's about the overall picture." **Ken Micallef**

# TOMMY CAMPBELL

Changing his base of operations from New York to Tokyo has allowed one of fusion drumming's brightest stars to stay busy on the world's stage.

Ask any serious student of fusion/progressive drumming about Tommy Campbell, and you'll hear that T.C. (as the drummer is known to his peers) is one of the greatest. Evidence abounds. Go back and check out the DVD *Zildjian Day In New York*, from the late '80s, where Campbell plays alongside heavyweights Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta,



Campbell performing at Tokyo's Blues Alley in September 2008



## BREAKOUT BEATS

Tommy Campbell first made an impact on the jazz scene by joining Dizzy Gillespie's band, which he appears with on the video *Jazz In America: Dizzy Gillespie*. Soon after, Campbell got to display his fusion chops on albums like John McLaughlin's *Belo Horizonte* and Kevin Eubanks' *Sundance*.

Alex Acuña, and Billy Cobham. Look up the transcription of Tommy's infamous exercise "The Funky Octopus"—one of the most insane drumbeats ever—at [tommycampbell.com](http://tommycampbell.com). Or listen to Campbell's recordings with Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Steve Coleman, Manhattan Transfer, and John McLaughlin. Even Dennis Chambers says in his *In The Pocket* video that Tommy is one of his favorite drummers.

When this particular drummer was taking lessons with Campbell on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the mid-'90s, players like Gene Lake, Lewis Nash, Rodney Holmes, and Van Romaine would regularly pop in to pay respect. And many a night I would see Tommy perform at NYC's Zinc Bar and bump into a who's who of drummers in the audience—Jeff "Tain" Watts, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Robby Ameen.... Along with Steve Smith, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Terry Bozzio, Campbell was a member of an elite group of players who were truly pushing the boundaries of progressive drumming.

Though he was busy playing and touring all over the world, Campbell began to feel he was on a sort

of professional treadmill, so he began to contemplate a change of scenery. He'd already lived in Boston for a decade (where for three years he'd taught up-and-comers like Will Calhoun, Zack Alford, Steve Hass, and Cindy Blackman at Berklee) and in France for two years while he was playing with John McLaughlin. Much to the surprise of the NYC jazz community, Tommy was soon packing his bags for Japan. "Japan was always very open to me," the drummer says today, "even before I moved there. There were always opportunities presenting themselves to me."

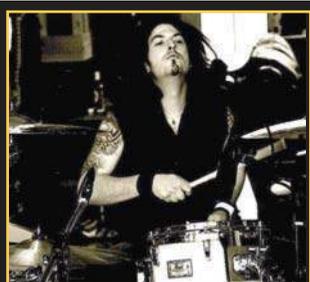
Campbell's intuition proved to be right on. These days he's playing drums nonstop as a leader of four different bands, one of which, Organ Eyes, is dedicated to his late uncle, the legendary organist Jimmy Smith. Campbell says he's assimilated well to the culture, marrying a Japanese woman, Jessie, and raising his eight-year-old son, Teman, in Tokyo. When asked if he misses New York and all his friends there, he responds with a laugh, "I see more musicians from New York in Japan than when I was living there!" In fact, the night before we spoke,

Campbell had seen drummer Eric Harland perform. And Tommy makes it back to the States several times a year for gigs. In a sense, he's got the best of both worlds.

Though he's found much opportunity in Japan, Campbell is still not immune to the everyday challenges faced by jazz musicians all over the world. A few years back, he was shopping a live-recording project that was going to feature famed drummer/vocalist Grady Tate, singer Marlena Shaw, legendary bassist Eddie Gomez, and longtime friends Branford Marsalis and Kevin Eubanks. Campbell got the runaround in both NYC and Japan, and the project stalled. "A couple of venues were unsure of my being the leader, while with others it was, 'Maybe,' or, 'We'll see.'"

But Campbell insists disappointments like that don't faze him. He's all pro and simply moves on to the next opportunity. T.C. says he's grateful for the career he's had and for what life continues to offer him. "Sonny Rollins once told me to play each gig like it's my last," he says. "I try to follow that advice." **"Pistol" Pete Kaufmann**

## ON TOUR



**Cheney Brannon** with Collective Soul

**Mike Hansen** with George Lynch

**Darren King** with MuteMath

**Craig Macintyre** with Colbie Caillat

**Dan Whitesides** with the Used

**Neil Mason** with American Bang

**Andrew Ranken** with the Pogues

**Franklin Vanderbilt** with Lenny Kravitz

## OUT NOW ON CD



ARTIST/ALBUM

Paramore: *Brand New Eyes*



Sherwood: *QU*



Hockey: *Mind Chaos*

Saosin: *In Search Of Solid Ground*

Dennis Diken: *Late Music*

Yaron Herman Trio: *Muse*

Job For A Cowboy: *Ruinaton*

Burnt By The Sun: *Heart Of Darkness*

Atreyu: *Congregation Of The Damned*

Switchfoot: *Hello Hurricane*

Ratko Zjaca, John Patitucci, Steve Gadd, Stanislav Mitrovic, and Randy Brecker: *Continental Talk*

DRUMMER

**Zac Farro**

**Joe Greenetz**

**Anthony Stassi**

**Alex Rodriguez**

**Dennis Diken**

**Gerald Cleaver**

**Jon "The Charn" Rice**

**Dave Witte**

**Brandon Saller**

**Chad Butler**

**Steve Gadd**

## BLOG INSIGHTS

"The path to better musicianship is that of an eternal student. Accordingly, I believe it's really important to keep focused on study and practice—no matter *how* busy things get."  
—drummer/leader **David Ashkenazy**

"I'm very fortunate to be able to play drums for a living. And without having musicians like Steve Gadd and John Bonham to look up to, I would probably be serving pizza and greeting children in a creepy mouse costume."  
—OneRepublic's **Eddie Fisher**

Quotes pulled from the *Blog* page at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).

# FURIO CHIRICO

**It's not prog if it doesn't take risks.** A master of the genre still sees no reason to dumb it down.

**T**hough Italian drummer Furio Chirico made his big U.S. debut at the 2002 Modern Drummer Festival, he has in fact worked as a professional drummer since the late '60s. In 1970, after several years on the Italian studio scene, he joined a reconstituted lineup of the Trip, a band that had previously featured guitarist Ritchie Blackmore, who'd left to form Deep Purple. In 1974 Chirico founded Arti & Mestieri, which plays a mix of progressive rock, jazz, symphonic music, and pop that highlights the drummer's fast, powerful, and complex chops. We recently touched base with Chirico to see what he's been up to since his MD Fest appearance and to gain some insight into his art.

**MD:** You've got a new album out with Arti & Mestieri, *Il Grande Belzoni*.

**Furio:** *Il Grande Belzoni* is a progressive rock album, with the characteristic sound of Arti & Mestieri. It's based on the story of the Italian explorer Giovanni Belzoni, a sort of Indiana Jones character who began as a strongman in a circus, then became an archeologist and a famous Egyptologist.

**MD:** Can you describe the music?

**Furio:** We are an experimental group. It's risky, but it's our nature. We are aggressive and cerebral—but see us live; we've got great vitality as well.

**MD:** Your drumming is intense and sophisticated. You really fill a bar, don't you?

**Furio:** My aim in music is freedom. I've been playing this way since the '70s, but of course I have improved my technique. Yes, I play a very personal

groove with intricate fills. With Arti & Mestieri I'm free to experiment with a kind of baroque sound, playing a constant interaction of harmony, melody, and rhythmic counterpoints.

**MD:** What influences shaped you and your music?

**Furio:** The Beatles, Miles Davis, and classical symphonic music. But I've listened to all kinds of music, from Latin jazz to the contemporary genius of John Cage. In the beginning my favorite drummers were Colosseum's Jon Hiseman and King Crimson's Bill Bruford and Michael Giles. I also listened to drummers like Bobby Colomby and Billy Cobham, and I loved what they were doing. My rhythmic ideas come from different instruments, mainly from Keith Jarrett's piano playing.

**MD:** You play on a drumset with "mirror image" toms.

**Furio:** Well, for many years it has been stylistically useful. Mainly I like snare drums, and I'm very critical in terms of snare sounds. I also like to do sound experiments. In the past I recorded playing on some oil drums with a lot of reverb, on plastic boxes, on backs of chairs as polyrhythmic instruments....

**MD:** Is progressive rock still on the move?

**Furio:** Progressive rock contains all the components of music: harmony,



Naoyuki Nakamura

melody, and rhythm, plus inspiration. It's like the classical music of Bach, or the rock of Jimi Hendrix. It's artwork, and artwork is timeless.

**Mario A. Riggio**

## BREAKOUT BEATS



He'd been a familiar face among Italian drum enthusiasts for years, but when Furio Chirico took the stage at the 2002 MD Fest, he was faced with an audience that was by and

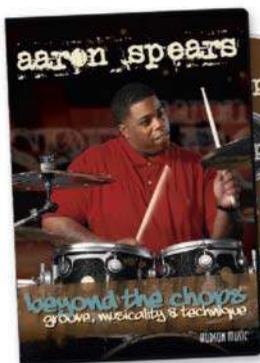
large unfamiliar with him. Attendees immediately picked up on the fact that Chirico was a seasoned professional, however, as he calmly dealt with some faulty-gear issues and blew out a thrill-filled solo full of passion and heavy prog chops.



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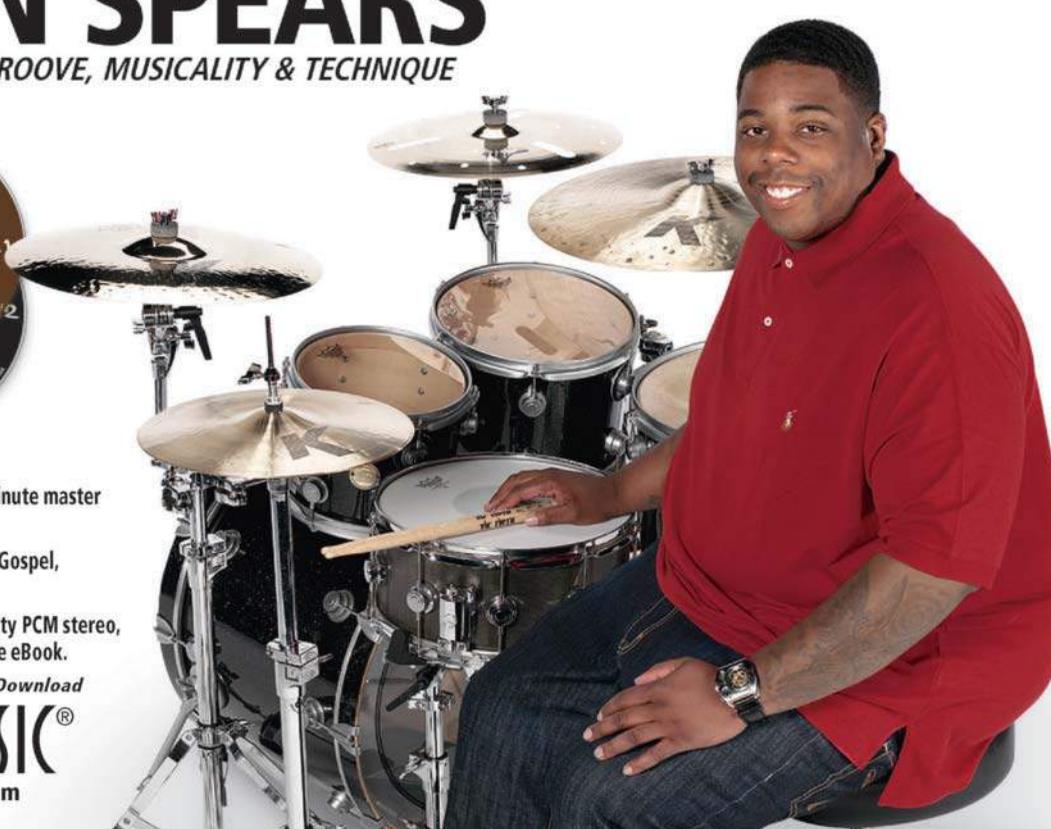
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# JEFF BALLARD

**Big-picture tips from the drummer who's an integral part of Chick Corea, Joshua Redman, and Brad Mehldau's trailblazing ensembles.**



**1 THINK ABOUT DYNAMICS AS SIZE OF SOUND RATHER THAN LEVEL OF VOLUME.** That way you're more aware of the space you're filling up with your instrument, more aware of the whole sound on stage, rather than thinking in terms of playing louder or softer. It's not a volume level, it's a *size* of volume. You'll fit well in the band's entire sound and the space you're playing in. Playing soft can be compared to a bonsai tree: Though it's small in size, it's a completely mature tree with fully grown leaves and roots. There's a whole world in that little tree.

**2 LOOK LONG AND FAR DOWN THE LINE.** An analogy: If you're trying to balance yourself while walking on a railroad track and you only look straight down at your feet to keep your balance while you're walking, soon you'll be losing it. Instead, look all the way down to the end of the tracks, to a focal point, and you'll find that your balance is more secure. Same as driving a

car. You don't look just to the end of the hood of the car and down at the road disappearing underneath you; you'll swerve if you do that. Rather, looking all the way down to the end of the road, to the point in the distance where the white lines seem to come together, keeps you straight and constant. The same thing applies to playing a tune. You have to see far ahead, keeping the ebb and flow of the music from swerving off the tracks.

Billy Hart once told me that the drummer is something like the conductor of an orchestra. To me that means we have to be aware of the total landscape of the tune all the time. It's a kind of global awareness of where we are in the music and knowing, more or less, where we're all going at all times. I'm talking about the peaks and the valleys, the drama of the music; this is the thing for us to gauge and to care for. Be careful, though—don't try to dominate it all. Just look far ahead while also being in the moment, and you'll keep the tune's balance.

**3 TRYING TO BE HEALTHY HELPS YOUR PLAYING A LOT.** Being on the road for much of the year, I've found that eating and drinking well, resting when you get the chance, and doing even just a little bit of exercise will help you a lot. I notice a big difference in my playing, in my focus, when I do. And this goes for you youngbloods too. You may not feel you need it, but resting up and keeping in mind that you're playing that night brings a much greater focus and consistency to the gig. And for me, a big difference between a good player and a great player is how much focus they bring to the music.

**4 DON'T PLAY CAREFULLY; PLAY WITH CARE.** The difference is that the former brings about tentative playing while the latter does not.

**5 EXTEND YOUR INFLUENCES.** Don't just start from today, start from as close

to a kind of beginning as you can. Knowing where that player you like is coming from musically is a crucial part of maintaining integrity in what you're trying to do. You're building on what others have done before you. So check out the players that your favorite players checked out; go back as far as you can.

**6 PRACTICE SLOWLY.** All drumming can be seen as more or less a matter of balance. This balance is a literal one; it's the body's balance. I think balance is underneath everything we're exploring: independence, speed, good sound.... Underneath all of it is a kind of physical balance to explore. Practicing slowly is vital. It will give you the time to ask yourself questions, get answers, digest them, and apply them in context.

I try to focus on the most universal elements when I practice. For example, how does it feel to pick up the stick? For some reason, in time it begins to feel different depending on when you pick it up. How does it feel coming down? What does it feel like when you reach out and strike the small tom in front of you? Notice what the whole process feels like—physically picking up the stick and then coming down slowly. Subtle but profound info is there. Then, with the same hand on the same beat, hit a floor tom. Notice what changes are felt when you hit it. The other drum is in a different location, so you're using different muscles. You're playing at a different angle, so the balance changes.

**7 KEEP YOUR FEELINGS OFF THE BANDSTAND.** Don't bring your emotions, like being pissed off or bummed out for some reason, to the gig. Leave all that off the stage, where it belongs. It's totally unprofessional.

**8 MAKE THE LEADER SATISFIED AND SOUNDING GOOD.** You'll keep the gig. Now, I'm not saying you should concern yourself *only* with trying to please the leader. If you do that, you run the risk of losing your own musical senses, and you'll end up playing guessing games in your head; you could say that you'd be nothing more than a ventriloquist's dummy. I'm saying bring your musicality, not an agenda, to the situation.

**9 BE ON TIME.** It shows a basic respect for the people you're playing with and the people who've paid to listen to you play. Being a pleasure to work with can make the difference in being called back or not. Imagine that there are four or five players as good as you who could be asked to play the gig. (There are *at least* four or five!) If you're someone who people like to work with, who they can depend on, then you're more likely to get the gig.

**10 STAY OUT OF YOUR HEAD WHILE PLAYING.** You're in the *music*, not in your own mental dramas and inventions. That's for later analysis, or not.

Hear Jeff Ballard on Fly's self-titled album, featuring tenor saxophonist Mark Turner and bassist Larry Grenadier.



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## THE PERFECTIONIST by Bernie Schallehn

**After working with a talented singer/songwriter/producer for several years now, I've defined a pattern in my dealings with him. We'll lay down a couple takes, get a positive vibe going, and after the third or fourth take I feel as though I've produced at least one or two solid drum tracks. But here's where the problem begins. He wants to keep going, all the while giving me very specific and minute criticisms, plus suggestions. After the eighth or ninth take, I'm confused, frustrated, angry, and more than a little insecure about my drumming. Is there a way I can keep the vibe flowing while still addressing this artist's suggestions?**

I hope you're charging a decent studio rate for this headache. In all likelihood, it isn't your drumming that's not meeting his specs, but his perception of the entire composition and/or his playing. But because you're the hired gun—the employee—it's easier to blame *you* for what his ears don't like. Starting to question his own abilities might be much too frightening for him. You're an easy target; he can deflect his true feelings of inadequacy on you. Of course, understanding this probably helps you feel only a *little* better about the situation. Besides, insight alone isn't usually a strong agent of change.

So let's move into an action plan that could remedy your situation. I want to illuminate two choices for you.

**Plan A: Negotiate.** Take this artist out for coffee or lunch before your next scheduled session. Getting him out of the studio levels the playing field. In the studio, you work for him in an employer/employee relationship. Changing the physical context helps to alter or disrupt the power structure. At a diner or restaurant, it's just two musicians discussing a project.

After a bit of chitchat, ease your way into why you wanted to meet with him. Begin a conversation about how in the '70s Steely Dan hired a host of A-list drummers for their albums and had each drummer play his interpretation of the same songs. Leaders Walter Becker and Donald Fagen then chose what sounded best to their ears, and those takes made it onto the records. Obviously, with such drumming royalty in the studio, you continue to tell him, the choice was not made on technical prowess but rather was based on style, feel, and other often indefinable traits.

Now zero in. Inform your perfectionist producer that you've found from your experience that your best drumming—the type that defines your style and feel—is usually created in the range of one to four takes. After that, you find yourself over-thinking a piece, concentrating too hard, experiencing creative fatigue—however you want to phrase it. In this way, you're not blaming him for anything. There's no reason for him to defend himself.

You're simply explaining how you work. Ask him to agree that, barring flubs and clams, the two of you will hold your tracking sessions to no more than four takes the next time you're in the studio.

During that time, he's more than welcome to make suggestions and add to the creative process. (Remind him, though, that he's forking over cash for your expertise. You're the drummer.)

If he agrees to your new arrangement, in the future you'll avoid his prolonged neurotic babbling of criticisms and tips in your ear. As such, you won't be in danger of being pushed to the point where you're calling him an anal-retentive nitpicker. The main thing is that you've established a new pattern, one that preserves your sanity and self-esteem and is likely to result in your best drumming.

**Plan B: Bow out gracefully.** What if he refuses? Let's imagine this producer dismisses your pitch and insists you keep cutting takes "until it's right," thereby retaining the old pattern that's driving you bonkers.

You have the right to bow out of the arrangement; no one is forcing you to stay. This guy is renting a lot of space in your head. And unless he's paying you boatloads of cash, is all the aggravation worth it?

First, suggest that you may not be the right drummer for his music. (You've already laid the foundation for this statement by speaking of the multitude of Steely Dan drummers and the bandleaders' eventually finding the style and feel they decided matched with their songs.)

Perhaps he doesn't buy it. You're his drummer, he wants only you, and he's unwilling to relinquish his existing system of creating songs. You take it a step further. Here's where what your mom and dad taught you comes into play: Honesty is the best policy. You tell him it's just not working for you anymore. If he wants reasons, tell him the truth. The hovering, the flow of criticisms, the "over-baked takes." Be prepared for an emotional reaction from him, but remember that you're in a business relationship and you're choosing to end it. As a professional, you should come prepared with the names of some other studio players to recommend, even though he may not accept them. Wish him the best of luck in his career, say goodbye, and move on to your next client.

**Bernie Schallehn** has been a drummer and percussionist for over forty-five years. He holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.

# MIND MATTERS

Overcoming Common Mental Barriers In Music

## IS THIS REALLY A LEEDY?

**I recently acquired a three-piece set (bass, snare, tom) of what the owner claimed were Leedys from the 1920s and '30s. The tom has an Elkhart, Indiana, badge that's upside down. Why would this be? The drum has a wooden top rim, wooden lugs, and a glued-on bottom head. Someone has whitewashed the tom to match it with the snare and bass drum. The snare has black metal rims, and the bottom head bears a "Leedy Super UKA" stamp. The badge has been pried off. The bass drum is 14x26 and has a clamp-on muffler, with no spurs or badge. Did Leedy not put badges on its bass drums? Is this even a Leedy? I can find no identifying marks.**

According to drum historian Harry Cangany, "The tom is a Leedy Dreadnaught model, made during World War II, when metal usage was limited because the material was needed for the war. The lugs are typically rosewood, and the bottom head is pigskin, which couldn't be tuned. It does look like the drum was painted over, although the typical finish was either white lacquer or white marine pearl. The snare drum is a late-'30s or early-'40s Gretsch with art deco Broadkaster lugs and a Renown strainer. The bass drum seems to be Gretsch as well, most likely from the '30s, based on the T-rod tuning handles. T-rods from the '20s had smaller heads and flat thumb rods.

"All the major companies had heads that they sold through their dealers.



So if a guy needing a head for his Gretsch snare drum walked into a music store that only sold Leedy, then that's what he used. ('UKA' refers to Leedy's top-of-the-line head named after longtime employee John Gyuka.) A lot of vintage Slingerland drums have been found with Leedy heads, Ludwig drums with Slingerland heads, Gretsch drums with Rogers heads, and so on."

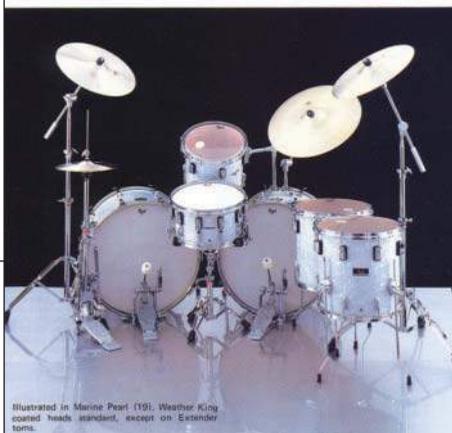
## PEARL'S '80s INTERIOR FINISH

**What product did Pearl use to coat the inside of its maple shells back in 1980?**

According to Pearl's Gene Okamoto, "Pearl maple kits from 1980 to 1983 were finished with lacquer, with a dusting of lacquer on the inside as a sealer. After 1983, polyurethane was used inside and out." The photos shown here are taken from Pearl's 1983 catalog. The bottom kit—the X 6-D Explosion—is the same one used by the great Louie Bellson during that period and features extended timpani-style heads for increased resonance and sustain.



Illustrated in Green Flash (G1) with Pearl Black Beat front bear drum head, Coated Weather King heads, standard.



Illustrated in Marine Pearl (P1). Weather King coated heads standard, except on Extended toms.

## FIXING FLAPPY-SOUNDING TOMS

**I recently purchased a mid-level drumkit and discovered that no matter how I tune the toms and regardless of which heads I use, they have a flappy, unfocused sound. What would be causing this? Is it bad edges, inferior wood, or something else? I've been able to achieve a decent tone by adding muffling rings, but when left unmuffled the toms sound like a warbling mess. Any ideas?**

We sent your question to Rob Mazzella of GMS Drums, which produces both custom and mid-level kits. Here's his response: "My initial inclination would be to check the bearing edges. If the drums are mass-produced, that's something that usually doesn't get inspected during a quality-control check. I've been to factories that make mid-level kits. While they are amazing facilities, simple things like truing bearing edges can easily be overlooked.

"While the edges of your drums may look smooth, if they're just a little uneven the heads won't seat right, which could cause that flappy sound. Of course, muffling would help focus the tone, but that's just a Band-Aid.

"The best way to check your edges is to take the heads off and place the drum on a flat piece of glass. If you can rock the drum back and forth, even as little as  $\frac{1}{16}$ ", then you should consider having the edges recut."

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# SLEISHMAN

## OMEGA SERIES FUSION DRUMSET by John Emrich



For over twenty-five years, Sleishman has been quietly building high-quality drums in Australia. The company has now opened an office in Las Vegas in an attempt to make its drums more readily available in the U.S. Up for review is a five-piece Omega series fusion set that consists of a 16x20 bass drum, 8x10 and 9x12 toms, a 14x14 floor tom, and a matching 5x14 snare. Sleishman also sent three other snares: a 5½x14 acrylic (\$579), a 2x10 maple (\$489), and a 7x13 rosegum (\$999).

For hardware, the company offers a bar mount that suspends toms and cymbals from the bass drum without impacting the resonance of the kick's shell. Our review set, however, came with clamps for mounting the toms on cymbal stands.

### APPEARANCE

The drums we reviewed featured a blue fade finish. The top clear-coat layer produced a very deep

look that really made an impact on stage. Many people who saw the drums commented on how great they looked and came up to the stage to check them out up close. Sleishman's minimal hardware helped bolster the kit's impressive appearance. According to the company's Web site, drums can be made in just about any color.

The kit's thin maple shells, which have sharp and well-cut bearing edges, feature multiple vent-

ing holes. The holes are positioned at the bottom of the shell, which allows them to be masked by the ring that's used to attach the hardware. Sleishman's badge is also placed on the ring. This is a nice touch, as the vents and badges don't interrupt the flow of the drums' gorgeous finish.

Each tom's mounting hardware is attached to the metal ring as well. This design prevents the hardware from touching the shell. In fact, nothing

## SIMULTANEOUS TOP AND BOTTOM TUNING

**Sleishman's patented tuning system allows for quick pitch adjustments to be made to the top head without upsetting the overall balance between the heads.**

This is possible because all of the tension rods are connected to a floating suspension ring at the bottom of each drum, rather than to individual lug casings bolted to the shell. So whenever the tuning of the top head is adjusted, the tension of the entire bottom head is automatically raised or lowered by the same amount.

is anchored to the shell; the heads are what hold Sleishman drums together.

## SOUND

These drums sounded great live when I played them with a band, and they worked well in a wide variety of styles. They were sensitive and had a wide dynamic range. The acoustic sound of the drums was full and traveled well. The tone was solid when I played harder in rock and funk situations, and the drums' sensitivity made them easy to play for light Latin and jazz during a quiet dinner set.

The timing of this review coincided with a sampling session I was producing for the drum software manufacturer FXpansion. So I was fortunate enough to check out the sound of the Sleishmans in a high-end recording studio. I've sampled many of the world's best drums, and these more than held their own.

The set came with Remo Powerstroke 3 bass drum heads and clear Emperors on the tops of the toms. The bass drum required a small amount of muffling in the studio but produced a very powerful punch with great low-end presence. The toms had great punch as well, plus a sweet and full sustaining tone. The matching wood snare produced a well-balanced sound and would work perfectly as a main snare in most situations. Its sensitivity was excellent, which made playing brushes on it very easy.

After I checked out the drums under microphones, I found them to be a great choice as a main studio kit. The fact that the hardware is completely isolated from the shells seemed to really bring out the difference in head choices, revealing a very versatile set that's capable of producing a wide variety of tones.

## EXTRA SNARES

Sleishman's 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 14 acrylic snare had the pleasant low-mid presence that's typical of its shell type. The 10" maple snare was a blast to work with and produced a very high pitch with plenty of tone. The 13" rosegum drum was equally nice. It has a solid shell built using stave construction. The minimal floating hardware creates a classy look that also adds to the drum's solid yet legato tone.

All three snares came supplied with a Remo coated Ambassador, which allowed for very sensitive snare response across the full dynamic spectrum. I swapped out the Ambassador on the rosegum drum with a Fiberskyn. This totally changed the sound to a much drier, more focused tone. The drum responded equally well to any head I tried. When I played it at a lower tension, it gave off a fat, solid tone. At higher tensions, it had a nice ring that wasn't overbearing.

## CONCLUSION

I was impressed with the overall sound and construction of these Sleishman drums. I found the simple tuning system to be very easy to use and worth checking out. An Omega series set like this one costs \$2,999.

[sleishman.com](http://sleishman.com)



# MEINL

## BYZANCE BENNY GREB SIGNATURE SAND RIDE

by David Ciauro

It takes all of ten seconds of watching Benny Greb's wailing to grasp that his playing is otherworldly, or perhaps from another time: the future! He belongs to an elite league of drummers who seem to be bound by nothing. A cross to bear for such perfectionists is that the expectations they have of their gear are so high that the sounds they want to hear are often yet to be created.

Greb's most recent obsession involves crafting a universal ride cymbal that incorporates the best sonic characteristics of lighter and heavier models with a vintage aesthetic. Ideally, the ride would be diverse enough to function as appropriately in a jazz setting as it would for arena rock.

## THE RESULT

Meinl turned every detail of Greb's aforementioned dream into reality, in the form of the 20" Byzance Sand ride. Hand hammered in Turkey and finished in Germany, the cymbal has a partially lathed bottom with an unusual ruddy texture, while the top is sandblasted to give a gritty feel and a timeworn appearance.

The best way to put the Sand ride to the test was to set my MP3 player on shuffle and see how the cymbal fared against whatever came up. Played along with everything from Kings Of Leon to Mastodon, Dave Brubeck to Sting, the ride never

sounded amiss. The lower midrange crash explosions and the accent overtones don't drown out softer notes, while every detail of faster and more complex stickings was articulated clearly. The bell had a great presence that tied together the ride's intricate and powerful elements. A quick decay accentuated the dryness of the medium-size bell and held a solid high pitch that nicely offset the substance of the body of the cymbal.

The Sand ride had a ton of character, an aspect essential to Greb's cymbal setup. "The ride is the most important cymbal in my drumkit," Benny says. "It defines the overall sound of the drummer and the whole band immensely."

## CONCLUSION

Although a small caricature of Greb adorns the sandy five-o'clock-shadow surface of the ride, the drummer and Meinl have devised a cymbal that truly speaks to a wide audience of players—retro-modern function and design with a universal sound. The thought of toting only one ride in your cymbal bag—one that's ample enough for pretty much any musical application—is a wonderful thing. Days of multiple gigs of varying drumming styles are now simplified. We live in a modern, multitasking world, and this is a multitasking ride. List price: \$560.

[meinlcymbals.com](http://meinlcymbals.com)

## EASIER SAID THAN MADE

Greb and Meinl spent almost a year developing the Sand ride, trying to find a perfect balance of the shimmer, transparent stick sound, and crash-ability of lighter rides along with the clarity, definition, and brightness of bells commonly found on heavier rides, all with a drier wash. They were also after a broken-in appearance and the inclusive tonal warmth of vintage rides.

# DRUMTREE

## TREEBRONZE SNARES by David Ciauro

When you talk drums with the legendary drum tech and renowned innovative drumsmith Jeff Ocheltree, the topic may surface of drummers often “hearing with their eyes” to determine the caliber of an individual drum or drumset’s craftsmanship. In other words, trendy aesthetics and sticker-shock price tags can lead you to believe that a product is of superior quality. This is an idea that’s not limited to the drumming world; the same can be said for other musical instruments, as well as for cars, electronics, restaurants, and so on.

Every once in a while, however, a drum comes along that is simply magnificent in both its design and sound. TreeBronze snare drums are worth their (heavy) weight in gold because they’re both industrious labors of love and pieces of art.

### HISTORY REPEATING

The origin of drums is believed to date back to 6000 B.C., but the earliest known drum relics, unearthed during excavations of ancient Mesopotamia, go back 5,000 years (to roughly 3000 B.C.). This was at the beginning of the Bronze Age, when the sand-casting techniques being used today to create TreeBronze drums originated. (Sand-casting is the most ancient form of shaping bronze, by pouring it into a sand mold.)

Ocheltree’s desire, in his words, to “do something to contribute to the art form of drumming” fueled him to “create a drum that had its own sound” yet remained universal in its applications. The success of Ocheltree’s achievement can also be seen as an Achilles’ heel, in that the strict focus on creating an unexampled drum means doing whatever’s necessary to make that drum perfect, which can result in what some may consider imperfect features.

The special TreeBronze alloy used for these drums is expensive and quite dense. (The 8x14 snare weighs around forty-one pounds.) So practicality and affordability to *everyday* drummers was not the aim in mind, which adds a certain artistic integrity to TreeBronze snares. This could be perceived as elitist, but it was never about mass production, marketing, or profit margins. With an artist’s zeal, Ocheltree assembled a small team that works together on every drum...one drum at a time.

### BEAUTY AND THE BEARINGS

To make TreeBronze drums, Ocheltree turned to Duluth Brass in Minnesota, a foundry that has been sand-casting bronze bearings for more than 115



years. It first cut its teeth in the drum world a few years back, when Ocheltree developed drumsets for Paiste using recycled 2002 series cymbals.

For the TreeBronze project, new castings had to be developed and computer software had to be designed, and redesigned, to get the beautiful etched DrumTree logo into each shell. The figure-eight groove lines cut into the shell are a nod to the design of crane bearings, which have an unexpected beauty in their own right.

### THE TREEBRONZE EFFECT

When I looked at and lifted these drums, logic told me they’d probably sound as good as the Liberty Bell would with two heads and some snares. The reputation of the maker certainly didn’t seem to

warrant such sonic imagery, though, and I was happy to discover that my initial theory was unsound. I played an 8x14 snare with a hand-rubbed patina finish and a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 with a dark satin finish. Both drums had cast bronze hoops, Nickelworks snare strainers, PureSound snares, and Attack Ocheltree signature Old School heads. The 8x14 was an absolutely massive and immensely powerful drum with insane attack and shotgun projection. The 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 was engulfed in richness and melodic fieriness.

After playing the drums for a few minutes, I removed the heads to inspect the seamless shells and hoops individually, pondering the anomaly of how such heavy solid-bronze shells don’t sound like a product of their industrial birthplace. Tap on the bare shell and it tolls a clear note. During R&D, it was realized that a shell thickness of  $\frac{3}{16}$ " produced a tone that let the drum speak best. So all TreeBronze shells are of this thickness. Even the hoops have a chime-like quality.

When I put the heads back on, I confirmed that the tone of the shells was the lifeblood of the sound; rim and head combinations changed certain aspects of the drums’ personalities but not their core. The cast-bronze hoops made for piercing

## THE TREEBRONZE EXPERIENCE

Playing TreeBronze snares is the drumming equivalent of watching a fireworks display. Colorful explosions burst in the heat of a summer-night sky, creating sounds that sweep the dynamic spectrum, from subtle to thunderous. That’s the TreeBronze experience in a sand-cast nutshell.

rimshots and tuneful rimclicks. Using three different batter heads (Attack coated Old School, Remo coated Emperor, and Remo clear CS Black Dot), I was easily able to get an array of stellar sounds that complemented my touch on the drums, without spending time fussing to set the snare or head tensions in order to find "the sound."

There was a gratifying amount of warmth and color in the tones these snares exuded. Each drum is one of a kind because of the sand-casting process and the way the molecular structure of each shell is affected by heat treating. The drums are a sonic fusion of opposites, so warm they're cool—like Miles Davis's trumpet tone.

### THE AUDIENCE

Simply put, these snare drums sound amazing. They can produce most any sound for any environment. Looking at the musical diversity of some TreeBronze artists confirms this: Danny Carey, Lenny White, Steve Smith, Billy Cobham, and Jason Bittner, for starters. The drums are incredibly powerful and dynamic, with snare response that's both super-sensitive and giving.

### FURTHER INSPECTION

While I was changing out the heads, I took a closer look at the snare beds and bearing edges. Surprise, surprise, both had been impressively executed. This feat is accomplished by hand, using five types of sharpening stones, ending with bronze on bronze. The sturdy hexagon lugs are Ocheltree's own design, and they attach to the shell with just one tiny round hex bolt per lug.

### THE PROCESS

From start to finish, making a TreeBronze snare consists of seven stages using the same eight people, each playing a specific role. First, one person makes the casting, then two other people pour the bronze. Next, someone machines the shell, someone else engraves the shell and drills the holes, and yet another person shapes the snare beds and bearing edges. Then the drum is sent to DrumTree production manager Pete Shaleen, who hand finishes and assembles every model. This method ensures that the laborious process can be repeated effectively. Finally, the drum goes off to Ocheltree to gain the approval of his fastidious eyes and ears. His autograph on each shell lets you know it has passed his quality inspection. He also tunes every drum before shipping it out.

Each TreeBronze snare takes roughly 125 man-hours to complete, with ninety of those hours spent getting the correct relief on certain finishes. TreeBronze drums are offered in five finishes: dark satin, darkened bronze, and antique bronze hand-rubbed patina finishes, plus satin and "blackout." The three patina finishes oxidize instantly. It's a controlled process, but variables are such that each drum will look unique. The patina becomes part of the molecular structure of the bronze, and the shells resonate freely since no pores are being clogged.

An additional option for TreeBronze buyers is to mix and match finishes for the shell, hardware, and rims.

### THE NITTY-GRITTY

The sheer mass and density of the cast bronze brings a presence and persona to each drum that is quite commanding, but a drummer's touch can easily control and shape the sound. These are very responsive drums with amazing sensitivity and range of character. The snares can be left quite loose without sounding sloppy and tightened up for whip-cracking backbeats. Every tension in between also has a sweet spot. The drums were a pleasure to play and never a chore to tune.

### ADDING IT ALL UP

Brass-plated or hand-patina die-cast hoops come standard on TreeBronze snares. Cast-bronze hoops are available at an upcharge of \$499. Our review models had the cast-bronze hoops, so the 8x14 would sell for \$3,599, the 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 for

\$3,499. Other sizes offered include 7x13 (\$2,699), 5x14 (\$2,799), and 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 (\$2,899). Obviously these aren't budget-conscious snares, but they're worthy of their price. They are collectibles as much as they are great-sounding, versatile drums.

Lugging TreeBronze snares around might be cumbersome for a steady gigging drummer. But unless the load-in involves a gargantuan staircase, you'll find the enjoyment of playing the drums for the evening should outshine the added poundage.

The cost of each drum includes shipping in the continental U.S., a padded bag, a square Protector hard-shell case, and a certificate of authenticity. Padded laser-etched hardwood cases are also available.

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## ISTANBUL AGOP

### XIST BRILLIANT CYMBAL SET

by Dave Previ

Istanbul cymbals have long been heralded as some of the best jazz models on the market. For Agop's new Xist line, the company took a departure from that mindset and opened the door to more modern and aggressive genres. Let's check them out.

#### XIST CYMBAL SET

Packaged nicely with a padded nylon cymbal bag, the Xist set—sold as separate cymbals as well—includes a pair of 14" hi-hats, a 20" ride, and 16" and 18" crashes, all of which have a brilliant finish. (Istanbul Agop also offers a traditionally lathed set.) The sonics of the collection stayed in the upper register, with splash-like highs from the 16" crash and a bright crash sound from the 20" ride that I found impressive even though the cymbal isn't technically a crash/ride. The 20" filled out the lower end of the spectrum with a clear, sustained tone.

The 18" crash (\$319) sat in between the 16" and 20" cymbals, making for a nice main crash. It offered a bright burst at first, followed by a medium-length decay. I could see myself riding on the edge of this cymbal to lift up a chorus, as it had the weight to take it where it needed to be volume-wise, with the right amount of sustain.

The 16" (\$274) crash spoke quickly and also had a medium-length decay. This cymbal was very bright and sounded smaller than its actual size. It didn't open up quite as clearly as I had hoped, and there was a bit of a twang that wasn't so pleasing to my ears. On a gig, both crashes stuck out in the mix rather than blending into the music. That quality could be seen as good or bad, depending on the situation. On loud gigs where you need to fight to be heard, the crashes would be great. But in a low-volume acoustic setting, they might be a little difficult to control.

#### HI-HATS

As beat keepers, the 14" Xist hi-hats (\$449) made a fine couple. They produced a clean, sharp stick sound with an overall warmth that rounded out the sound nicely. Unlike the crashes, these cymbals blended into the band sound very well. Their volume range was wide, and their clarity remained true at any volume. When I opened them up during a chorus section, their warmth kept them pleasing to the ear, even as I played them with force. When I kept time on the ride, the Xist hats complemented the groove with a bright, snappy "chick" from my left foot.

#### RIDE

The 20" Xist ride (\$398) featured a blend of qualities that made it fun to play. The bell had a very consistent sound, regardless of where or how I hit it. When I rode on the bow, the stick produced a bright, clear "ping," with an interesting wash reverberating underneath. I enjoyed pushing the cymbal with the shoulder of the stick, which gave a nice boost of volume when I needed it. Again, I liked using the ride as a crash. I don't normally feel this way about most "pingy" rides, which are usually a little too thick to work as a crash. This cymbal, however, had a pleasant balance of ride and crash characteristics.

#### WILL THEY SURVIVE?

For what these cymbals are intended to do and how they're priced (\$1,049 for the four-piece set, including the bag), it's very likely that we'll start seeing Istanbul Agop cymbals on more rock tours around the globe. The Xist line adds a brighter edge to the company's established models, which should bring a new type of player to the brand.

[istanbulcymbals.com](http://istanbulcymbals.com)

### WHY DO THEY XIST?

If you've been looking for more "mainstream" sounds from Istanbul Agop, the Xist line may be your answer. Priced to be "accessible to drummers at any level," according to the company, these cast B20 (80 percent copper, 20 percent tin) cymbals offer a clean, straightforward sound that is applicable to much of today's modern pop-rock.



# FORD

## DRUMVEE CASES by Chap Ostrander

Anyone who plays a set of Ford drums will be impressed with their sound and quality. Now the company is making a unique line of drum bags called Drumvee. Like Ford's drums, these cases had to meet stringent quality standards before they could be released. Let's see how they check out.

### URBAN CAMO

Ford Drumvee bags are fashioned from military-spec 600-denier polyester and are 100 percent waterproof. The construction is layered with half an inch of closed-cell foam plus half an inch of polyfoam to protect the drums inside. The webbing is tear resistant to 500 pounds. The seams are double stitched with ballistic polyester thread, and extra-strong #10 YKK zippers are sewn into each case with a lip that acts as a gasket to keep out moisture. Drumvee cases also have snaps and O-rings made from heavy-duty steel, plus ergonomic molded-rubber handles and padded shoulder straps that make the bags easy to carry.

### CASE BY CASE

A Drumvee snare case (\$110) has a unique shape, to accommodate today's larger strainers and adjustable butt plates. This means that the case sticks out slightly at those spots, so you don't

have to stretch the fabric around the hardware. The snare case includes an outer pocket that's big enough to hold spare heads.

Tom cases (starting at \$114) are shaped to fit mounting hardware. Therefore, if you play drums outfitted with bulky suspension mounts, you no longer have to purchase a case that's a size larger than the head diameter in order to accommodate the hardware. Each case includes padded inserts to ensure that the drum fits snugly, regardless of its depth.

With some other companies' cases, you have to slide the fabric over the drum because the bag won't stand up by itself. Drumvee cases have a hard-foam spine that eliminates this problem. Indeed, I found putting my bass drum into the Drumvee was fairly easy. When I removed the drum, it slid right out, and the bag sat upright like a hard case. (Bass drum cases start at \$276 for a 20" drum.)

The Drumvee deluxe cymbal bag (\$210, plus \$20 for a protective BTS coating on the bottom) is designed to hold models up to 24" in diameter. The main compartment has enough sewn-in soft dividers to accommodate six cymbals. A round pocket on the outside is designed for hi-hat cymbals up to 16" in diameter. The bottom of the bag is double thick and cushioned with half an inch of

high-density foam with strong webbing. A pocket holds a key ring to keep keys out of sight. There are other pockets on the outside for smaller items like a cell phone or business cards. A simplified version of the deluxe bag, the Eco cymbal case (\$90), has no cymbal dividers or outside pockets. Otherwise the construction quality is the same.

The Drumvee line also includes 32" and 36" hardware cases. The 32" case (\$240) will hold five or more cymbal/boom stands. The 36" case (\$270) will hold a single or double pedal, hi-hat stand, snare stand, and throne base. Both bags feature padded dividers to separate the contents and prevent items from banging together. Although you can purchase these cases separately, they were designed as a set. (The pair sells for \$450, plus \$40 for BTS on the bottom.)

Another thoughtful touch is that the cases have handles on either side, as well as the traditional top handle. If you need help moving your hardware, the double handles make it easy for two people to carry the cases. I asked Jay Gaylen from Ford why the company doesn't offer wheels on the hardware cases. He explained that most drummers they interviewed have rolling drum carts of some type. The main idea with these cases is that their internal dividers protect hardware by keeping the pieces from knocking into each other.

## BULLETPROOF BOTTOM

Drumvee hardware bags have a multilayer Tolex bottom, and all the sewn seams are located on the inside. These cases can also be ordered with Ford's proprietary BTS coating. BTS is a super-durable elastomeric Kevlar finish that repels just about anything.

### CONCLUSION

These Drumvees are great cases. They're thoughtfully designed and beautifully built—and they have a striking look as well. They come with a twelve-month warranty; if a fault is revealed, Ford will repair or replace a case free of charge.

[forddrums.com](http://forddrums.com)



## SHURE

## SM27 AND SM137 MICS

by Michael Dawson

Shure's SM line of microphones has long been the industry standard for both live and studio applications. The SM57 is *the* snare mic of choice for almost every engineer, while the SM81 probe condenser is often called on for its natural and clean sound when used on cymbals.

Now the dependable SM line includes two new mics: the large-diaphragm SM27 and the thin "pencil style" SM137 condenser. Each of these mics is meant for a variety of applications, including drums, and is positioned at a price point that's well within the budget of most gigging drummers and home studio owners. Let's check them out.

## OVERHEADS

We began our testing by placing pairs of SM27s and SM137s over the center of a kit in an X-Y configuration (capsules close together, at roughly a 90° angle, pointing down at the kit). In this position, the SM27s sounded noticeably smoother and warmer than other mid-priced large-diaphragm condensers we've tried. They didn't have all of the sparkly highs that you get with more expensive mics (like Shure's KSM32, which we use regularly in our product-testing studio), but they did reproduce a wide, realistic picture of the kit, including the spraying overtones of cymbal crashes and the low sympathetic hum of the toms. Another clear difference with these mics is that the initial attack of drums and cymbals cut through in a prominent and pleasing way that was similar to the "pop" you get from an SM57 placed on the snare. These aren't transparent-sounding microphones, as they added some color to the drum and cymbal sound (the term *meaty* comes to mind), but they did capture a natural and musical overall sound.

The SM137s produced similar results when used as overheads, with a more focused response and stronger SM57-like qualities. They didn't capture as many nuances from the kit (such as tom hum and cymbal resonance) as the 27s did, but

they accentuated the attack and body of the drum and cymbal tones. They really brought out the sound of the stick tip on the ride cymbal and hi-hats. For loud stage gigs or in situations where you want to use overheads mainly for cymbals, these mics are a viable and affordable option.

## SPOT MICS

Because of their naturally focused and pointed attack, the SM137s also worked well as spot mics on the hi-hat and snare. Their capture of the hi-hat was a lot like a hybrid of an SM57 and a more expensive small-diaphragm studio condenser like Shure's KSM137. The SM137 was aggressive yet crisp, conveying a biting attack and a chunky midrange that roared (in a good way) when the hi-hats were played partially open. This mic would be great for rock applications, but it had enough sparkle and clarity for pop, R&B, or jazz. I'd also recommend this model for the ride, when the situation warrants it.

The SM137 is designed to withstand very high sound-pressure levels, or SPLs—165 dB with the attenuator on—so we tried it on top of the snare. Because it's a condenser, we expected the mic to sound snappy and bright. On the contrary, the SM137 was much closer to an SM57, with more emphasis on the low and midrange frequencies, adding extra body and shell tone to the sound. If you have an SM57 and an SM137, you could use both of them on the top head to give you a lot of options for balancing attack and resonance.

The SM27 beat out several other mics in our collection that we use on toms. Again, these have a hybrid dynamic/condenser quality, featuring the

strong and punchy attack you normally get from a dynamic mic (like Shure's SM57 or Sennheiser's 421), plus the increased resonance and clarity of a condenser. Because of their sturdy metal construction, these mics are more likely to hold up after an accidental stick hit than some of the more fragile large-diaphragm condensers that are often placed on toms.

## CONCLUSION

Shure's new additions to the SM family proved to be more than just affordable versions of the company's high-end KSM models. They have their own robust dynamic-meets-condenser sound, which could work in almost any situation. If you're a gigging drummer and you often provide your own sound reinforcement, or if you're looking to put together a project studio in your home, these mics will satisfy your needs for quite some time. Like the classic SM57, the SM27 and SM137 are built to withstand the rigors of the road, and they have a professional sound that stands its ground, even when compared with much more expensive mics. The SM27 lists for \$460; the SM137 lists for \$236. [shure.com](http://shure.com)



## STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

According to Shure, "The SM137 is a versatile, flat-response cardioid probe microphone with an ultra-thin diaphragm for a frequency response that combines a smooth high end with a tight, controlled low end. The SM27 is a rugged large-diaphragm, side-address cardioid microphone with low self-noise and extended frequency response that picks up instrument nuances with clarity." Both mics feature a 15 dB pad to keep them from being overloaded by loud drum and cymbal hits, and the SM27 has three low-frequency filter options: flat, -18 dB per octave at 80 Hz, and -6 dB per octave at 115 Hz. These filters proved to be great for cutting out a little—or a lot—of tom and kick bleed when we used the SM27s on cymbals.

Roland®  
V-Drums®

MAKE A STATEMENT.



SEND YOUR MESSAGE LOUD AND CLEAR with the new TD-20SX V-Pro® series from Roland. Loaded with our most expressive and powerful sounds and features, this flagship drum set provides the ultimate V-Drums playing experience from top to bottom. And it looks as good as it plays, with brushed-metal V-Pads™, silver-colored V-Cymbals, huge V-Kick, and a rock-solid chrome drum rack.

 **Roland®**

[www.RolandUS.com/VDrums](http://www.RolandUS.com/VDrums)

EXPERIENCE THE V-DRUMS ADVANTAGE

## NEW AND NOTABLE

A multi-surface practice pad, big-bell rides, and updated drumheads—plus the return of the classic Wavedrum—are just a sampling of the latest releases.



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**1. ROLAND'S** flagship TD-20SX V-Drums kit features a new look, more expressive sounds, and upgraded hardware. The TD-20SX debuts a completely new look for the V-Pro series, with striking brushed-metal V-Pads and V-Kick shells; a more substantial V-Kick for a solid, natural feel; silver-colored V-Cymbals; and a chrome drum rack with new metal clamps and internal cable management. In addition, the newly designed V-Pads allow drummers to easily change shell wraps for the V-Pads and V-Kick to customize the look of their kit.

At the heart of the TD-20SX is the new TD-20X percussion sound module, which combines the features of Roland's TD-20 and TDW-20 expansion board. The module features 920 drum instruments, a hundred drumkits, new sound layering features, enhanced editing options, new compression algorithms, and new ambience choices.

**Roland's more affordable TD-4SX V-Drums kit** is now available with mesh heads on all drums. [rolandus.com](http://rolandus.com)

**2. TRX** has added two 21" Big Bell rides to its product line. The medium-heavy ALT series Big Bell ride features a natural bell and a traditional lathed surface for a warm, resonant tone and excellent stick definition. It's recommended for mainstream rock and Latin playing situations. The highly polished, unlathed, hand-hammered BRT series Big Bell ride is extra heavy to provide the bright, dry projection and clarity required for hardcore, metal, and punk applications. Each model lists for \$475.

[trxcymbals.com](http://trxcymbals.com)

**3. MEINL'S** new Combo Bag for cymbals and sticks can be separated using a zipper on the bag. The cymbal bag holds models up to 22" in diameter and has a 15" external cymbal compartment. Several padded dividers prevent damage to cymbals during transport. The stick bag has four sections for drumsticks and a separate compartment for accessories. The Combo Bag is available in black or original camouflage. List price: \$149.

[meinlcymbals.com](http://meinlcymbals.com)

**4. BLOWN AWAY INNOVATIONS'** high-quality drumsticks are available with full-color custom print work. Bands currently using these sticks include MercyMe, Hawk Nelson, and Stryper. [picksandsticks.net](http://picksandsticks.net)

**6. FXPANSION** now offers high-quality BFD2 sampled drumsets as single downloads. The average price of these kits is \$50. Four sets are currently available: JEX, Decatom, Oak Custom, and Maple Custom Absolute. More expansion sets will be released throughout the year. [fxpansion.com](http://fxpansion.com)

**5. EVANS** recently relaunched its popular pre-muffled EC2 heads with SST (Sound Shaping Technology). These models feature a new damping technique that targets select frequencies for removal in order to fully optimize the attack, tone, length of sustain, and ease of tuning for each head size. The result is said to provide a more balanced and pre-EQ'd sound across the kit. List price: \$26–\$50. [evansdrumheads.com](http://evansdrumheads.com)

Joe zooms Chad.



**Q3** Handy Video Recorder. Who's zoomin' you?

Joe Satriani and Chad Smith of Chickenfoot. Two of our favorite comedians!  
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**ZOOM**



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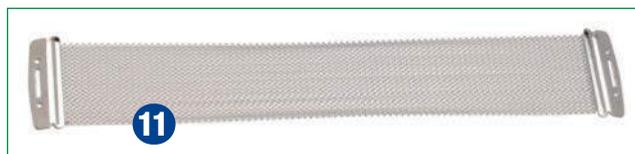
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**7. Austrian-born, L.A.-based session drummer Bernard Galane created GALANE CUSTOM DRUMS and CYMBALS** to provide drummers with extremely personal, 100 percent handmade products. Drums can be made in any shell dimension and in any gloss or matte finish.  
[galane.net](http://galane.net)

**8. SJC CUSTOM DRUMS' Series IV line features a custom-made kit at a production-line price.** The set includes a 13" rack tom, a 16" floor tom, and a 20" kick. The toms are fitted with tube lugs and 2.3 mm hoops. Many different glitter finishes are available, and SJC can match any color you want. Shown here is a custom "seafoam green glitter" prototype.  
[sjcdrums.com](http://sjcdrums.com)

**9. PEEK cymbal cleaner is designed to clean stands, hardware, and pedals as well.** Available as a cream concentrate or a spray foam, this unique-formula polish is nontoxic, nonabrasive, and easy to use. To get a free sample, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Tri-Peek Canada Limited, P.O. Box 952, Escondido, CA 92033.

**10. KORG's original Wavedrum was introduced to the music world in 1994.** This legendary electronic instrument was famous for its innovative design, performance possibilities, and unique sounds. Now Korg has released an affordable next-generation version. This Wavedrum can be used as a stand-alone percussion instrument or integrated into an existing drumkit or percussion rig. Unlike digital trigger-based systems, the Wavedrum uses a real drumhead as the playing surface, providing an authentic, familiar feel. This allows the performer to employ sticks, brushes, mallets, and/or traditional hand drum techniques (mute, slap, bend, etc.). By combining thirty-six advanced DSP (Digital Signal Processing) synthesis algorithms with two hundred PCM samples (a hundred for the head, a hundred for the rim), the Wavedrum provides a wide palette of sounds, ranging from traditional drum and percussion instruments to complex synthetic tones and sound effects.  
[korg.com](http://korg.com)

**11. DRUMFIRE, a supplier of quality drumsets and percussion accessories, has added**

**DSW1420 twenty-strand snare wires to its line of products.** These snare wires are intended to be replacements for and/or upgrades from the stock wires included with most snare drums. They feature identical medium-gauge (0.6 mm) coils and chrome-plated end clips. The result is a rich, crisp "snap."  
List price: \$10.99.  
[musicpeopleinc.com](http://musicpeopleinc.com)

**12. LUDWIG's P4 practice pad, designed by renowned drummer/educator Pat Petrillo, features three playing levels and four playing surfaces** that provide a variety of feels, sounds, and responses. The P4 fits neatly on top of a snare drum and also has an 8 mm screw thread, so it can be attached to a cymbal stand.  
[ludwig-drums.com](http://ludwig-drums.com)

**13. The DRUM-AROUND is a seat attachment that allows for drums to be suspended directly from the throne post** for creative 360° setups.  
[drum-around.com](http://drum-around.com)





**BALANCED TONE AND HOT FINISHES  
AT A GREAT PRICE – OCDP VENICE ONYX KITS**

The OCDP Venice series is known for its balance of response and dynamics, plus great sound. Now they're taking the next step with the Venice Onyx line, featuring the versatile tone of all-basswood shells.

- 4-Piece kit: 20x22 kick™, 8x12 rack™, 14x16" floor, 6x14" snare (5x13" snare and 20x20" kick with White Onyx kit)
- All-basswood shells
- Offset lugs, OCDP tom suspension
- Black powder coated rims and lugs
- Blue Onyx or White Onyx finish

**HARDWARE AND CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY**

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$599<sup>99</sup> SAVE \$400  
OFF LIST**

(OCV4020-W0B)(OCV4022-B0B)  
LIST: \$999.99



**THE OCDP AVALON –  
THE POWER OF MAPLE IN A COOL SPARKLE FINISH**

- 6-Piece kit includes: 6-ply 8x10 and 9x12" rack toms, 12x14 and 14x16" floor toms, a 9-ply 20x22" kick drum, matching 6.5x14" 9-ply snare
- 100% maple shells
- Rack toms feature suspension mounting system
- Triple-flanged hoops designed to give a more open sound

- Available in Deep Red Sparkle, or the new Moody Blue and Black Sparkle

**HARDWARE AND CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY  
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION**

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$999<sup>99</sup> SAVE \$701  
OFF LIST**

(OCA6022-BKS) LIST: \$1699.99  
(OCA6022-DRS) LIST: \$1699.99  
(OCA6022-MBS) LIST: \$1699.99



**YOUR CHOICE OF ORANGE COUNTY SNARE  
DRUMS AT AN INCREDIBLE PRICE**

Orange County Drums and Percussion earned their reputation by making some of the finest custom drums. Now, they're bringing the same quality of craftsmanship to a wider audience. There's nothing that exemplifies OCDP's philosophy like their snare drums. The Black Brass snare delivers outstanding volume, response and sensitivity. Its brass shell is fitted with matching black chrome hoops for an even sleeker look. The Black Brass snare also features an inverted center bead and OCDP's Super Tube Lugs. Meanwhile, their deep, 7x14" rock maple shells offer a huge sound that blasts through walls of stacks and captivates the audience. Plus, they've got the looks to match with offset lugs and satin black or silver sparkle finish.

**SELECTION VARIES BY LOCATION**



**YOUR CHOICE**

**\$299<sup>99</sup> SAVE UP TO  
\$199 OFF LIST**

(OC0713-BBB) LIST: \$499.00  
(OCUL0714-BC) LIST: \$399.99  
(OCUL0714-SSC) LIST: \$399.99



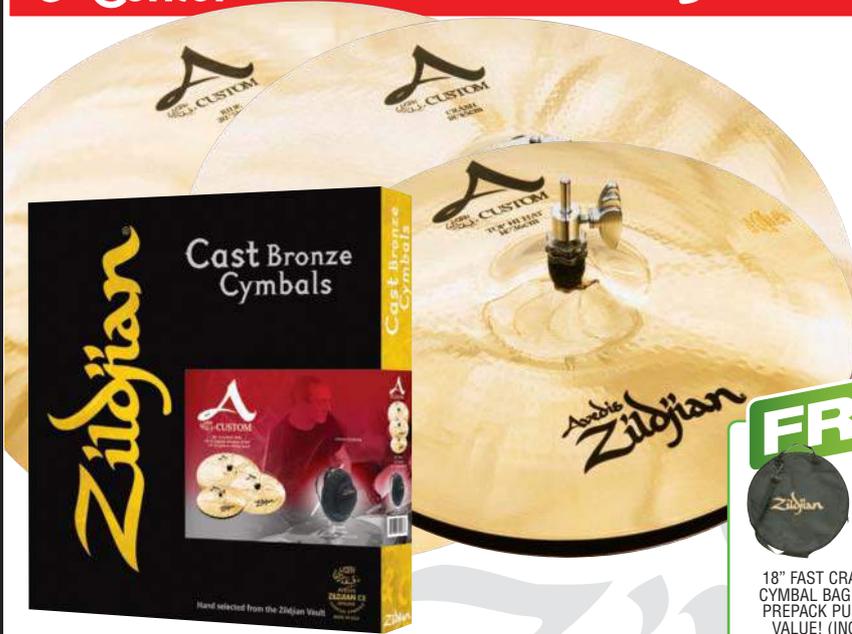
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**GET AN EXTRA**



**10% OFF\***

**ON ANY SINGLE ITEM**

\*10% off applies to single-item purchase at our tagged Guaranteed Lowest Price. Not to be used in conjunction with any other promotions or offers. Not valid on prior purchases. No cash value. Excludes clearance, price-matched and vintage equipment. Adam monitors, AKG, Ampeg, Apogee Duets, Apple, Audix, Bose, Crate, Crown, dbx, Digitech, Digidesign HD, Edirol, ESP, Euphonix, EVH®, Fender®, some Gibson® and Epiphone, Gretsch® guitars, Jackson®, JBL, Korg, KRK, Lexicon, Mackie, Marshall, Martin, Mesa Boogie, Mogami, Monster Cable, Morgan, Peavey, some PRS, QSC, some Roland/BOSS products, Royer Labs, Shure, Soundcraft, Squier®, SSL, SWR, and Vox. Offer expires 12/31/09.



**FREE 18" CRASH AND \$30 ZILDJIAN COUPON WITH THIS A CUSTOM PREPACK**

Zildjian has been making world-class cymbals for centuries, using ancient metallurgical techniques pioneered by the Turkish masters. This cast cymbal A Custom prepack gives you that legendary sound in a complete setup.

- Includes 20" ride, 16" crash and 14" hi-hats, plus a free padded cymbal bag and 18" fast crash
- Brilliant finish for a crisp, sweet, sophisticated A Zildjian sound

**FREE!**



18" FAST CRASH AND PADDED CYMBAL BAG WITH A CUSTOM PREPACK PURCHASE - A \$273 VALUE! (INCLUDED IN BOX)

**\$30 ZILDJIAN COUPON INCLUDED**  
GOOD TOWARDS YOUR NEXT ZILDJIAN PURCHASE

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$699<sup>99</sup> SAVE \$600 OFF LIST**

A CUSTOM PREPACK (A20579-9) LIST: \$1299.99

**A THREE-PACK OF QUALITY ZILDJIAN SOUND FOR UNDER \$150**

This 3-pack offers the great sound of Zildjian ZBT series cymbals at an incredible price. The cymbals' moderately bright tone and higher pitch help them cut through dense mixes with ease. They're also remarkably consistent from set to set, which means finding a fitting replacement is never a problem.

- 18" Crash ride
- 13" Hi-hats
- Free 14" crash included
- Bright tone, higher pitch
- Rapid decay
- High volume, great projection

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

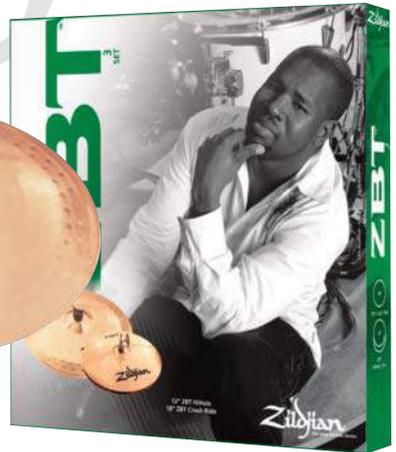
**\$149<sup>99</sup> SAVE \$171 OFF LIST**

ZBT3 PREPACK (ZBT3P-9) LIST: \$321.00

**FREE!**



14" ZBT CRASH WITH YOUR ZBT 3-PACK PURCHASE - A \$54.95 VALUE! (INCLUDED IN BOX)



**FREE ZHT CHINA SPLASH WHEN YOU BUY ANY 6 PAIRS OF ZILDJIAN STICKS**

Mix and match any six pairs of Zildjian drum sticks and get a ZHT splash free via mail-in rebate. The ZHT splash gives you a bright, fast and cutting accent that's sure to extend the dynamic range of your current cymbal set.

**FREE!**



10" ZHT CHINA SPLASH WITH ANY 6 PAIRS OF ZILDJIAN STICKS - A \$64.99 VALUE! REDEEMABLE BY MAIL





## WHIP YOUR SNARE INTO SHAPE WITH THE EVANS TUNE-UP SET

The Evans Snare Tune-Up Pack features an EC PowerCenter Reversed coated snare batter, a Hazy 300 snare side, Puresound Blasters snare wire, 14" ERings and a magnetic drum key.

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$39<sup>99</sup> SAVE \$77 OFF LIST**

(ESPG1RD)  
LIST: \$116.99

## BUY THREE EVANS EC2 HEADS, GET THE FOURTH ONE FREE

The new and improved EC2 features a Sound Shaping Technology ring mounted underneath two plies of 7-mil film. By controlling edge vibration (instead of eliminating it), the ring isolates and damps higher overtones, enhancing low-end and attack, and enables a broader tuning range. Each size head is now optimized for performance, with just the right amount of damping to create a balanced sound around the full kit.

FREE HEAD IS DETERMINED AS LOWEST PRICE OF THE FOUR

**NEW!**

**BUY 3 GET 1 FREE**

**EVANS EC2 SERIES**

**45% OFF LIST PRICE**



## PRICE DROP ON EVANS G2 HEAD PREPACKS

Evans G2 heads offer a great blend of depth, sustain, attack and durability. Their two plies of 7-mil film are extremely consistent from head to head, and are available as either coated or clear. Package includes three tom heads in either standard or fusion sizes, clear or coated.

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$39<sup>99</sup>**

**SAVE \$33 OFF LIST**

CLEAR FUSION (ETPG2CLRFB)  
LIST: \$73.50

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$44<sup>99</sup>**

**SAVE \$34 OFF LIST**

CLEAR STANDARD (ETPG2CLRSD)  
LIST: \$79.50

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$41<sup>99</sup>**

**SAVE \$33 OFF LIST**

COATED FUSION (ETPG2CTDF)  
LIST: \$75.00

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$44<sup>99</sup>**

**SAVE \$36 OFF LIST**

COATED STANDARD (ETPG2CTDS)  
LIST: \$81.00



**PRICE DROP**

**INSTANT REBATES**



**TURN YOUR KIT INTO A PERCUSSION BEAST AND SAVE BIG WITH INSTANT REBATES ON THESE ESSENTIALS FROM LP AND TOCA**

Unlock the full potential of your kit by expanding it with mounted and hand percussion. We've chosen a few of our most popular items that will give you the accents and colors that can take your playing to the next level. LP mounted percussion is a great way to expand your tonal palette without increasing your drum set's foot print. This is just a small sample of Guitar Center's huge stock of percussion. Come in today and try it out for yourself.

**A. LP BLACK BEAUTY COWBELL**  
Cutting tone that's versatile enough for every gig.

AFTER \$7.00 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$21<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 50% OFF LIST  
(LP204A) LIST: \$44.00

**B. LP CYCLOPS TAMBOURINE**  
More innovation from LP gives you this loud, kit-mounted beast with two rows of steel jingles.

AFTER \$8.00 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$23<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 50% OFF LIST  
(LP160) LIST: \$48.00

**C. LP A-GO-GO BELL**  
Chances are that a handful of your favorite songs feature this uniquely shaped bell.

AFTER \$9.00 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$27<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 50% OFF LIST  
(LP231A) LIST: \$56.00

**D. LP DOUBLE SAMBAGO BELLS**  
The Sambago bells offer complementary pitches with crisp and consistent sound.

AFTER \$6.50 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$20<sup>49</sup>** SAVE 50% OFF LIST  
(LP617) LIST: \$41.00

**E. LP DOUBLE-ROW STUDIO BAR CHIMES**  
Crafted from a tempered aluminum alloy to provide bright sound and great tonal diversity.

AFTER \$38.00 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$124<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 50% OFF LIST  
(LP513) LIST: \$249.00

**F. LP PICCOLO JAM BLOCK**  
LP Jam Blocks offer wood block tone and warmth with a much more durable synthetic mold.

AFTER \$6.00 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$16<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 50% OFF LIST  
(LP1204) LIST: \$34.00

**G. LP MICRO SNARE DRUM**  
If you haven't at least tried the Micro Snare, you owe yourself a trip to Guitar Center.

AFTER \$15.00 INSTANT REBATE  
**\$84<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 43% OFF LIST  
(LP846-SN) LIST: \$150.00

**H. TOCA 14" FREESTYLE DJEMBE**  
Freestyle series djembes offer a sound and feel that's true to the original.

GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE  
**\$109<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 52% OFF LIST  
(SFDJ14LB) LIST: \$229.00

**I. TOCA 10" FREESTYLE DJEMBE**  
Same traditional sound, but in a more portable package.

GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE  
**\$99<sup>99</sup>** SAVE 41% OFF LIST  
(SFDMX-10AS) LIST: \$169.00

**HOLIDAY SAVINGS ON THIS COMPLETE CONGA SET**

Perfect for younger players or anyone looking for a more compact hand percussion set

- 9" And 10" heads
- EZ Curve rims for more playing comfort
- Includes adjustable stand
- Matching bongos also available



GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE  
**\$199<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE \$159 OFF LIST

CONGAS (CP636-AWB) LIST: \$359.00

GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE  
**\$49<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE \$29 OFF LIST

BONGOS (CP221-DW) LIST: \$79.00

**OVER 40% OFF A TRIO LP PERFORMER SERIES CONGAS**

Ideal for the intermediate player or aspiring pro who's looking for good sound and quality.

- Includes an 11" Quinto, 11.75" Conga, 12.5" tumbas
- Built from kiln-dried Siam oak with uniquely shaped horned side plates
- Matching bongos also available



SPECIAL PACKAGE PRICE  
**\$599<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE \$447 OFF LIST

(LPP311-DWC, LPP312-DWC, LPP313-DWC) LIST: \$1047.00

GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE  
**\$99<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE \$74 OFF LIST

BONGOS (LP601-DWC) LIST: \$174.00

**SPECIAL PACKAGE PRICE SAVE AN EXTRA \$105**

## A NEW SOUND IN DRUMMING

This Tama Starclassic Performer kit features a hybrid shell design that brings together deep, dark tones and aggressive attack of bubinga with the focus and control of birch. The result is a sweet and fat sound that has serious punch.

- Includes a 9x12 rack tom, 12x14" and 14x16" floor toms, and a 18x22" kick
- Star-Cast suspension mounting
- Black-nickel rims and lugs
- Die-cast hoops

SELECT STORES

COLORS AND CONFIGURATIONS VARY BY LOCATION  
HARDWARE, SNARE, PERCUSSION AND CYMBALS  
SOLD SEPARATELY

STARTING AT

**\$1699<sup>99</sup>**

STARCLASSIC BB KITS

**EXCLUSIVE  
COLOR**



## TAMA'S MOST POPULAR KIT EVER

Hundreds of thousands of drummers all over the world started on a Tama Rockstar. With pro features typically found on more expensive kits, you get a kit that sounds great and will stand up to years of playing.

- Includes an 18x22" extra-deep kick drum, 8x10", 9x12" and 16x16" toms, and 5.5x14" matching wood snare
- Star-Cast suspension mounting system for unhindered shell resonance
- High-tension lugs, plus heavy-duty tom holders and bass drum spurs
- Available in black, vintage red and midnight blue

HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND ACCESSORIES SOLD SEPARATELY

YOUR CHOICE AFTER REBATE

**\$499<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$334  
OFF LIST

ROCKSTAR 5-PIECE KIT  
(RG52KS-MNB) (RG52KS-BK)  
(RG52KS-VTR) (RG52KS-CMM)  
LIST: \$833.99

**+** MAKE IT A DOUBLE BASS KIT  
WITH THE 3-PIECE ADD-ON SET  
(RG32AKSBK) LIST: \$667.00

**\$349<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$317  
OFF LIST

## RENOWNED FOR GREAT SOUND

Get that classic Gretsch sound with an added contemporary punch. The Gretsch Renown Maple offers all the elements that has made Gretsch famous, in a smaller configuration that takes advantage of the power and vintage tone of the all-maple shells.

- Includes quick size 8x10 and 9x12" toms, a 14x16" floor tom, 18x22" bass drum plus a free 7x8" tom
- 6-Ply maple shells for a bright, focused attack
- Die-cast top and bottom hoops increase tuning stability and sustain
- 30-Degree bearing edges for brightness and articulation
- Available in cherry-burst, autumn-burst or transparent ebony

**SNARE, HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND PERCUSSION SOLD SEPARATELY**  
**COLORS VARY BY LOCATION**

### GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE

**\$1499<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$960  
**OFF LIST**

RENOWN 4-PIECE  
 (RNE824-AB) (RNE824PT6-TEL)  
 LIST: \$2460.00

**FREE!**



**FREE!**



## GRETSCH 6-PIECE CATALINA MAPLE KIT WITH FREE ACCESSORIES AND AN ADDED FLOOR TOM

If you're looking for a versatile set with top-quality sound and features, you need to check out this Gretsch Catalina Maple set. Its maple shells project a warm, round, classic tone you'll fall in love with. The beautiful UV gloss finish is sure to capture attention and evoke that unmistakable Gretsch vibe and spirit.

- Includes 8x10 and 9x12" mounted toms, 14x14" floor tom, 18x22" bass drum, 6x14" 8-lug snare drum and a free added 16x16" floor tom
- All-maple shells with natural interiors and cherry red gloss finish
- GTS suspension systems, die-cast claw hooks, hinged tom brackets, Mini Gretsch lugs

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS, PERCUSSION AND ELECTRONICS SOLD SEPARATELY**

### GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE

**\$749<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$405  
**OFF LIST**

(MCE825PT-MR) LIST: \$1155.00

## THE LIMITED-EDITION GRETSCH 1964 REPLICA CATALINA CLUB KIT AND CATALOG

Gretsch went back to their original 1964 drum catalog for inspiration. This "Name Band" 4-piece Catalina Club kit, dressed in a true-to-the-original Black Pearl finish, offers the classic warmth and soul that old-school Gretsch players swear by. It's paired with an 18 page replica catalog featuring the best kits Gretsch had to offer.

- 14x22" Kick with tom rail mount and ride cymbal arm installed
- 9x13" Rack with tom mount installed
- 16x16" Floor tom with legs
- 5.5x14" Matching snare
- All drums in Black Pearl finish to match picture in 1964 catalog

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND ACCESSORIES SOLD SEPARATELY**

### GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE

**\$649<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$349  
**OFF LIST**

(CCS424-BP) LIST: \$999.00



**FREE!**





**THE SIMMONS SD9K OFFERS THE MOST KIT FOR THE MONEY**

One of the best-selling electronic kits we've ever seen. The Simmons SD9K packs all the great sounds and features that have made Simmons a popular choice in today's electronic drum market, all at an amazingly low price. Simmons also gives you a 200-watt amplifier that packs the punch necessary to cut through the loudest band at rehearsal, and give you a clear picture of your sound on stage.

- Includes six sensitive, responsive and durable pads, including a dual-zone snare drum pad, plus three dual-zone chokeable cymbals and a chokeable hi-hats
- 714 Voices, 40 preset kits, and room for an additional 59 user-defined kit
- MIDI In/Out allows you to trigger sounds from other modules, while its USB device port allows you to connect directly to your computer
- On-board reverb, delay and 4-band Master EQ
- Sequencer hosts 110 preset songs with room for 100 user-programmed songs

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

**\$999<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$865 OFF LIST

(SD9K) LIST: \$1665.00

**\$299<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$200 OFF LIST

(DA200S) LIST: \$499.99

**THE SIMMONS SD7PK OFFERS ADVANCED FEATURES AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE**

Simmons electronic drum kits are known for delivering professional features and performance at an incredible price. The Simmons SD7PK takes that even further with softer pads for a more comfortable feel, a re-configured layout for improved playing ergonomics and a drum module with 300 of the best acoustic, electric and percussion sounds you'll find. Plus, the kit's super-low crosstalk means more accurate and dynamic triggering of sounds as you play them. Be sure to check out the Simmons 50-watt electronic drum amplifier, perfect for practice and monitoring at small gigs.

- High-quality pads for pro feel
- Kick pad, 3 tom pads, 2 cymbal pads, 1 hi-hat pad, snare pad with rim detection, hi-hat control pedal
- Over 300 acoustic, electric and percussion sounds; 20 factory kits, 30 user kits
- Stereo line and headphone outs

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

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- 5-Piece kit with 9-ply mahogany shells
- 8x10 And 9x12" toms, 16x16" floor tom, 18x22" bass and 5.5x14" snare

**HARDWARE AND CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY**

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**\$399<sup>99</sup> SAVE \$199 OFF LIST**

(SCB625P-91) LIST: \$599.00  
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- Uni-Lock tom holders
- High-gloss wrap finish
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**HARDWARE AND CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY**

**YOUR CHOICE**

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(VX825PB-91) LIST: \$849.99  
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## JOHN LEGEND'S RASHID WILLIAMS

Text and photos by Sayre Berman

**“M**apex drums give me great, full, round tones,” says Rashid Williams, drummer for neo-soul superstar John Legend. “If you hit a snare light, you want to feel it, and if you hit it hard, you want to feel that. With my drums, I feel *everything*.”

Williams uses Paiste cymbals, he says, “because of their bright tones and because they cut really hard. And the bigger you go in their Twenty series—which I play on stage—the warmer they get. My hi-hats are 13” Signature series heavies, which are tight and crisp. I’ve had many front-of-house guys come up and ask me what kind of hi-hats I’m playing. They tell me, ‘We don’t have to do anything to them—just mike ‘em and we’re good.’ And that’s great because I do a lot of hi-hat accents.

“My percussion gear,” Rashid continues, “is all LP—cowbell, tambourine, chimes, and djembe. Thier chimes fit me really, really well; they sound correct when I put them in the music. And the

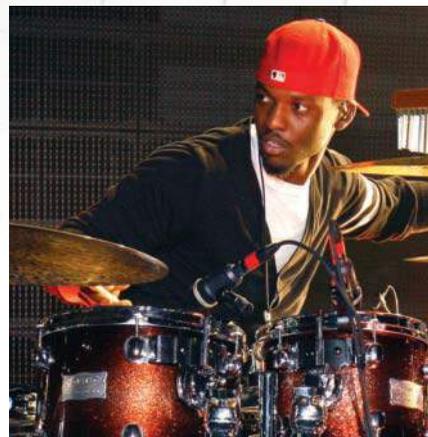
djembe has a great low tone, but at the same time you can crack it on the edge for that hard ‘pop.’

“As far as electronics, I’m using Roland’s SPD-S, not only as a sampling pad but to trigger the other electronics on my kit. So the sampling pad goes to a Roland TD-8 drum pad and also runs to a trigger for my kick drum.

“My sticks are Vic Firth HD4s, which are light yet durable. They’re a great length for me, and they seem to blend with the weight of my hands.”

Williams’ heads of choice are Evans. “I’m playing a Hydraulic tom head on my side snare,” he says, “because it gives me such great low tones. On the recordings of the ‘60s and ‘70s, the drummers played with a bottom sound that added so much soul to the music. So playing R&B now on stage, I try to duplicate that sound. Today we drummers have to replicate those sounds so we can make people feel like they’ve been transported in time. Something as simple as putting a tom head on a snare can accomplish that.

“Of course, I have to mention my Converse Chuck Taylor All Stars,” Rashid adds. “If there are no Chuck Taylors, then I am not playing. If you’re looking for a lighter foot, that’s the way to go.”



**DRUMS:** Mapex Saturn series in "root beer burst" lacquer

- A. 6x13 Black Panther walnut snare
- B. 5 1/2x14 snare
- C. 9x10 tom
- D. 10x12 tom
- E. 14x14 floor tom
- F. 16x16 floor tom
- G. 20x22 bass drum

**HEADS:** Evans Hydraulic Glass on toms, 14" Power Center on main snare and Hydraulic tom head on 13" snare, and EMAD clear batter on bass drum

**STICKS:** Vic Firth HD4

**ELECTRONICS:**

Roland SPD-S sampling percussion pad, TD-8 drum pad, and kick trigger

**HARDWARE:**

Mapex 750 series

**CYMBALS:** Paiste

- 1. 13" Signature heavy hi-hats
- 2. 14" Twenty thin China
- 3. 17" Twenty thin crash
- 4. 10" Signature splash
- 5. 18" Twenty thin crash
- 6. 22" Dark Energy Mark II ride
- 7. 19" Twenty crash
- 8. 12"/14"/14" Noiseworks Triple Raw Smash Stacker
- 9. 18" Twenty crash
- 10. 16" Twenty China

**PERCUSSION:** LP cowbell, tambourine, chimes, and djembe

## THE DODOS'

Text and photos by Tim Herzog

# LOGAN KROEBER

In 2005 Logan Kroeber started playing with his Dodos bandmate Meric Long using just a single floor tom, a far cry from the seven-piece double bass kit he'd been playing with punk and metal bands a few years earlier. These days his setup has grown a bit, but it's still a thing of skewed beauty, featuring two snares, two toms, a floor tom, an unidentified 16" crash, and a 14"/16" stacked pair of cymbals.



Kroeber says that he and Long are both very rhythmic people and work hard to create the complex layered rhythms found on songs like "Fools," from the Dodos' highly regarded 2008 sophomore album, *Visitor*. The drummer says he loves the "cathartic energy" of bands like Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Sepultura and tries to work that vibe into the more traditional singer/songwriter genre the Dodos are often lumped into.

When asked about playing a setup that doesn't include a bass drum or hi-hat, Kroeber says, "The limitations of a kit like mine are also the reasons for its existence. It's not as easy to play standard rock beats on it, but that's what I was trying to get away from. It's just a different approach that I'm lucky enough to get to try, because it might not work in another group. It's also good because a standard kit is starting to seem fresh to me, so maybe when I begin playing one again I'll be able to get something new out of it that I was missing before."

Note that the kit in the shot below is a bit different from the one described in the gear list. This is the rig Kroeber assembled at a gig last summer using the house set at Brooklyn's Music Hall Of Williamsburg. As any touring drummer knows, you often have to make gear compromises on the road, and this time Logan had to use Yamaha floor toms in place of his standard Tama Starclassic tom arrangement.



## KROEBER'S PREFERRED SETUP

**DRUMS:** 9x13 and 14x15 Tama Starclassic toms on a rack mount, with clear Remo Emperor batter heads on both; vintage no-name 16x16 floor tom with clear Emperor on top; 5x12 and 5x14 Pearl brass snares with coated Ambassador batters

**CYMBALS:** unknown 16" crash, 16" Zildjian crash under 14" Sabian top hi-hat

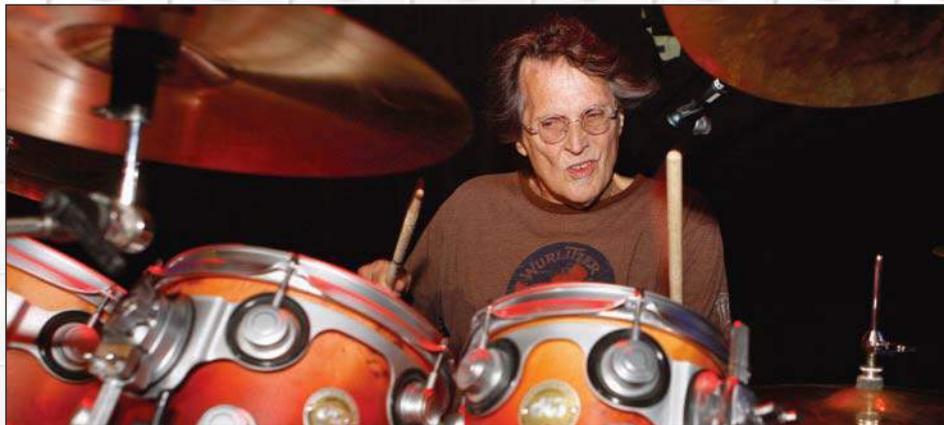
**PERCUSSION:** Sound Percussion tambourine taped to right foot

**STICKS:** Vater Los Angeles 5A, Pro-Mark Lightning Rods, and mallets for acoustic sets

**ACCESSORIES:** Moongel and duct tape to control drum ring

# LITTLE FEAT'S **RICHIE HAYWARD**

Text and photos by Sayre Berman



“I’ve been with DW for about twelve years,” says Little Feat drummer Richie Hayward. “They’re always experimenting not only with wood types but with the direction of the plies and the wood grain. The snare I use is from Johnny Craviotto’s original project. It’s a steam-bent single-ply shell with single-ply reinforcement hoops. I have three of these—a 4”, a 5”, and a 6”. The 5” is the one that I fell in love with and use all the time—the best snare drum I’ve ever had.”

Among Hayward’s Sabian cymbals are several AA El Sabor models, including a 20” ride. “That cymbal was originally designed for Latin players,” Richie says. “It has a very bright sound and is really fast. And the contrast between my 18” El Sabor crash and my 18” AAX crash [not shown] gives me a great textural choice.

“I use 14” AA hats. The bottom is ridged to avoid air lock, so they’re very easy to control. I switch between those and a pair of Fusion hats with rivets in the bottom

cymbal. All my cymbals ring in harmony, which is important.

“My drumsticks are the Pro-Mark Japanese oak wood-tip 747 Neil Peart model. The reason I’m with Pro-Mark is *that* stick. They don’t break and the beads don’t soften or split, and the balance is excellent. I have them made without varnish for a better grip.

“I test-drove Evans heads around 2004 and decided that I liked their single-ply G1s. Their quality control is consistent, and they’re very congenial to work with.

“And I *must* talk about my SoundSeat,” Hayward adds. “It’s one of the most important parts of my kit. As far as I’m concerned, if the seat isn’t solid, the playing becomes more stressful and the work much harder. Mine has this big tractor kind of bottom that’s made of some sort of NASA-esque memory foam covered with leather. It holds the shape of my bony behind just perfectly. I love it!”

**DRUMS:** DW in rich red fade over mapa burl in hard satin with satin chrome hardware

- A. 5½x14 snare
- B. 7x8 tom
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 9x12 tom
- E. 12x14 floor tom
- F. 14x16 floor tom
- G. 18x22 bass drum

**CYMBALS:** Sabian

- 1. 14” AA flat hats
- 2. 12” AA splash
- 3. 18” AA China
- 4. 18” AA El Sabor crash
- 5. 16” AA El Sabor crash
- 6. 20” AA El Sabor ride
- 7. 19” HHX X-Treme crash
- 8. 20” AA China

**HEADS:** Evans G1, clear on toms, coated on snare

**STICKS:** Pro-Mark Japanese oak wood-tip 747 Neil Peart model without varnish

**HARDWARE:** DW, SoundSeat tractor-style throne



# ON TOUR & ON STAGE

MAKING IT WORK ON THE ROAD



## The live arena is where drummers sink or swim.

There's no "fixing it in the mix" if you flub a fill, no second take if you stray too far off the click, no starting over if you can't hear the vocals in your monitors. And as anyone who's done time on a tour bus knows, day-to-day pressures of touring, like living with strangers in close quarters and fighting off boredom and loneliness far from home, can be as tough as the demands of the show itself.

But touring and playing live also provide some of the most magical moments of a player's career. The camaraderie of sharing an adventure with good friends, the transcendent moments when you and your bandmates are so on that you can practically feel the stage levitate...

This month we ask seven road dogs about the ups and downs of life on tour, and for useful tips on everything from dealing with odd personalities on the bus to working with a click track live to choosing the right gear for the long haul. Listen up—it's the kind of stuff that can help make your next gig or tour a dream rather than a nightmare.

38. Avril Lavigne and Gavin DeGraw's

### RODNEY HOWARD

"There are a lot of great musicians that really aren't built for touring. You have to be willing to embrace everyone's eccentricities."



42. Branford Marsalis's

### JUSTIN FAULKNER

"When I first began playing with Branford, he might say something on stage like, 'Why are you using sticks in this song? Listen.'"



46. Muse's

### DOMINIC HOWARD

"Sometimes on stage you become so free in the music, it's like you're standing back and watching yourself."



60. Gov't Mule's **MATT ABTS**

"Some bands do the same set every night, but that's just not our thing. We have a repertoire of 500 songs. That keeps things fresh."



64. TLC's **TOM KNIGHT**

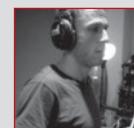
"Landing a major tour was a dream come true. But I was so busy enjoying it, I wasn't thinking about what was going to happen when it came to an end."



66. Rufus Wainwright's

### MATT JOHNSON

"Nir Z had played on John Mayer's record, and it was fascinating getting to play his parts live. I listened very carefully to how much weight and precision he brought to them."



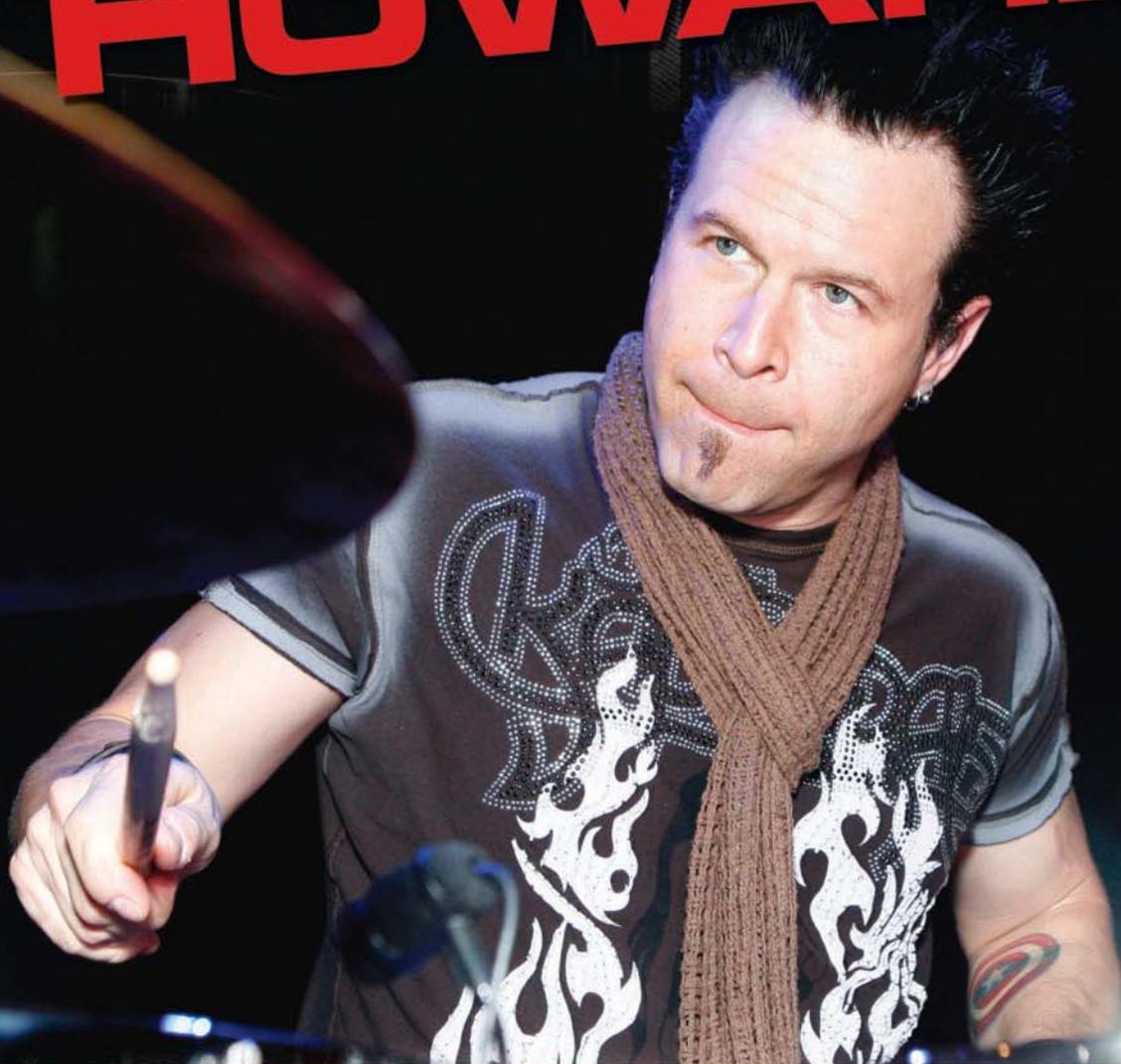
68. Incubus's

### JOSE PASILLAS

"I've set up sideways pretty much since the beginning. I want people to see what I'm doing."



# RODNEY HOWARD



**NAIL THE GIG, AND YOU MIGHT JUST END UP ON THE ALBUM. THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED FOR AVRIL LAVIGNE AND GAVIN DEGRAW'S MAIN MAN.**

**M**odern Drummer readers recently spoke loud and clear about their love for New York-based drum sensation Rodney Howard by voting him runner-up in the Pop category of the 2009 MD Readers Poll. Howard's fashionable flair and passionate playing style have powered the machine behind several of today's biggest stars, including Avril Lavigne, Gavin DeGraw, and Regina Spektor.

Howard's diversity and depth keep him bouncing from stage to studio. Perpetually busy on the road, within the NYC studio scene, and on the Broadway circuit, Rodney has played heavyweight shows like *The Lion King*, *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Little Shop Of Horrors*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*, and he's got the tips and tales to prove it.

**MD:** In terms of gear, what do you prepare before a tour?

**Rodney:** Make sure you have *all* of the gear that you're going to need or *may* need for the tour. Have a spare of everything, ready to go, on stage—

## “NEVER TRY OUT NEW GEAR ON TOUR. STICK WITH YOUR STANDARD EQUIPMENT SO THERE ARE NO SURPRISES.”

especially sticks, bass drum pedal, snare drum, snare stand, and heads.

Use a portable table to keep your percussion close at hand. Don't keep percussion on the floor, where you have to go searching for it in the dark. And I *always* have a fan. Even if it's freezing outside, it can be 90° in the venue. I don't want to miss a cue from the singer because I've got sweat in my eyes. In-ear monitors are also becoming the standard for live playing. I suggest purchasing a good-quality in-ear system and getting acclimated to it as soon as possible.

And don't try out new gear on tour. Stick with your standard gear so there are no surprises. For my electronics, I keep backup batteries, a backup click track, and such. Be prepared for using unfamiliar backline gear, and don't necessarily expect the exact backline gear that's in your rider. I always bring my own bass drum pedals, cymbals, side snare, and shakers, plus all my

specialty gear that I know will probably not be supplied by a typical backline company.

My stick bag always contains mallets, wire brushes, wooden rods, a shaker or two, and a Sabian Chopper or

something from Factory Metal Percussion that's similar to a tam-bourine. Think of it as going hiking in a survival situation. Try to fit everything you can into that stick bag.

I've had a drum tech for every major tour I've done. But I've also toured where I was my own drum tech. In either case, you have to be aware of all

### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Howard plays a **Pearl** Masterworks kit (maple, birch, and mahogany hybrid) in “white glass flake,” including an 18x24 bass drum, 8x12 and 8x13 toms, a 14x16 floor tom, a 6½x14 Reference series snare, and a 7x12 Soprano snare; **Sabian** cymbals, including a 12" Chopper (on 12" snare, when used), 16" Artisan hi-hats, an 18" Saturation crash, a 22" HHX Legacy heavy ride, a 20" O-Zone ride, and a 22" AA China; **Vic Firth** 5B wood-tip sticks, Steve Gadd model brushes, Rute 202s, and SD12 swizzle; percussion including a Pearl Hex Ganza, a 6" **Factory Metal** Hi-Hat Jingler, and an 8" Factory Metal Celtic Bell; hardware including Pearl 2000 series stands and Demon Drive double pedals; a **Sensaphonics** 3D in-ear system; and a **Clark Synthesis** Tactile Transducer.



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## RODNEY HOWARD

times of what you may need, like the type of cases you may or may not need. Always consider the amount of room available in the trailer, bus, or semi-truck. If you're doing major tours, you need to invest in large road cases where the entire kit fits in one case and hardware and cymbals fit in another. When you're starting out and playing local gigs, invest in the best cases that your budget will allow, and always be aware of space limitations in your vehicle and in venues.

**MD:** What about in terms of the music?

**Rodney:** You need to know your drum parts inside and out before the tour starts. You also need to have your chops ready. Typically there is no time to practice on tour. Do all of your shedding now, before you enter the touring arena. You also have to be able to assimilate and execute any changes in the music at any given moment. Be ready for anything!

If you're in a live situation where the song list changes every night, discuss these changes hours before the gig, not minutes before. Gavin DeGraw's set list changes every night. So I need at least an hour to set up all the tempo changes and specialty gear used on each song. Then run the show in your head to double-check for any surprises.

**MD:** Do you have a pre-show ritual?

**Rodney:** Warming up is very important to me, especially when there's more finesse playing involved in the gig. You can't hide behind aggression, so I want to make sure I'm feeling loose and comfortable. Stretching is very important too, especially for my legs since I started using a double pedal. I also sing, so I do vocal warm-ups as well.

Drink loads of water to stay hydrated. For the high-energy gigs, I do enjoy a coffee or Red Bull before the show.

**MD:** What about the social aspects of touring?

**Rodney:** Getting along with the band and road crew is essential. The band bus carries a village of people that you'll be living with day in and day out. There are a lot of great musicians that really aren't built for touring. You have to be willing to embrace everyone's eccentricities and idiosyncrasies. You really have to make an effort to reach out and be a good neighbor and a member of the village.

Also, make friends with the monitor

engineer and the front-of-house engineer, quickly! These people can make your job really easy or really difficult. In fact, make friends and keep a positive attitude with everyone you meet. In this business, it always comes around. You never know when you'll make an ally who will stay with you for your entire career—or may just own your sonic destiny for one night. It always makes sense to make friends as quickly as possible on the road.

**MD:** Is there a difference between a great studio drummer and a great road drummer?

**Rodney:** There can be an assumption in the industry that there is a difference. My philosophy is that you should be a great musician, period. Playing with musicality and excitement applies to studio and live performances. The only difference in the two scenarios is that in a live performance, you're putting on a show. A live performance is a celebration of the music, and you should dress, play, and act accordingly. People are paying good money to see a show, and we should do our best to give them a unique experience.

If you want to get into touring and live performance, know that it's all about the show. People want to be entertained. In the pop realm, think of your favorite studio drummers, and then look at the tours they've done. Vinnie Colaiuta, Abe Laboriel Jr., Josh Freese, Steve Gadd, Keith Carlock, Kenny Aronoff—it's all about the music. There are tools that you develop for the studio, and it takes a maturity to know that you're not in the studio and that there are different priorities on a live gig. It's about being a complete musician and knowing which tools to bring to the gig.

I recently recorded the new Avril Lavigne record and the new Gavin DeGraw record. What I'd brought to these artists live led to my being on their records. When playing live, don't be just a dull reproduction of the recording. I think the drummer has more power than anyone else on stage to either electrify a show or kill it. The key to being a successful touring drummer is to be in the moment and bring it, every night, with all your heart and soul. The guys who light me up when I see them live are the guys who do exactly that.

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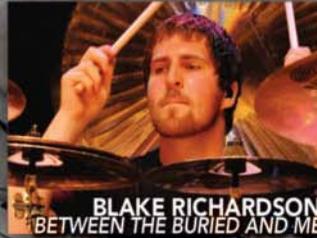
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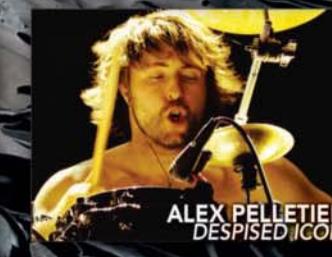
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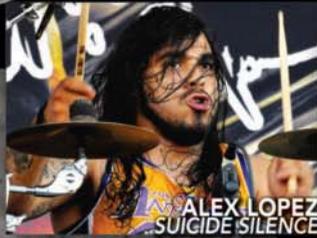
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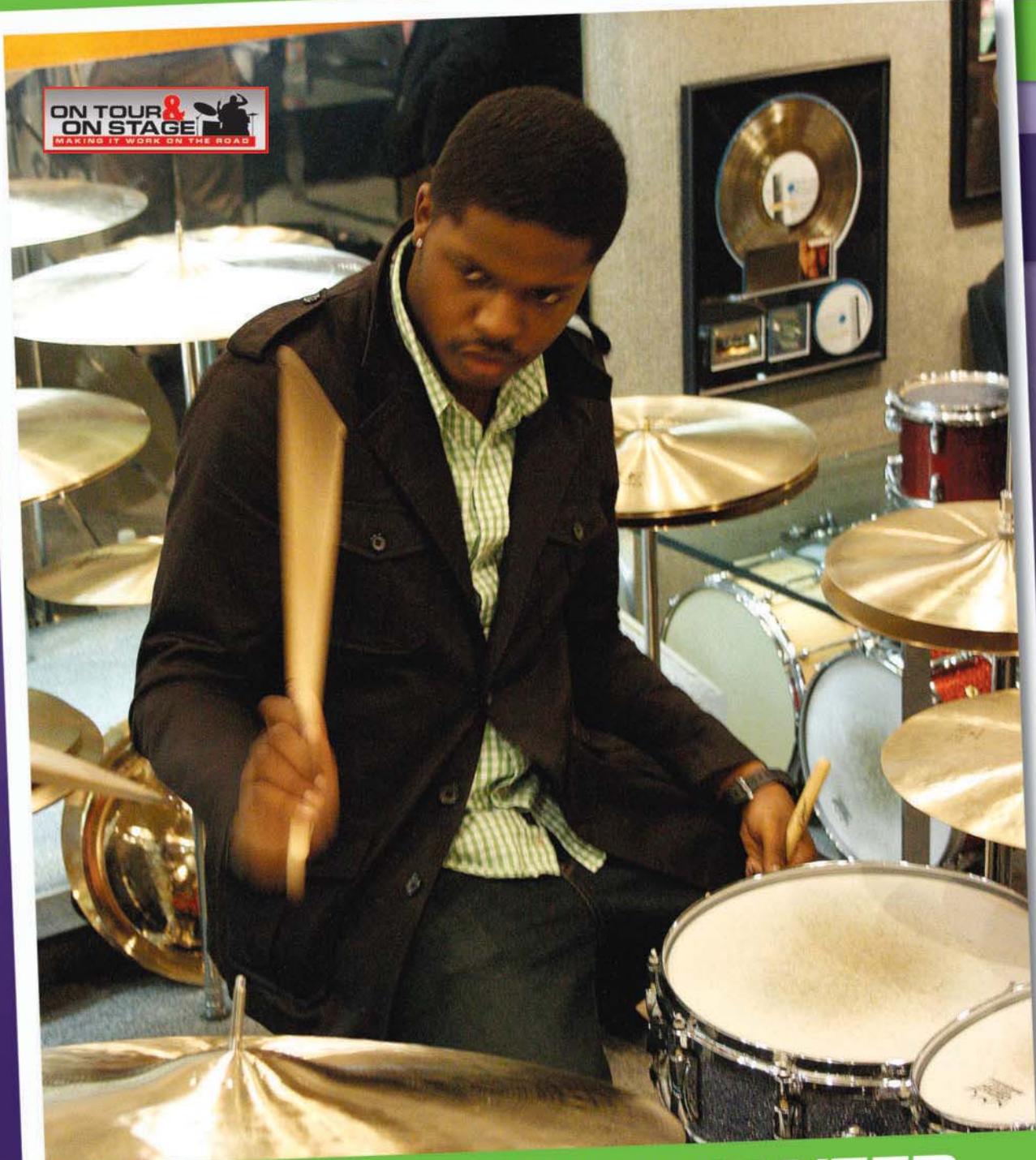
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IN THE MIDDLE OF SONGS.”**

# BRANFORD MARSALIS'S

## JUSTIN FAULKNER

HOW DOES A TEENAGE NEWCOMER FOLLOW ONE OF THE MOST HERALDED DRUMMERS IN MODERN JAZZ HISTORY? FOLLOW THE SONG, KID, FOLLOW THE SONG.

**A**t the fresh-faced age of eighteen, Justin Faulkner has not only replaced one of the premier drummers in jazz, he's landed one of the idiom's most cherished gigs. And he has yet to record a single record.

Jeff "Tain" Watts manned Branford Marsalis's titanium-plated drum throne for longer than most of us can remember, but sometime in early '09 Marsalis tapped Faulkner for the gig, and the newly enrolled Berklee College Of Music freshman never looked back.

A simple YouTube search shows Faulkner burning with various leaders, but his relatively new gig with Marsalis has taught the young gun secrets about improvisation, song form, and relying

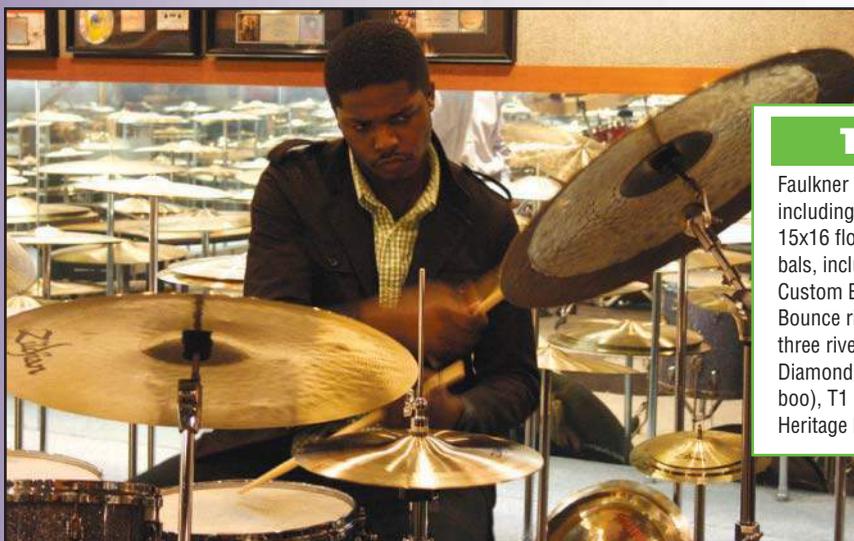
on instinct—all necessary tools for live music presentation.

"I've never had a rehearsal with Branford," Faulkner reveals from his hometown of Philadelphia. "We just play. We don't do soundchecks; we don't do any of that stuff. Sometimes Branford hands me charts. Other times he sends me the records and says, 'Learn this.' He taught me a method where instead of trying to figure out everything, I'm basing the song forms on the melody and the bass. Branford says the song will tell you what it needs in order to make it a good song. The song will tell you where the next large downbeat should be."

Faulkner has been playing jazz around Philly for most of his teenage

years—since the age of three, in fact—and he's studied both privately and at local institutions. (In addition to drums he plays orchestral percussion.) He played his first gig with Marsalis in San Antonio when he was only sixteen, but the initial results were so poor, due to drastic tempo shifts, that the tenor saxophonist simply said, "Better luck next time, kid." But he knew Faulkner had something special. Later that same night the Marsalis band, including bassist Eric Revis and pianist Larry Goldings, played one of Tain's signature tunes, "Samo." Faulkner acquitted himself well and earned the nickname "the Assassin." "Branford keeps me on my game," Justin laughs.

Befitting his role in a band that never practices or rehearses, Faulkner includes prayer as a part of his warm-up routine. After listening to Marsalis blow his



### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Faulkner plays **Yamaha** Maple Custom Absolute drums, including a 6x14 snare, 7x10 and 9x12 toms, 13x14 and 15x16 floor toms, and a 14x18 bass drum; **Zildjian** cymbals, including 14" K Constantinople hi-hats, a 20" A Custom EFX, a 20" K Custom Dry Complex II ride, a 22" K Bounce ride, and a 22" K Custom Dry Complex II ride with three rivets; and **Vic Firth** sticks, including Joe Porcaro Diamond Tip 7A, Peter Erskine model, Tala Wands (bamboo), T1 General mallets, Rute 505 nylon tip, purple Heritage brushes, and black Steve Gadd brushes.

tenor on classical compositions pre-show, the drummer typically returns to his room for spiritual reflection and a little focused practice.

First, for the soul: "I do a short prayer; that's the first thing," Faulkner says. "That's the center of my playing. Kendrick Scott has a prayer on all of his sticks. I ask that the music become one with me and that the drums become an extension of me. That reminds me that it's not about me. It helps me to not overlap and to complement whoever is soloing."

Then, for the senses: "I'll go through

some simple rudiments like paradiddles on a Vic Firth practice pad, then slowly increase the tempo. And I do flam accents with weird displacements, starting with the left hand. That warms up my wrists. We often do rubato ballads where I play rolls with mallets on the floor tom. To control the overtones, my rolls have to be fast to choke some of the sound so it doesn't drown out the band. Warming up helps."

Since the Marsalis quartet is entirely acoustic, no onstage or in-ear monitors are used—that is, unless a hall is extremely problematic, in which case

Faulkner runs "a little piano" through a single stage monitor. More important to the group than the monitoring setup is each member's placement on the stage. "We always set up in a V shape," Justin says. "And I'm always in the left corner, with Branford in the middle. He wants me there because he likes the band set up like he's listening to a stereo. He wants the bass in the middle, with the piano to the right. It gives it that oomph."

Since the acoustic group is keenly aware of dynamics and the hall environment, the members often carry on a conversation during the set. Sometimes Marsalis advises Faulkner; the group will even joke on stage. Communication is key, so why rely purely on the nonverbal? "We say whatever we need to say on stage," Faulkner explains. "We just talk, even in the middle of songs. When I first began playing with Branford, he might say something like, 'Why are you using sticks in this song?' *Listen.* Or, 'Does what you're playing make sense in a hall like this?' That's his main thing. He wants me to listen."

But some things are obvious, even to an eighteen-year-old. "I may end songs just by understanding the momentum of the song; maybe I'll do something really aggressive. On Tain's tune ['Samo'], Branford will sometimes turn around to signal me, and then I know to bring up the intensity. I'll play a certain figure, and the band will know it's the end of the song."

But as with all serious musicians, the communication between jazz players remains largely unspoken: You do the homework, you shed the tunes, you hit the stage. "Basically, I try not to think at all," Faulkner says. "Then each song can find its own place. But I'm also considering: What can I do to make this song come alive for the people? What can I do to portray the message of the song? That keeps my head in the game the whole time. It's mostly subconscious. What effect will adding this figure have? How will it change the timbre of the horn? If Branford plays a high note, what if I complete his phrase by hitting the bell of the cymbal? I ask myself that subconsciously, and the music either comes alive or I fail in doing it at that moment."

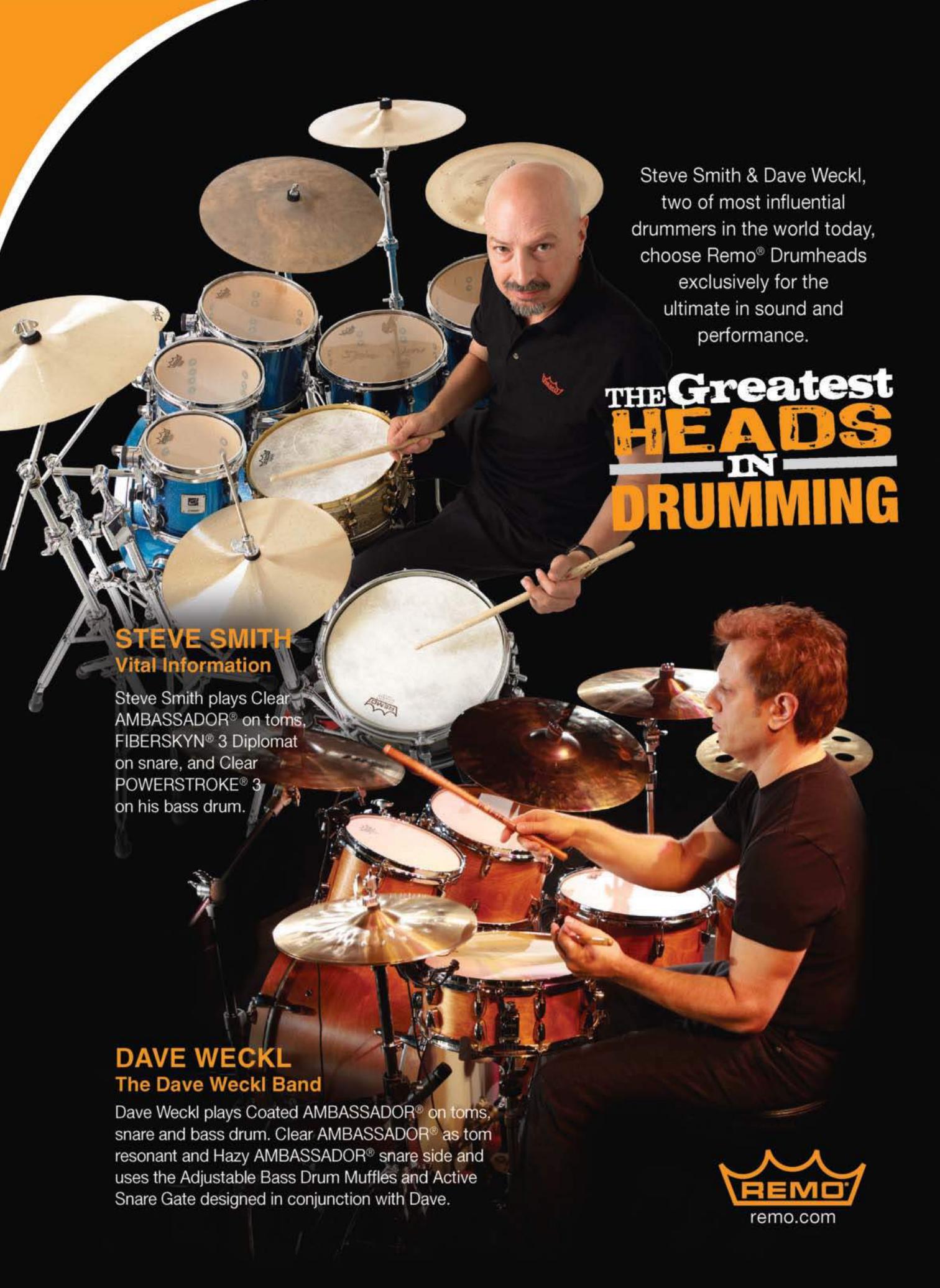
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# MUSE'S DOMINIC HOWARD



**IN ITS NATIVE ENGLAND, THE MAJESTIC POP-ROCK TRIO MUSE IS BIGGER THAN, WELL, ALMOST ANY OTHER BAND. NOW, WITH A DARING NEW ALBUM AND AN INCREDIBLE LIVE SHOW, LEFTY DYNAMO DOMINIC HOWARD AND HIS MATES ARE POISED TO TAKE IT UP A NOTCH IN THE STATES.**

It's the day before the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards, and Muse—singer/guitarist/keyboardist Matthew Bellamy, bassist Chris Wolstenholme, and drummer Dominic Howard—is on stage at New York City's Walter Kerr Theatre, preparing for its U.S. television debut. The plan for the following night is to cut away from the main VMA show over at Radio City Music Hall to this tiny 900-person-capacity Broadway theater in time for the band to play its new single, "Uprising." But today it's all technical run-throughs with stage blocking, lighting cues, and camera angles. There must be thirty-five stagehands milling about while the group plays the song over and over again.

One would think a musician would take this opportunity to cruise on autopilot, to go through the motions and save his performance for the actual gig. But Dominic Howard chugs through the galloping shuffle and huge backbeats of the tune with as much conviction and enthusiasm as he will summon when the world is watching. The music breathes. He's hitting hard. He's sweating. And he's proving that in this new Auto-Tune world, there's still a need and desire for real musicians playing real songs on stage. "We're constantly evolving live," Howard says. "It emphasizes how much you're changing as a

musician over the space of a few months on the road."

Muse formed in the mid-'90s in Teignmouth, England, and spent the next decade writing soaring anthems, fighting off comparisons to Radiohead, and slowly building a rabid following across Europe. The trio's brand of beautifully urgent pop mixed with a penchant for serious riffage enabled a steady ascension to massive popularity overseas. Nowadays they'll play two nights at Wembley Stadium and headline huge European festivals. Though success in America hasn't seemed quite as dramatic, the band has done pretty well for itself here, reaching number nine on the *Billboard* album chart with its 2006 release, *Black Holes And Revelations*, and selling out Madison Square Garden in June 2007.

Muse's latest album, 2009's *The Resistance*, which reached number three on the American album chart, takes an already lofty level of progressive pop ambition to new heights of stadium rock grandeur. There are Queen-style vocal workouts drenched in Arabic scales ("United States Of Eurasia"), quick-tempo punk blasts ("Unnatural Selection"), grooving funk struts ("I Belong To You"), and a bold, piano-led, three-part orchestral "symphony" that's about as epic as rock music can get ("Exogenesis").

Which brings us back to the VMA performance. Directly preceding the live telecast, Muse is treating lucky fans at the Walter Kerr Theatre to a full set of songs. Howard blasts his way through the group's dense repertoire with precision, colossal tom beats mixing with laid-back ballad understatement and gutsy, Rage Against the Machine-style head-banging snare assaults. One moment Dom rides his crash cymbal on a transcendent chorus, the next he plays the rims of his beautiful DW kit, supporting Bellamy's operatic falsetto simply by keeping time. Howard's live drumming is tight and powerful, to say the least. Is this a paradigm shift back to bands learning to play their instruments? Was that a Chopin nocturne they just played? (Yes, it was.) And is America actually ready for this stuff?

For *MD's* special issue focusing on live performance, we catch up with Howard and the band on the eve of their grand American television debut, just before a whirlwind promotional excursion for *The Resistance*, which will include a few gigs opening for U2 on its 360° tour in the States. The thin, mannerly thirty-two-year-old drummer enlightens us on what's in his monitor mix, pre-gig rituals, "rock neck," and whether he's ready to take over for Phil Collins.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky • Photos by Rahav Segev



**MD:** What were some of your early drumming influences?

**Dominic:** I listened to a lot of hip-hop when I was growing up. De La Soul's *3 Feet High And Rising* was big, as were some English rappers, like Derek B. So I was tuned in to a lot of beat-driven music. Sometime in my early teens I gravitated towards rock. I heard some Iron Maiden, and straight away I became a big fan of Nicko McBrain's playing and began to get interested in the drums.

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**"We learned more from watching the Chili Peppers and Foo Fighters than from actually playing. We got off that tour thinking we had to step up our game, big time."**

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We all certainly loved music, but we formed a band because we thought it was cool...to get the chicks. [laughs]

But eventually we got very serious about it. There were actually a lot of bands in the small town we were from, and after a while

## DOMINIC'S KIT

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- B.** 10x12 tom
- C.** 14x14 floor tom
- D.** 16x16 floor tom
- E.** 20x22 bass drum
- F.** 16x21 gong drum

### CYMBALS: Zildjian

- 1.** 14" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats
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- 5.** 22" A Custom ride
- 6.** 19" A Custom crash
- 7.** 18" FX Oriental China
- 8.** 11" **Rhythm Tech** Ribbon Crasher

### HARDWARE: DW

**STICKS: Pro-Mark** Dominic Howard Autograph series American hickory TX101 with wood tip, Hot Rods, and brushes

**HEADS: Remo** clear Emperor on tops of toms, coated CS on snare batter, Powerstroke 4 on kick, clear Ambassador on gong drum and all bottoms

**ELECTRONICS: Roland** TD-8, RT-10S snare drum trigger, and RT-10K kick drum trigger into an **Apple** Mac computer running **Native Instruments'** Battery 3





they all kind of disbanded and it was just the three of us left. There was no music scene, no real music influence at all. So we would do some covers of all the early-'90s things—some Nirvana, some Pixies, and some English bands like Ned's Atomic Dustbin. I preferred the heavier stuff. We were drawn to a lot of American music. Particularly over here, 1991 was a pretty important year. Rage Against The Machine's first album came out, which we all loved. That rap/rock mix was confusing at first, but we grew to understand it.

**MD:** What opened your eyes and led you to a new level in your drumming?

**Dominic:** Really it was the shift to those American bands, like Rage, Helmet, Primus—we were *huge* Primus fans. I loved Tim Alexander, but I think I turned into an even bigger fan of Brain [Bryan Mantia] when he joined for *The Brown Album*. I would listen to that record ten times a day. I was inspired by what he did to that band. Before that, they were so technical, which was great, but he applied a bit more groove and swing. There was also Dave Grohl, because we were all such big Nirvana fans, and Brad Wilk as well. I'm self-

taught. I didn't love the couple lessons I had, so I continued to learn by listening to those drummers.

**MD:** When you started out, how difficult was it being a lefty? You couldn't sit in with other bands, right?

**Dominic:** Yeah, we did lots of gigs with other bands before we got signed, and I could never use their kits. I was rolling around with this beat-up kit packed in the back of my mum's car. I'd show up to a gig and the right-handed drummer would say, "You're not using my kit," which would give me an excuse to use my own drums and set up in front of them. There were a few occasions when I'd have to use someone's kit,

and they'd be so pissed off. I would undo all their clamps, move the tom over, and raise and lower the stands! But having my own kit meant at the end of our set I could kick it over and trash my stuff, and they couldn't complain.

**MD:** How have you adjusted to playing bigger and bigger rooms?

**Dominic:** The way we perform on stage has evolved with the size of the rooms. You become much more expressive and your playing becomes much more exaggerated when you get into the bigger venues. A lot more flailing of arms, more running around the stage for the other guys. It kind of happened naturally, really. But even early, we

## DOM'S FAVES

**The Police** "So Lonely" from *Outlandos D'Amour* (Stewart Copeland) /// **Primus** "The Chastising Of Renegade" from *The Brown Album* (Bryan "Brain" Mantia) /// **The Beatles** "Helter Skelter" from *The White Album* (Ringo Starr) /// **Aphex Twin** "Come To Daddy" from *Come To Daddy* EP (programming) /// **Justice** "Waters Of Nazareth" from *Cross* (programming) /// **Nirvana** "Milk It" from *In Utero* (Dave Grohl) /// **Smashing Pumpkins** "Silverf\*\*k" from *Siamese Dream* (Jimmy Chamberlin) /// **Rage Against The Machine** "Bulls On Parade" from *Evil Empire* (Brad Wilk) /// **Iron Maiden** "The Number Of The Beast" from *The Number Of The Beast* (Clive Burr) /// **Helmet** "Insatiable" from *Aftertaste* (John Stanier)

## DOMINIC HOWARD

learned a lot when we toured arenas with the Foo Fighters and the Red Hot Chili Peppers in 1999. They weren't our own shows, and we certainly wouldn't have been able to handle doing our own shows for that many people at that stage. We were kids, maybe twenty years old. We were totally scared and nervous.

**MD:** Were you getting a soundcheck?

**Dominic:** Yeah, it was loose, just a few wedges on stage. They were pretty good to us. But it was a learning process. We were thrown on first in

arenas. They weren't empty, but, you know.... [laughs] We learned more from watching those two other bands than from actually playing. Like the Peppers, because they were headlining—how they controlled the stage and the crowd, how great they were as players. Chad Smith was unbelievable on the drums. We came off that tour thinking we had to step up our game, big time.

**MD:** The gong drum to your right—does that help you come up with inventive tom grooves?

**Dominic:** I was watching the Led

Zeppelin DVD, and I saw Bonham had a timpani to his side. I put in that gong drum for the last album [*Black Holes And Revelations*], on a song called "Map Of The Problematique." Rather than adding a double pedal for certain grooves, which would sound a bit "metal," we wanted to make something more layered and flabby. I use it live as a sort of bass drum substitute on "Knights Of Cydonia" [from *Black Holes*], as well as for some parts on "United States Of Eurasia." It's a great-sounding piece.

**MD:** Let's talk about clicks. How much of the live show involves them?

**Dominic:** About 70 percent. As the albums have progressed, we've become more and more ambitious for a three-piece band, to the point where it's impossible to do certain things live, and we needed to add a keyboard player [in addition to Bellamy's live piano playing]. And we run lots of live MIDI for all the arpeggios, so all that has to be clicked up.

**MD:** Were you always comfortable with it?

**Dominic:** No, I hated it at first. I remember being very frustrated in the studio early on—constantly moving in and out of it. You start sweating, just losing it. But you get better. One of the first songs I started using a click live on was "Bliss," off the second album [2001's *Origin Of Symmetry*]. It had a real obvious synth arpeggio, with us rocking out on top of it.

**MD:** What's your live click like?

**Dominic:** It's 8th notes with three tones of some really annoying cowbell [mimics rising and falling notes]. I don't have it too loud. It just sits in the mix nicely, so when you're on it you can't hear it. If you shift a little, you can hear it and then adjust yourself. It's distracting playing with a click, really. If it's too loud, you can't hear the intricacies of what you're playing, what the others are playing, or what else is going on in the track. Over the years I've found a balance, so I can't really hear it anymore. Though that might have more to do with my hearing damage! [laughs]

**MD:** What about your in-ear monitors? What's in your mix when you play live?

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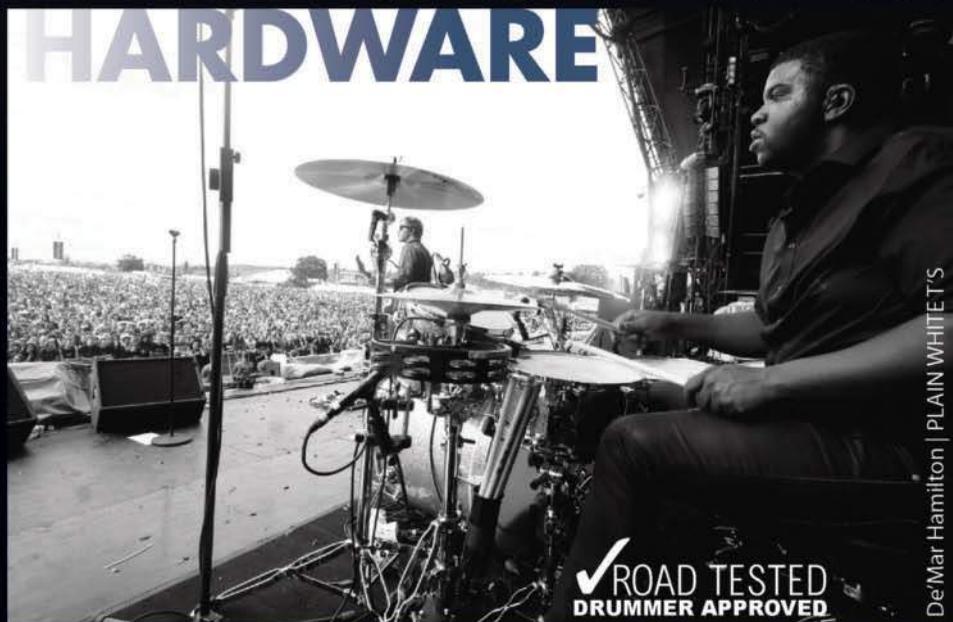
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## DOMINIC HOWARD

**Dominic:** I've been using Shure E5 in-ears for about six years now. It was a weird switch when you go from yelling for more kick in your huge wedge to these, but I had to for our second album. Our crew is brilliant, so I have a nice, clean balance.

**MD:** A lot of drums?

**Dominic:** A lot of bass, really. But I try to make it sound like I'm listening to an album.

**MD:** Is the audience fed in?

**Dominic:** Yes, recently I added some audience as well. We were playing a gig in Germany recently, and everything sounded so dry and focused. It sounded good, but I took my buds out and played a bit. I was missing some of that space. So I started putting a lot more ambience in because we have stage mics all over the place pointing at the crowd. So the next gig in Paris, I put in all this crowd noise and loved it. I had such a better gig.

We're actually going to start putting up a few more ambient mics behind the drumkit. It's good for the whole mix, because certain crowds, you can hear them screaming and singing along. Like in Paris they're always bang-up for it all the time; they go really mental in Spain as well. I recall in Marseilles a few years ago, two people broke their ankles near the front because they were just going ballistic.

**MD:** During your concerts, do you ever change the beats from earlier records?

**Dominic:** The songs are always changing live. I've got so much more to improve with my playing, personally. I still have all these goals, like becoming more fluid and relaxed. Where I am as a player now compared to where I was—I'm much more confident and a bit more proficient in areas. With that knowledge, you tend to perceive the older tunes differently.

**MD:** What's an example of a song that's received an overhaul?

**Dominic:** Funny, the other day we started playing a tune called "Cave" from the first album [1999's *Showbiz*], which was written in maybe 1997. We played a more jazz version of it, with the piano—a bit less aggro. And it was so much fun. It all came back, but

it feels so different, almost like a new song. "Plug In Baby" [from *Origin Of Symmetry*] has evolved over the years. It's a relatively straightforward tune to play, but because it is I have room to be very spontaneous in the live situation. I improvise on that one quite a lot—little subtle fills.

**MD:** Does it mess up the other musicians when you change it up? Do you get a couple of glances back at you?

**Dominic:** Sometimes! [laughs] If I'm greatly speeding up just before the chorus.

**MD:** Your new single, "Uprising," is a different kind of shuffle, not the normal dotted ride pattern. There's a four-on-the-floor kick, with offbeats on the floor tom. The album version also has some tom-fill overdubs. How are you going to do that live?

**Dominic:** We initially approached recording the new album all live. We tried it, and it was just kind of okay. We then got much deeper with the production, where I recorded all the parts separately. But that was still playable live. Those big tom stabs give the drums some massive dimension. Live, I'll just add them within the part. We have a keyboard player who will play some auxiliary floor toms and snare live as well.

**MD:** How about the programmed beats on "Undisclosed Desires"? How will you approach the hip-hop elements of the song live?

**Dominic:** In the studio I used programming software [MOTU BPM] and put in lots of layers and dynamics. Live, I'll play a groove with triggers. The triggers go right into a Roland TD-8 trigger-to-MIDI converter and into a Mac running Native Instruments' Battery 3. It's a genius piece of software. I can do all sorts of trigger changes for this tour.

**MD:** Those huge fills in the new three-part "Exogenesis" symphony are quite impressive. Did you improvise those while you were tracking, or were they written out? Will you change them up live?

**Dominic:** Yeah, there's an element of craziness there. I was trying to be a bit bombastic, going through a few different ideas in the studio. I'll probably

change it up live—do something and think, *Why didn't I record it like this?* That's a spot to really open up live. For the show, there will be some great video for that symphony. I'll use some triggers as well. As on Part 1, there's a Massive Attack influence—that loud, dry rimshot coupled with that “heart-beat style” bass drum.

**MD:** On the *H.A.A.R.P* live DVD from Wembley Stadium in 2007, you play with brushes on “Soldier’s Poem.” Isn’t technology amazing that you can do that and be heard in a huge outdoor venue?

**Dominic:** You know, we recorded that track for the album on vintage gear in a little room with an old jazz kit. The whole band was recorded with just a couple of mics. We took it to the stage and were so surprised at how well the song translated to stadiums and arenas. You’re right, it is amazing that those subtleties can come out in such a vast space. But our sound engineer is amazing, one of the best. It’s weird that such a stripped-down, delicate, acoustic song that’s not rocking or covered in cymbal noise can actually work in a stadium. It was refreshing to do. For the encore, we all moved down to the front of the stage, and I had this little jazz kit that came up on a hydraulic lift. It’s a nice moment because it makes this massive stadium gig feel intimate.

**MD:** Also during that encore, you play with bundle sticks on “Blackout.” So at this point in the show, you’ve played with sticks, brushes, and bundles on two different kits. Any mental or physical adjustments to make?

**Dominic:** You know, it’s the music that gets you in the right spot. We just played this big rock set on the main kit, and it’s refreshing to take a break and come out and play these mellow songs. Just relaxing. At this point we’re knackered, so that’s why we did it too. [laughs] It’s quite easy to play with Hot Rods and brushes because they’re light. You can just tickle around—you’re not smashing the kit and using up lots of energy. They add a different texture to a big rock show. We seem to cover a lot of ground with our music anyway—lots of different

styles and plenty of peaks and troughs in the set. It’s nice to get it pumping and then bring it down there, play some piano songs and then build it back up towards the end.

**MD:** Any specific reason for using clear drums live during that period? You can’t hide any of your secret licks that way.

**Dominic:** I just think they look really cool. I bought a bunch of Vistalites on eBay then. When we recorded *Black Holes And Revelations*, I was using a Frankenstein kit for every song—a different tom here, a different snare there...it was all over the place. But I did end up using the ‘70s Vistalite toms on most of it. I enjoyed how bright and aggressive and loud they were, and I really wanted to use them live. I thought the clear kit would have a nice silhouette effect with LED screens directly behind me as well. So 50 percent look, 50 percent sound. [laughs]

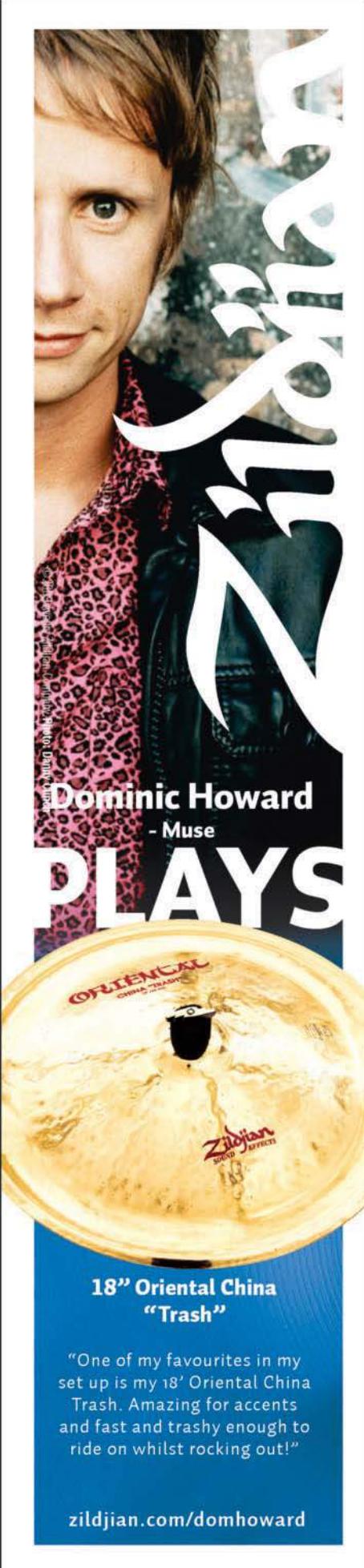
This time around, for *The Resistance*, we built our own studio and produced the album ourselves. I did a lot of A/B-ing between my kits, and the DW won. Live and studio playing are obviously two different things. It’s amazing what you can get away with live, but in the focused studio environment the massive magnifying glass comes out, not only on what you’re playing but also on every little frequency of the drum sounds.

There’s a certain mid-low frequency that’s very apparent with the Vistalite kits. The wooden DW kit had a much wider frequency range—much deeper lows—and it was even brighter in some weird way, which surprised me. That made more sense in the studio, so I thought it was time to take that vibe on the road this time, and so far I’ve been very happy with it. It sounds brilliant, very fat.

**MD:** What are some of the tougher tunes to play live?

**Dominic:** “New Born” [from *Origin Of Symmetry*] is quite hard to play. Fun, but hard. It’s relentless—this snare drum thing all the way through for ages. The verses are really long, and it’s just tiring.

**MD:** What do you do to cope?



**Dominic Howard**  
- Muse

**PLAYS**

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## DOMINIC HOWARD

**Dominic:** Just gotta chill out, don't get nervous, don't let the fear take over. I've really calmed down with that feeling of tension on stage, which so many drummers get. A good friend of mine, Andy Burrows, who used to be in [British indie rock band] Razorlight, always talked about how tense he would get in his arms. When practicing at home he could blaze around the kit, but on stage it was like, *What's going on? I'm stiffening up.* I totally understand what he means, because I've had that feeling. You get on stage and you get nervous. You want to play well, and you get a bit tired and tense. I've gradually learned to get rid of that, mainly by warming up before I play.

There's also the tune "Assassin" [from *Black Holes And Revelations*], which we don't play all the time, but that's me trying to find an area of heaviness without playing "rock grooves." It's like finding an area of madness—controlled madness. [laughs]

**MD:** What are some of the fun tunes to play?

**Dominic:** Off the new album, there's "I

Belong To You," which is a really comfortable groove, a real hip-hop-influenced funk thing. That's kind of like the piano side of the band, almost like a Ben Folds Five thing. "Stockholm Syndrome" [from 2003's *Absolution*] is still one of my favorites. It's really fun live because it's a rolling tom beat for the verses, and then it opens out into this half-time 8th-note bass drum thing in the choruses. And it's got some fat riffs so you can go mental, with your arms flailing around. That's a song where you get "rock neck."

**MD:** Rock neck?

**Dominic:** Yeah, you get off stage and you have this weird headache, this muscular pain. Sometimes when I play live, if I do a sharp move weirdly, I get this twinge in my neck, this hot, spiking pain that goes up the back of my neck: rock neck. Also, one time at a show in Japan at the Fuji Rock Festival... It's up in the forest, and they switch on all these bloody lights, and the first thing that comes out is a billion insects! The whole stage is swarmed with two-inch beetles, and they're crawling up my

back and down my pants. I'm freaking out and trying to get them off me, and during a tune I stretched my arm strangely and it locked up. I couldn't move it for a few seconds, couldn't play the next song! So you have to watch out for those rock 'n' roll injuries.

**MD:** What's your pre-gig ritual? Anything you go through before every performance?

**Dominic:** A strong bout of nervousness. [laughs] I normally need at least forty-five minutes in the dressing room. I have a little practice pad and a kick pedal attached to a pad.

**MD:** You don't have a kit set up backstage?

**Dominic:** I've had that in the past, but I didn't use it much. I'll set up a spare kit when we get into the arenas on our own European tour soon, where there will be lots of space backstage. But on the pad I'll loosen up a little, warm up, go through some rudiments, paradiddles, a bit of stretching. I use Power Wrist Builders metal drumsticks—quite heavy, so when I walk on stage and grab my sticks they feel really light.

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And I'll focus and think about the show, maybe about some fills I might try. It's always good not to over-think things, though, because the moments when you can be spontaneous make the shows better. I like to be comfortable on stage so I can improvise and do things I don't expect. I like that about some players—that's just their style, like they're improvising throughout the whole song. Like Ronnie Vannucci from the Killers—I love his playing, just doing offbeat cymbal hits. You can tell he's having fun and not really thinking about it.

**MD:** What kinds of spare snares and cymbals do you bring on the road?

**Dominic:** We've actually got two full sets of backline for the whole band, like an A and a B rig. They leapfrog each

other around the world. One will be here and the other on a boat going to Australia. It's expensive to do that, but it makes it easier to fly and get to places without worrying about the gear.

I've got a lot of spare equipment for shows, but I don't really change out different snares during the performance. I just have some spare cymbals and pedals and things like that.



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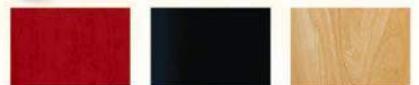
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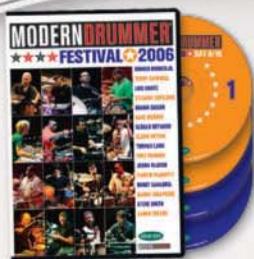
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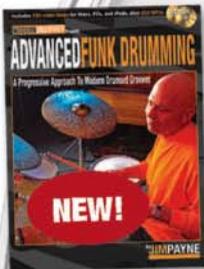
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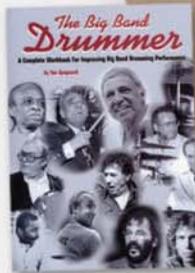
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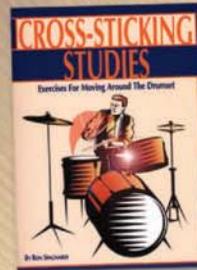
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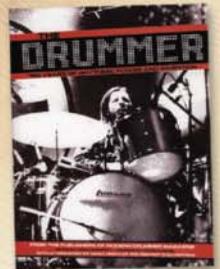
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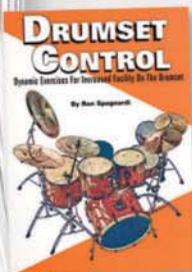
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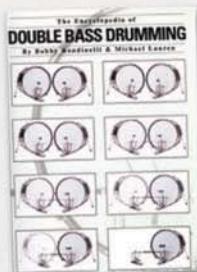
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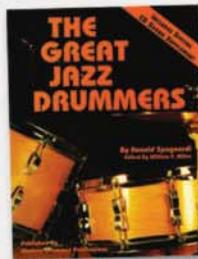
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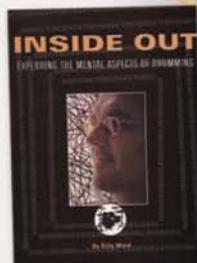
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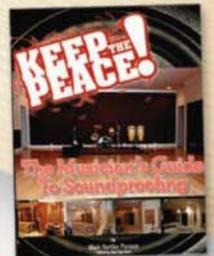
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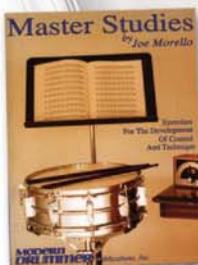
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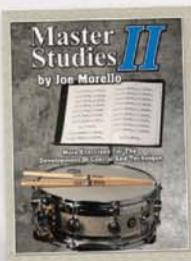
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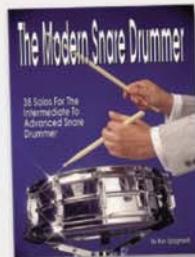
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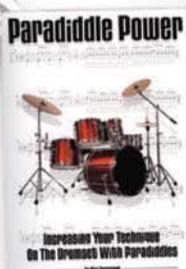
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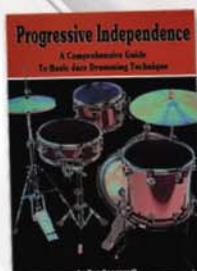
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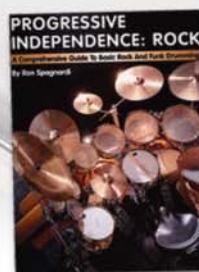
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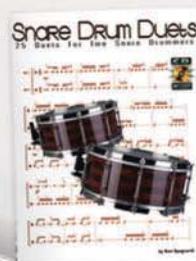
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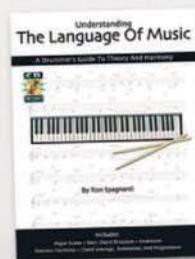
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## DOMINIC HOWARD

**MD:** How about preparing for tours?

**Dominic:** You know, we spend so much time fiddling around with video screens, we don't really get to play too much. [laughs] We've never been a band to practice too much, ever. I'm always the one who wants to, but the other guys are like, "That'll be it for today, let's not push it." I want to run through the set twenty times.

**MD:** That's interesting, because the band sounds extremely tight and well rehearsed.

**Dominic:** Good you should say that, because we tend to use a few gigs as rehearsals. [laughs]

**MD:** What things need to go right on a gig to put you in a proper headspace? Band vibe? Sound on stage? Audience involvement?

**Dominic:** All those things, really. I suppose there are moments on stage when you become so free in the music that you're not struggling in any way. It's like you're standing back and watching yourself. Those are the best moments—when you're so lost in it

that you feel you can do anything. When that happens with all three of us, that's when the gig is hot. We all know it too, because we're so tuned in to each other.

Sometimes there are weird moments—some mistake or something technical going wrong with the gear, or you've been on the beers the night before and your energy isn't there. Those moments start to play mind games with you on stage. I hate those moments. As you gain experience playing live, you learn to tune out those things. The other day we played the first gig we had done in a year, and there was a moment on stage, maybe Matt forgot some chords on the piano and it all got strange for a song. I was probably over-thinking it and the audience probably wasn't aware in the first place, but I got on the mic and cheered up the crowd, and the whole vibe of the gig changed instantly for the better.

**MD:** Do you feel you might get to the point of going through the motions? Like, does Larry Mullen Jr. still feel it

when he plays "With Or Without You"?

**Dominic:** We want him to, don't we? When you go see him, you want to think it's the same. We're not jaded, though—far from it. You get asked, "Is it boring playing the same songs every night?" And the answer is no. They're never the same. All these variables are moving around. The audience participation, the band vibe, as you mentioned. Sometimes you put songs away and bring them out and they have more life—a breath of fresh air has been blown into them. We really love what we're doing.

**MD:** Now that Phil Collins has announced that he can't drum any longer, is it up to you to carry the lefty British drummer torch?

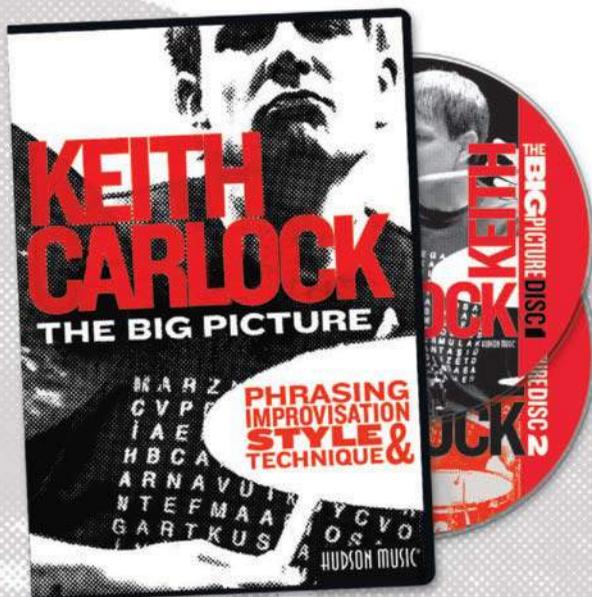
**Dominic:** Yeah, huh? Those lefty drummers are a strange, rare breed. [laughs] When I see another lefty on TV or at a festival, it still looks so weird and backwards and bizarre to me. That's a shame about Phil, isn't it? I'm the last one then.



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# MATT ABTS

MISTAKES? HE'S MADE A FEW. BUT **GOV'T MULE'S** LONGTIME DRUMMER KNOWS THAT SWEATING THE SMALL STUFF DOESN'T PAY WHEN YOUR GOAL IS JAM-BAND NIRVANA.

by Jeff Perlah

“I don't play songs the same way twice,” says Gov't Mule drummer Matt Abts. “That's the whole approach of the band. Anything can happen.”

Surprising fans with radically fresh versions of familiar songs is a common occurrence at a Gov't Mule concert. Abts, guitarist/vocalist Warren Haynes, keyboardist Danny Louis, and bassist Jorgen Carlsson try not to dish out too much new studio material on stage, since they allow fans to tape shows. “That spreads the music around,” the

drummer says. “And it's kind of our philosophy.” But over time, the new tunes become part of the Mule's ever-evolving jam-heavy assault. Even in the studio, the band often sounds “live.”

Like the Mule's earliest material, the group's latest album, *By A Thread*, captures the raw, rootsy intensity of a blistering, bluesy show, only with no cheering. “As on most of our records, there are songs that lend well to changing and evolving,” Abts says. “Gov't Mule has always been a live band—we stress the jamming.”

**MD:** Your latest studio material harks back to earlier albums, which had an especially live-in-the-studio vibe.

**Matt:** Over fifteen years and however many records, we've added a little more production, but we still pretty much fol-

to play?

**Matt:** Last year we did a five-week summer tour in the States, and we did all the big festivals—Bonnaroo, and on and on. We did Mile High in Denver, which has a huge crowd. It's outside, and the

**MD:** Is your gear on stage different from your studio kit?

**Matt:** Usually not. On this last record we set up the drums exactly how they are live. To my left I have some djembes and percussion stuff going on; I

## “WE DON'T REALLY REHEARSE. WE LET THE LIVE SHOW DO THE TALKIN'.”

low that format: minimal overdubs, that sort of thing. This is our first record with our new bass player, Jorgen Carlsson, and when you have a new member, that shakes it up somewhat. We went down to Austin with two weeks of studio time booked and nothing prepared. Within two weeks we'd recorded ten or eleven tracks from scratch. When you're creating from scratch, you've got to have spontaneity and chemistry going on.

**MD:** Any Gov't Mule tunes that you especially enjoy performing live?

**Matt:** It's hard to pinpoint certain songs. On our first record we did a song called “Trane”—as in John Coltrane—which is basically an instrumental improvisation. We have a number of songs like that, expressly written to jam out on. Our audiences like that type of thing, and we try to please them in that sense.

**MD:** In terms of playing live, are there any particular drummers who have influenced you?

**Matt:** Especially when we started, we looked up to Miles Davis's groups, so Tony Williams was definitely an inspiration. We don't necessarily sound like the Miles Davis Quintet, but we definitely take inspiration from what they did. And it's in a jazz realm where it's more likely that anything can happen.

**MD:** Is there anything you do to prepare yourself before gigs, like exercise or meditate?

**Matt:** I have a certain ritual I go through before I go on stage, usually in the back of the bus. I take an hour to warm up, doing rudiments or just stretching. And it involves a kind of meditation—thinking about what's on the set list, because it changes every night. If there's a song we haven't played in a month or two, I'll go through it in my head or listen to the CD and reacquaint myself with it.

**MD:** What size shows do you prefer

dynamics aren't necessarily...well, sometimes there are no dynamics! And usually there's no soundcheck, so you kind of hope for the best. There's a certain excitement to that kind of situation.

But probably my favorite places to play are the small theaters, which are usually 1,500 to 3,000 people. It's intimate but big enough to really draw from the crowd, and it can sound really great.

**MD:** Gov't Mule has several live albums. Do you like being identified

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as a “live band”?

**Matt:** Well, it keeps you on your toes. There are certain bands that go out and tour—really big bands that people have known for years—and they do the same set every night. That's just not our thing. We probably have a repertoire of 500 songs that we rotate, and that keeps things fresh.

**MD:** Has that made you a better drummer?

**Matt:** It has, because we cover a lot of ground, a lot of genres, from jazz to rock to blues to country to broken-down acoustic. You can't really pigeonhole Gov't Mule.

even had the gong set up in the studio. [laughs] We wanted everybody to be comfortable. My live kit definitely translates to the studio.

**MD:** Gov't Mule was originally a trio that featured the bassist Allen Woody. How have you moved forward as a drummer following his tragic passing?

**Matt:** Al passed away in 2000, nine years ago. It's hard to believe so much time has passed. But whenever you go from a trio to a quartet, it's gonna shake things up a bit. The original trio was reckless, but in a good way, and we really liked playing as a three-piece. But when we added Danny Louis on

## MATT ABTS

keyboards, it was a good change. We didn't want to replicate what we had done before. We felt that would be wrong, and it was time to move forward. Of course, I spend more time listening to keyboards now—it changes things. And just keeping your eyes open always changes your playing.

**MD:** After Woody died, you released *The Deep End, Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*, which were recorded with a number of his favorite bass players. What was striking about those sessions?

**Matt:** That was a pretty incredible experience. It was conceived partly to help us figure out how to keep the band going with some new perspective. We just started making phone calls, and as a tribute to Al all these players joined the ship, and we got to put out all this amazing music, with bass players from Jack Bruce to John Entwistle to Rocco Prestia to Phil Lesh to Oteil Burbridge and on and on.

**MD:** The *Deepest End* CD/DVD captures Gov't Mule performing live in New Orleans and continues the theme of having you play with many bass players. Were you able to prepare for that?

**Matt:** We soundchecked as many people as we could and ran over the numbers we were gonna do, but there was only so much time. We must have soundchecked for two hours, and the gig itself lasted four or five.

**MD:** What is unique about your live drum solos?

**Matt:** I do a solo every night, and I really enjoy it. It's an evolving thing. We do it in different spots. While the structure of the solos can be similar, they come out of different songs. Sometimes it might come out of a real high-energy one, sometimes out of just the opposite. How I create that solo from where I'm being left off is very interesting. It's a nice way to tell a story.

**MD:** Do you do a lot of rehearsing before a tour?

**Matt:** We do almost none. Warren and I have been playing together for twenty-two years now. I met him when I was with the Dickey Betts Band in the '80s, and he was brought into that band. Eventually he joined the Allman Brothers. We do have this extrasensory

perception; we spend a lot of time in the bus together, we tour a lot, we talk about music a lot, and of course we do soundchecks. But we really don't rehearse. We let the live show do the talkin'. A new member came into the band, and we spent three weeks with him rehearsing, which is probably the longest rehearsal stretch we've had. But he literally had hundreds of songs to learn.

**MD:** Do you protect your hearing on stage?

**Matt:** Oh, yeah. I have a bit of hearing loss. Almost every drummer who's been playing a long time does. I usually wear some kind of molded ear protection. It's something you always have to be concerned about. I keep putting less and less in my monitor.

**MD:** Any advice for drummers who want to perform live?

**Matt:** First, start a band and go out and find gigs—though this seems to be a dying proposition because nightclub work has dried up since when I was growing up. But play with as many people as possible. Have open jam nights at clubs, and encourage networking with other players. Play at parties.

**MD:** How do you keep it together when something goes wrong on stage?

**Matt:** Things can and do go wrong while you're performing—a cymbal or drum goes down, musical mistakes, forgetting parts.... It happens to everyone. If you are afforded a drum tech, he or she will make your life easier by being there when things go wrong.

I've held a cymbal that had fallen onto my lap and kept on playing with one hand. There were times when I was constantly pulling back my creeping bass drum. I've made a mistake in an arrangement and had the rest of the band give me dirty looks. You make matters worse by freaking out and drawing attention. Experience comes into play here. Try to keep your cool and a sense of humor if at all possible. If you make a mistake, repeat it—that's called jazz. There are no mistakes, just opportunities.

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# TOM KNIGHT

by Mike Haid

**THERE'S NO ROOM FOR SCRUBS WITH A HIGH-PROFILE ACT LIKE THE HIP-HOP SUPERSTARS TLC. A FIRST-CALL TOURING MACHINE SHARES SOME HARD-EARNED ROAD WISDOM.**

One of the top drumming guns on the Atlanta music scene, Tom Knight made his mark with the Grammy-winning producer Dallas Austin, who once called Tom "a human MPC3000" for his impeccable timekeeping. Knight has worked on numerous top-selling recordings with Austin and remains the first-call touring drummer for the Grammy-winning hip-hop artists TLC.

**MD:** What are the differences between being a member of a band and being a gun for hire?

**Tom:** I think there's a different dynamic as a touring sideman. It's very important to be able to get along with everyone when you're not a member of the band because you're more easily replaced. The thing that got me into the TLC gig is that I had a successful track record and a strong relationship with Dallas Austin, who produced most of their music. The girls also had a say in the decision. But it was his recommendation that got me on the tour. He had confidence that I would give the music what it needed.

I believe the key to becoming a successful recording and touring sideman is how quickly you can give them what they want. Because I had a

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Knight plays **Yamaha** Recording Custom drums, including a 22" kick; 8", 10", 12", and 14" toms; a 14" main snare; and a 10" side snare. His **Zildjian** cymbals include K series crashes and rides, Quick Beat hi-hats, and A series splashes. He uses **Remo** heads, **Vic Firth** sticks and mallets, an **Akai MPC2000XL** MIDI production center/drum machine, and a Yamaha DTX DS10 electronic drum and percussion system with triggers on the kick and main snare.

**"IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE A PRERECORDED TWO-BAR VERBAL COUNT-IN WITH THE CLICK."**



strong relationship with the girls and the producer, it was an easy transition to the touring band. I found it to be a profound transition from the dark, air-conditioned recording studio to the bright, hot stage, far away from home. The more comfortable your relationship with the artist, the easier that transition can be.

**MD:** With TLC, you play to a click track for the entire show. What's the setup like?

**Tom:** I hear a click track generated from off stage—I'm the only one hearing it—and that enables me to keep the band in time with the choreographed stage show, lighting cues, and screen projection, all of which are crucial to the overall performance.

I highly recommend always using a single cable from the sound-emitting device to your headphones. I experienced an extension cable disconnect during a show, lost the click, and went into panic mode. Luckily, my drum tech was there to quickly reconnect the signal; a few moments longer and it may have been unsalvageable.

I also recommend the Vic Firth shielded headphones. There's an avalanche of noise when you're playing in front of 25,000 screaming people, and you need to be able to hear the click clearly. I also feel it's important to have a prerecorded two-bar verbal count-in with the click. The first bar is for me, the second is for the band. This ensures always starting the sequence on the 1 of the first measure.

**MD:** What gear do you feel the need to have duplicates of?

**Tom:** For a major tour, you need a duplicate rig so

there's a spare for everything—not necessarily the bass drum and toms, but practically everything else. For TLC we also have a duplicate rig of electronics, powered up and running, in case anything fails.

**MD:** A good drum tech must be very important for a tour of that size.

**Tom:** By the time I arrive at the venue, the drums are set up. My drum tech's job at soundcheck and during the show has been to keep a watchful eye on my stage and to update the bank of samples at the end of each tune so that when I hit the drums, it actually sounds like the recording for that song. We have an intercom system to communicate, if necessary. We play twenty-two songs a night, each with a different set of samples from Dallas Austin's library of music.

**MD:** How do you remain focused during a long tour?

**Tom:** TLC manager Bill Diggins has us on the bus immediately after the show and traveling between cities overnight, so there's no chance of anyone engaging in anything unnecessary. It also encourages getting a good night's sleep. I'm very health conscious and exercise on a regular basis prior to going to the venue. And the big arena gigs are usually in a venue that's on ice because they play hockey there. So it's imperative that I keep my hands warmed up before the gig. I usually practice the Mitch Markovich piece "Tornado" on a pad to warm up my chops. After doing that pop gig, my heavy jazz chops went away, and it took several months of practice to get them back. That was an unexpected dose of reality after the road.

**MD:** Do you find it difficult adjusting after returning from a tour?

**Tom:** Landing a major tour was a dream come true and everything that I had always thought a major tour would be. But I was so busy enjoying it that I wasn't thinking about what was going to happen when it came to an end. And they all come to an end, eventually. When the tour ends and you haven't been thinking about what your next move is, you're not moving! And that's what happened to me. I thought I was going to walk off of one major stage directly onto another. Wrong!

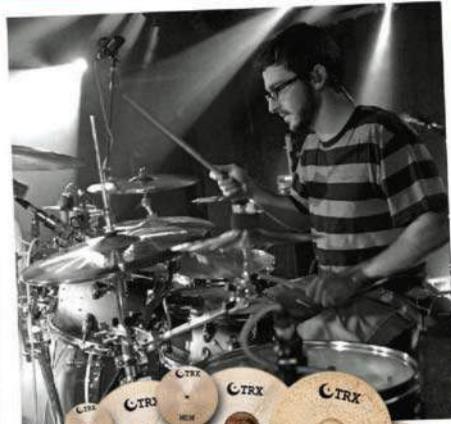
**MD:** So what did you do?

**Tom:** I pulled all of my marketing resources together and made a promo video, which helped land a potential gig with LeAnn Rimes, though the tour never happened. Even if you've done everything in your power to keep your career alive at home, though, people at home have a hard time believing that you're really home for good. It takes time to reestablish trust that you're not going to leave again. I had a hard time finding work after the TLC tour because of all these unexpected circumstances. We recently did a short TLC tour in Japan, and I made everyone in town well aware of my schedule so my work would continue upon my return. TLC was also slated to open for the Michael Jackson tour before his untimely passing. Playing live on a major tour can be the ultimate experience. But you also need to prepare yourself for what lies ahead, after the lights go down.



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# MATT JOHNSON



by Patrick Berkery

**JEFF BUCKLEY'S GRACE** ALBUM PUT HIM ON THE MAP. BUT THE DRUMMER SAYS IT'S SUBSEQUENT GIGS, LIKE ONES WITH **RUFUS WAINWRIGHT** AND **JOHN MAYER**, THAT REALLY TAUGHT HIM HOW TO MOVE A CROWD.

**B**rooklyn-based drummer Matt Johnson has kept busy the past fifteen years with a succession of fulfilling gigs that have seen him playing European stadiums, Lower East Side bars, and every kind of venue in between.

After arriving on the New York City music scene from his native Texas in the early '90s, Johnson hooked up with Jeff Buckley and was a member of the revered singer's band on the *Grace* album and tour. The years since Buckley's untimely 1997 death have found Johnson backing John Mayer, Rufus Wainwright, Martha Wainwright, Duncan Sheik, Beth Orton, and others in the studio and on stage, as well as moving forward with his own projects, like his new solo

album, *Cagefighter*.

It hasn't been an entirely smooth ride for Johnson, who grappled with his limitations and insecurities earlier in his career and has emerged a well-rounded, self-aware musician. "After all these years and all these experiences, I find that it's fed into the total story and the unfolding of my drumming," the thirty-eight-year-old Johnson explains. "I realized along the way that I wasn't playing because I was really great at this. I was playing because I really love this."

**MD:** What had you been doing prior to working with Jeff Buckley?

**Matt:** I'd been playing in a lot of different bands in New York, just learning how to play the drums in the context of any band that I could find. I had a lot of work to do in terms of getting my craft together. The best way to do that was to be working with people constantly.

**MD:** Do you feel you had your chops together by the time you began working with Buckley?

**Matt:** In some ways. But before the age of thirty there were always things in my life that were highlighting my insecurities. Even the experience with Jeff was incredibly punishing and difficult. The approach that you hear on *Grace* has these jazzy, dynamic inflections because I brought them to the music. I think Jeff went through a period where he thought my playing was too jazzy, where maybe I was a little too precious, too jack-of-all-trades, master of none. I think it's a really good record, and I'm happy that I took that approach. I'm just not really sure that's what Jeff wanted in a drummer in the long term.

**MD:** What was your mindset when that gig ended?

**Matt:** I was doing what a lot of drummers do at some point, I think, if they're going to play for their entire life and they're really in love with the instrument. I realized the work that I had to do. I spent a lot of time studying tabla. And I learned a tremendous amount from that.

**MD:** And you've managed to stay consistently

## MATT'S TOURING SETUP

Johnson plays **Smith Custom** drums, including a 14x22 bass drum, an 8x12 tom (on a snare stand), 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, a 5 1/2x14 hammered phosphor bronze snare, and a 5 1/2x14 maple snare; **Zildjian** cymbals, including 14" K light hi-hats, a 20" K Hybrid ride, a 22" K light ride, and an 18" A Custom medium thin crash; two **Pearl** chain-drive bass drum pedals; a **Roc-N-Soc** hydraulic stool; **Vater** Los Angeles 5A wood-tip sticks; and **Evans** heads.

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**Matt:** Initially it was just kind of making a living and trying to learn how to play with different bands and different styles that didn't come easily for me. Especially some of the pop things like John Mayer and Duncan Sheik—that was a whole different headspace. Nir Z had played on John Mayer's *Room For Squares* record and had a very distinctive style. It was pretty fascinating to get to know Nir and play his parts live, because they're extremely stripped down. I listened carefully to how much weight and precision he brought to those simple parts. After having done some of those pop gigs, it was very nice to work with Rufus Wainwright, because the compositions he's capable of are fascinating to play night after night.

**MD:** Was playing a more ornate style of music with Wainwright another phase of your education

in a sense?

**Matt:** More so than anything I've done. Rufus immediately gets everybody in the band singing. The ornamentation and a lot of the complexity and density of the music are found in the background vocal parts. So singing those parts and playing the drums was an absolute transformation for me. It made it so much easier for me to finally learn how to play the guitar and sing. He's a big influence on me in just learning how to play, sing, arrange, and write music.

**MD:** You still play in a wide variety of venues. Are you tailoring your setup and style to each type of room?

**Matt:** Yes. It's really tricky to find the right balance. Sometimes it's just best to hit consistently within a very limited dynamic range. In smaller rooms, I don't always think that's the case. When

you're mixing yourself—when you're unamplified—if you apply the same stroke to the cymbals that you do to the floor tom, there's a pretty big chance that the cymbals are going to be louder than anything else people hear. There should be a difference in the dynamic that you're applying to the drums and the cymbals.

I did the McGarrigle Christmas Hour show at Carnegie Hall last year. Dynamically, that's a very sensitive room. And that gig was important to me for understanding exactly how my drums resonate, how they're tuned, and what's working about them. And I've made changes since then, to where I feel I can get by with one kit and one fairly large cymbal bag. I can run the gamut of a lot of different types of gigs, without really having to do much to my drums.

**MD:** I imagine a gig like that, where you're playing kit on traditional holiday songs, on the quieter side, would be pretty challenging.

**Matt:** Right. I knew that loud/soft—that whole rock 'n' roll dynamic—wouldn't work. I had to think about how jazz guys who were playing in clubs in the 1950s could turn a band on without using the loud/soft switch so much. I was just concentrating on keeping a groove going.

**MD:** And there's the challenge of giving a pretty diverse group of singers—Lou Reed, Emmylou Harris, Laurie Anderson—what they want or need rhythmically.

**Matt:** I felt that. But there's also a part of me that doesn't give a damn. Meaning, yes, I do give a damn, but there's a cutoff point to it. Because giving a damn after a certain point only turns you into somebody without a spine. You cannot lack a spine and be a drummer—at least not a good one.

*For more about Matt Johnson, including how to order his album *Cagefighter*, go to [drumsmattjohnson.com](http://drumsmattjohnson.com).*



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# JOSE

# PASILLAS



**A YEAR OFF FOR GOOD DRUMMING BEHAVIOR: INCUBUS'S BEAT-SMITH DIVES HEADLONG INTO JAZZ TECHNIQUE DURING AN EXTENDED BAND HIATUS, AND COMES OUT A STRONGER ROCK PLAYER.**

by "Pistol" Pete Kaufmann



**A**fter a yearlong break, the multiplatinum rock group Incubus recently released *Monuments And Melodies*, a greatest-hits double CD (replete with B-sides), and supported it with a summer tour. But don't think for a minute that drummer Jose Pasillas and band had been relaxing while being away from the road. Pasillas had a baby, guitarist Mike Einziger studied music at Harvard, singer Brandon Boyd focused on his art (he designed the cover for *Monuments*), and bassist Ben Kenney worked on his own musical project.

At a tour stop at Radio City Music Hall, Pasillas fueled the band's fire with his creative playing, ferociously attacking the drums with confidence, originality, and fluidity. He owned the music like it was a part of him. It seems that when you've played with the same band since high school, it's hard to lose the connection or get too rusty, even after twelve months off.

While the group was in town, *MD* took advantage of the opportunity to pick the brain of this young veteran of the road. In opposition to his aggressive drumming style, in person Pasillas is humble and soft-spoken, and he gladly talked at length about the unique demands of life on tour with Incubus.

**MD:** After touring on and off for almost seventeen years, Incubus recently took a year-long break. Why?

**Jose:** The break was much needed. We toured for a year and a half before that break, and we were ready for it. We had planned to do other things in our personal lives: Mike went back to school, I had a child.... Everyone was pursuing different things. It was a good time for us to do that.

**MD:** Did you take a break from the drums while you were off tour, or did you keep playing?

**Jose:** No, I played every day. I ended up taking jazz drumming lessons for almost a year. I'd been meaning to take lessons and learn jazz for years; I finally had the opportunity, so I did it.

**MD:** Did you notice a difference in your playing after you took lessons?

**Jose:** It made me a better, more rounded player. I didn't play anything but jazz for a long time. I went into it not knowing what to expect, just hoping that it would help me as a musician. And when I came back to rehearsals, I did feel a difference: Playing felt more effortless, and I was more at ease with my instrument.

**MD:** When I saw Incubus play the other night, I noticed your drumset was set up sideways. What made you shift your kit to the side?

**Jose:** One of my favorite drummers, Jon Fishman from Phish, always sets up stage left and sideways, and I thought it was a

cool perspective. I got that idea when I was in high school, and I've pretty much done that since the beginning. I want people to see what I'm doing.

**MD:** The song "Monuments And Melodies" off the new album sounds like you're playing with brushes and a cymbal with rivets in it.

**Jose:** Yeah, that's right.

**MD:** Is that your jazz influence coming through? It's not very often you hear a rock drummer exploring that kind of sonic territory. It would be cool to see you play that live.

**Jose:** We never mess with that song live; it didn't get that much attention. But then again, we've been playing stuff we haven't played in years, so there's always the possibility that we'll play it sometime.

**MD:** Bassist Ben Kenney has been in the band for a while now. He's a much different

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Pasillas plays **DW** drums, including 4x13 and 8x14 snares (Rockit shells); 5x8, 5½x10, and 6x12 rack toms; 14x16 and 14x18 floor toms; an 18x20 bass drum; and an 18x6 tube tom. He uses **Sabian** cymbals, including a 4" bell, an 8" AAX splash, a 10" HH China Kang, a 10" AAX splash, a 12" Evolution splash, 13" Evolution hi-hats, an 18" Paragon China, a 20" Vault ride, a 21" HH Vintage ride, a 21" HH Raw Bell dry ride, and a 22" prototype; **DW** hardware, including two low snare stands, two low tom stands, a three-leg 9500 series hi-hat stand, a 9000 series bass drum pedal, a low drum chair, and a cage with ten cymbal arms; **Remo** heads, including clear Controlled Sound Black Dots on the tops of the toms, clear Ambassadors on the bottoms of the toms, a coated Powerstroke or clear Powerstroke 3 on the bass drum, coated Controlled Sound Black Dots on the tops of the snares, and Diplomats on the bottoms of the snares.

bass player from Dirk Lance. They're both incredible, but Ben comes in from a more polished, funkier perspective, having played with the Roots and all. Has playing with him changed or helped your drumming?

**Jose:** It's a natural progression for us. It's been so much fun playing with him, and he's made me a better musician. I feel it every night; he's a well-rounded, accomplished player and plays every instrument very well.

**MD:** You guys have been playing "Punch Drunk," one of the B-sides from *Monuments And Melodies*. On that song your

playing is very loose, and the band tends to stretch on it.

**Jose:** It's turned into a cool live jam. All of us love playing that. And yeah, it's really loosey goosey. We just slow it down or speed it up...it kind of undulates as it goes. It's a cool song to play.

**MD:** You and DJ Chris Kilmore have to lock in live with the sequences. You use a click live, right?

**Jose:** I use a click during half the set.

**MD:** Did you use a click on "Love Hurts"? That's a heavy groove.

**Jose:** Yeah. That's a fun song to play. A lot of pocket in that one!

**MD:** "Pistola" is another great live Incubus jam. You guys do a nice version on the DVD *Look Alive*.

**Jose:** We kind of keep the middle open. We could play that song for five minutes or for ten minutes.

**MD:** Because playing drums for Incubus is physically demanding, do you warm up before you play?

**Jose:** I've tried warming up, but it doesn't really do anything for me. It's more about my psyche. All that practicing won't help me; I'll just feel awkward. I look at every song as a personal challenge. I don't really prepare for it, I just try to get in the right frame of mind.

**MD:** Incubus tours a lot. It must be a challenge to be consistent night after night. Have you had any bad nights when you just weren't feeling it?

**Jose:** We played the Hollywood Bowl, which was a big night for us, and... I didn't play badly, but I wasn't feeling well. It was kind of a low point for me; I wanted to have a good time, but I struggled through it. You try hard to get out of it, but sometimes you can't. That night I couldn't—it happens.

**MD:** On *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* you covered "Let's Go Crazy" by Prince, with Incubus and the Roots playing at the same time. What was that like? Did Questlove and those dudes just jump in? Did you rehearse?

**Jose:** We only went over it once or twice. They're such good musicians. It came out really cool; it was pretty rad.

**MD:** I noticed you took the lead and Questlove followed. It's always great to watch two drummers work together in musical ways.

**Jose:** It was cool getting up there and running with it. He's a great musician.

**MD:** When I bumped into Ben Kenney the other night he was saying that sometimes you two play drum solos together for live shows.

**Jose:** Yeah, we've done that. We're pretty eye-to-eye. We're not battling each other, we're battling *with* each other. [laughs] We have a good time.

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Turn to page 73 for drumming highlights from Incubus's *Monuments And Melodies*.

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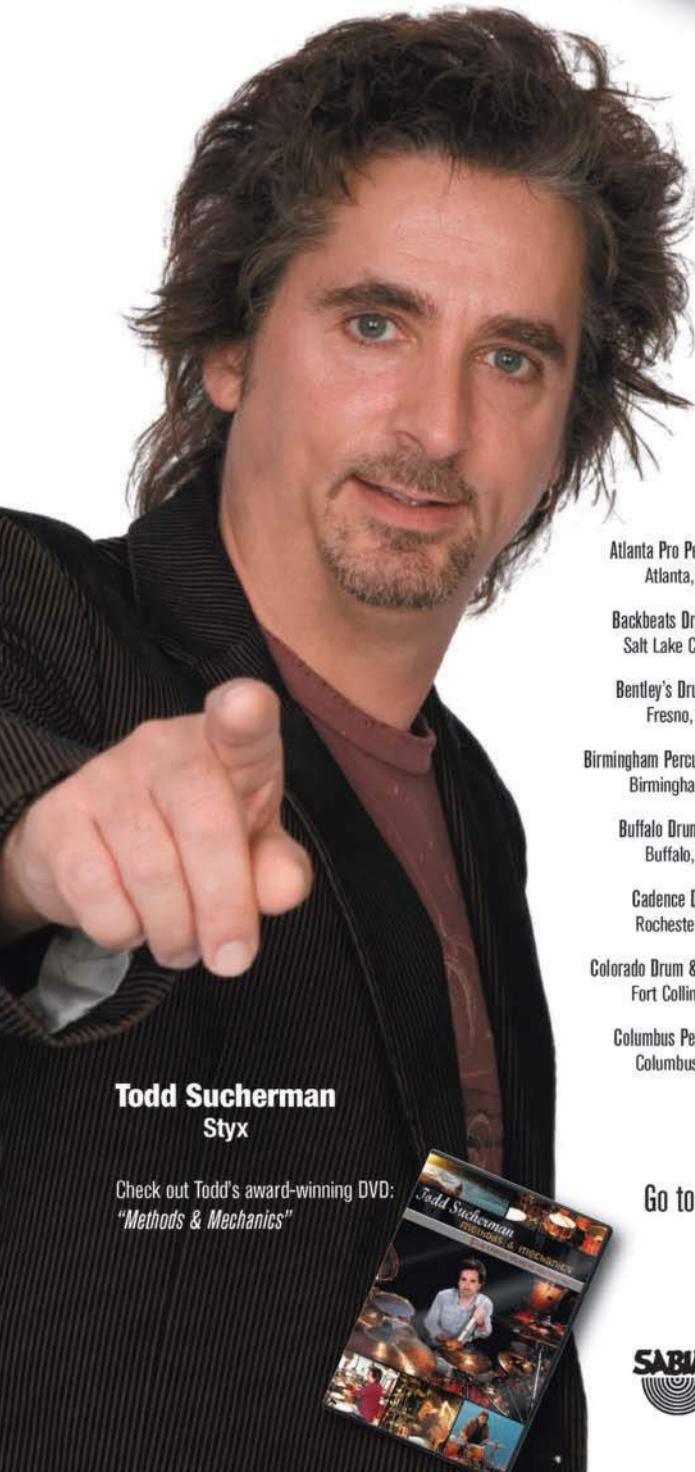
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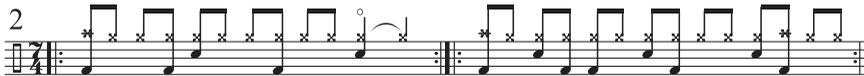
# 5 Drumming Highlights From *Monuments And Melodies*

Transcribed by Stephen Bidwell

**I**ncubus took the opportunity to include rarities, live cuts, and a handful of new songs on the recent best-of release *Monuments And Melodies*. Leadoff track "Black Heart Inertia" utilizes some clever mixed meters that don't sound angular and never detract from the lyrics. Jose Pasillas sets up a tom-intensive backbeat in the intro that he returns to in later choruses, with changing textures.



On the bridge to "Black Heart Inertia," Jose sneaks in a half-time groove in 7/4 and then doubles it up, creating a bit more urgency going into the next transition.



Here's Pasillas's blazing double-time breakbeat during the verse for "Pardon Me."



The drums and bass lock up to create slight tension going into the last chorus in the backbeat-oriented ballad "Dig," and Jose brings it all back together with a tasteful sextuplet fill.

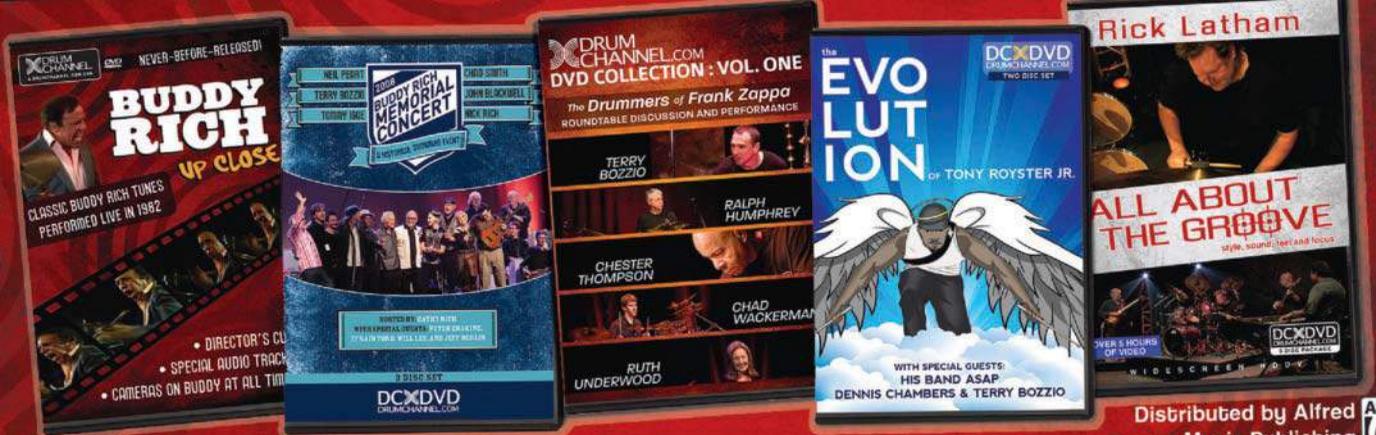


Pasillas and Co. dig into a dense Mars Volta-style groove during the opening and choruses of "Megalomaniac."



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STAGE

Photos  
by Hadas

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## MAYHEM FEST

San Manuel Amphitheatre  
San Bernardino, CA, July 12, 2009

Clockwise from top:

Michael "Moose" Thomas of Bullet For My Valentine, Ginger Fish of Marilyn Manson, Travis Smith of Trivium, Zbigniew Robert "Inferno" Promiński of Behemoth, Shannon Lucas of the Black Dahlia Murder

Also appearing on the main stage: Dave Lombardo with Slayer, Justin Foley with Killswitch Engage, Paul Mazurkiewicz with Cannibal Corpse, Corey Pierce with God Forbid, Tony Laureano with All That Remains (filling in for Jason Costa, who was nursing a broken hand), Steve "Skinny" Felton with Mushroomhead, Kevin Lane with Whitechapel, and Jon "The Charn" Rice with Job For A Cowboy



# Mastering Time

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by David Stanoch

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S.D.	●
P.T.	⊕
B.D.	⊖
H.H.	⊗
w/ foot	⊗
	○
	●
	⊕
	⊖
	Ghost note

**W**hen I was a college student in Madison, Wisconsin, in the '80s, I encountered the funk drumming legend Clyde Stubblefield. At that time, Stubblefield himself was not as well known as the classic grooves he played with James Brown, and David Garibaldi and Mike Clark were the only voices I heard praising the drummer by name. Fortunately that situation has been corrected, and Stubblefield, Jabo Starks, and many other musicians who helped craft the sound of the Godfather Of Soul have received the credit they so richly deserve.

Stubblefield constantly downplays his talents, even though he possesses some of the most innovative skills in funk music. Perhaps his ability to use his chops *inside* the groove set him apart from his more flamboyant contemporaries.

This article is based on a musical concept that I often saw Clyde use to great effect in a variety of ways. The foundation is the most fundamental of rudiments—the single-stroke roll, as seen in Example 1.

1

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

Through the interpretation in Example 2, the single-stroke roll transforms into what I call the "Stubble-stroke roll."

2

We'll use the Stubble stroke as an ostinato to create rhythmic phrases for grooves and improvisations. We can do this by employing "rhythmelodic thinking," which involves superimposing two-voice melodies between the kick and snare over the 16th-note foundation.

The right hand of the Stubble stroke maintains an 8th-note pulse on the hi-hat, but it can also drop down to the snare.

3

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



The left hand can add accents on upbeat 16th notes.

4

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

Here's a combination of the two techniques.

5

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

You can add the bass drum anywhere in the 16th-note flow to give the pattern some bottom end.

6

Example 7 is a transcription that I feverishly jotted down on a napkin after watching Stubblefield play the pattern four times (as an eight-bar breakdown) during a gig at a club in Madison, circa 1983. Note the use of buzz strokes as an embellishment. To create additional colors, you can experiment with adding double strokes, accented hi-hat notes, and open/closed hi-hat "barks" to the single-stroke foundation. And you can move the

left hand up to the hi-hat to achieve even funkier patterns.

Also, try swinging the 16ths and playing in the cracks between straight and swung subdivisions.

7

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

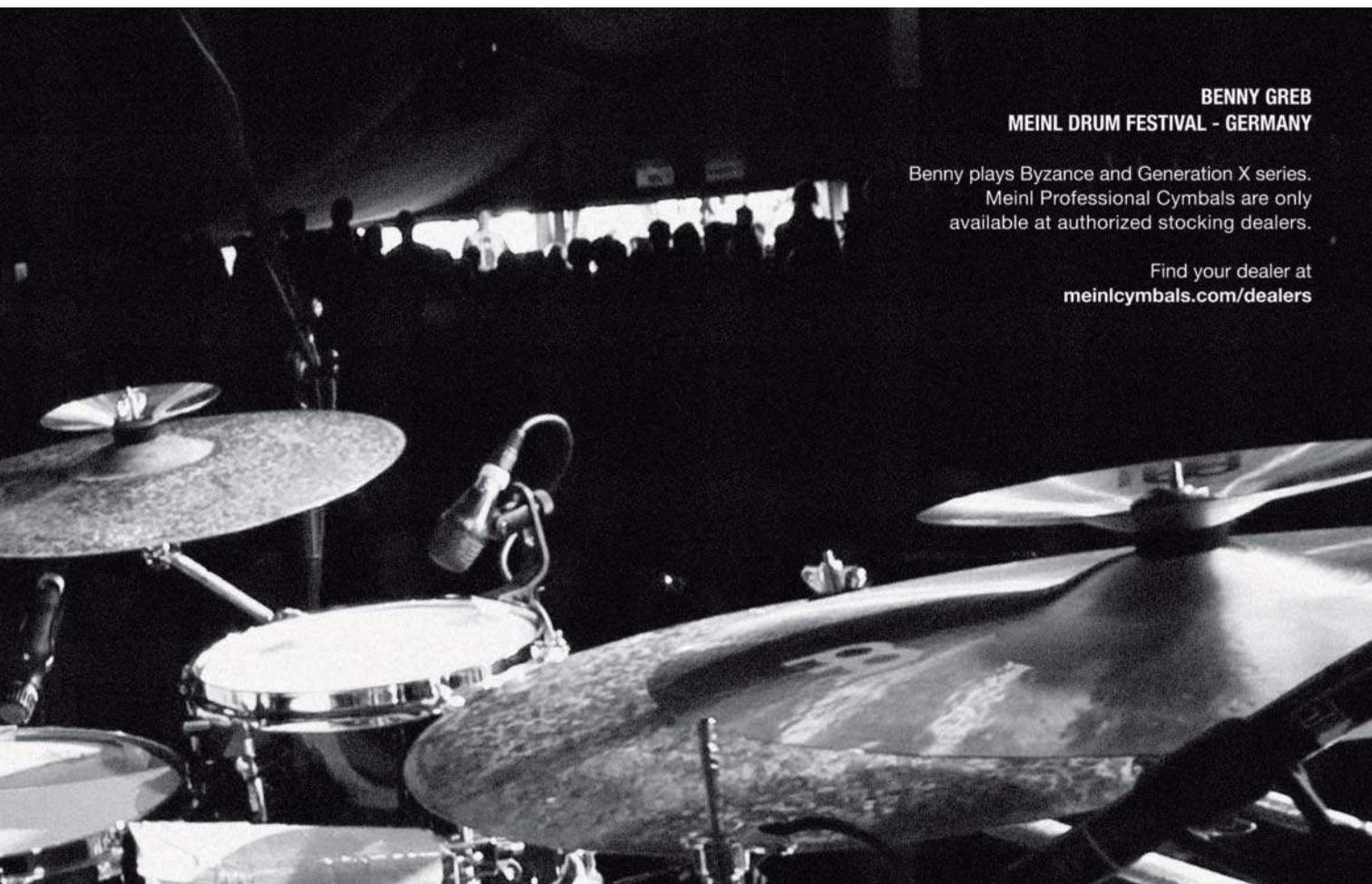
Here's a reinterpretation of the famous beat Clyde played on the James Brown track "Cold Sweat." Have fun!

8

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

David Stanoch is a faculty member of the McNally Smith College Of Music. For more information, visit [rhythmelodic.com](http://rhythmelodic.com).



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# LIFEHOUSE'S Rick Woolstenhulme Jr.

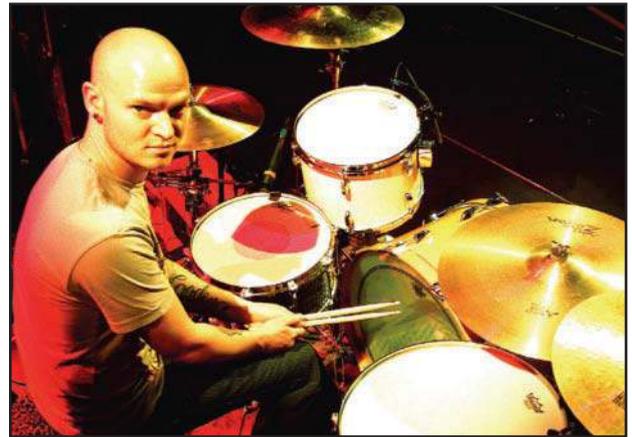
“DISARRAY” by Mike Malinin

**R**ick Woolstenhulme Jr. has been the drummer for Lifehouse since 2000. In the '90s, after high school, he moved to California from his home state of Arizona and attended the Los Angeles Music Academy, where he spent most of his time working on straight-ahead jazz. “My passion while in school was definitely jazz,” Woolstenhulme says.

Around 1999, Rick hooked up with an artist signed to the DreamWorks label. As is all too common in the record industry, this artist soon lost her deal, without releasing an album. Woolstenhulme wasn't around for the end, however. “Strangely enough,” he says, “I got canned for being too young.”

As luck would have it, Rick had been rehearsing in the space next to the room where Lifehouse practiced, and he would often see the band's lead singer, Jason Wade, in the hallway. In an instance of excellent timing, Lifehouse was in need of a drummer just when Woolstenhulme was in need of a gig. Needless to say, things worked out well, and Rick has been with the band ever since.

A couple of years ago, Lifehouse was on tour with my band, the Goo Goo Dolls, so I got to see Rick play a few



dozen times during the course of the summer. His drumming was always extremely solid, and his musicality is one of the things that made the band such a pleasure to watch. He has a great instinct for knowing just how to approach a song, and there is no better example of this than his performance on “Disarray” from Lifehouse's 2007 album, *Who We Are*.

“With ‘Disarray,’” Woolstenhulme says, “I tried to go for a dark mood and feel. The song seemed to call for that. I also



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PHOTO: STANLEY BENDERS

wanted to keep building the dynamics." One of Rick's all-time favorite drummers is Jim Keltner, which makes perfect sense; Keltner is known for his ability to always play for the song, and that's something that Rick himself has also had success with.

Woolstenhulme picked some relatively big drums for the recording. "I used my blond '70s Gretsch set, which is maple," he recalls. "The kick drum is 24", and I used 13" and 18" toms. For cymbals, I used Zildjian 15" New Beat hi-hats and a 21" Sweet ride. The crashes were probably a 19" A Custom fast crash and a regular 19" A Custom crash." The drummer describes his snare as "a 6 1/2x14 Black Beauty knockoff." He's had it for a while, and he says it has always worked well for him in the studio.

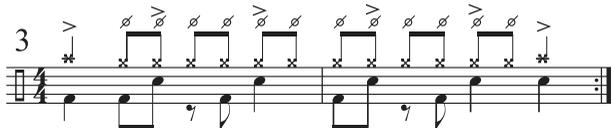
At the top of the song, Rick avoids a straight-ahead beat by keeping time on the floor tom, while playing his rack tom on the upbeat of beat 2 and holding the snare down on beat 4. It's very effective in setting the tone for the track. A nice little addition is the tambourine hit on every other bar. There's also some added percussion in the second half of the verse that helps move things along. Here's the intro beat.



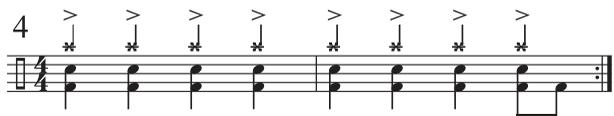
Woolstenhulme goes to a straight-ahead rock beat for the chorus, playing a kick drum pattern that grooves nicely.



After a relaxed bridge, the song gets to the third chorus. At this point, Rick follows the vocal line with his rhythm.



Woolstenhulme continues to build the chorus slightly the next time it comes around, and then he hits the final chorus with the snare on all of the downbeats.



All in all, "Disarray" displays a talent for building a song in a simple yet powerful and very musical way. Rick's ability to come up with just what each track needs to make it special is something we can all learn from.



Wendy Marvel

In this series, **Mike Malinin**, drummer for the platinum-selling band **the Goo Goo Dolls**, takes his magnifying glass to burning tracks recorded by some of his drumming buddies. Tunes from Mike's side project **Forty Marshas** can be heard at [myspace.com/fortymarshas](http://myspace.com/fortymarshas).



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2

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

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

In Examples 3–6, notice that the drags at the end of each hand’s phrase are written as 16th-note diddles. When played fast, drags will default to this rhythm, rather than being played as grace notes inserted just before the primary note. Work up the tempo on these exercises until they sound like drags and not simple 16th-note rhythms.

3

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

4

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

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

5

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

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

6

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

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



**Bill Bachman** is an international drum clinician and a freelance drumset player 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](http://billbachman.net).

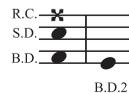


# Polyrhythms

## PART 4: TWO-LIMB FOUR-AGAINST-THREE PATTERNS

by Rod Morgenstein

MUSIC KEY



In the third part of this series (November '09), we applied a four-against-three polyrhythm to either the ride cymbal or the bass drum, while the snare drum played the backbeats on 2 and 4. Now let's take things a step further and incorporate a second limb into the mix.

In Example 1, the polyrhythm is played on the ride, with the snare doubling every other note. In order to feel the polyrhythm being played with both hands, count out loud. First count every 16th note: "1 e & a, 2 e & a, 3 e & a, 4 e & a." Then count just the quarter notes: "1, 2, 3, 4." Start at a relatively slow tempo so you can fully grasp the concept.



Now add a quarter-note bass drum pattern.



Example 3 incorporates three limbs (on kick, snare, and ride) into the polyrhythm. The bass drum and snare drum alternate on every other ride note.



To become comfortable with playing polyrhythms, it's important to practice moving back and forth between a basic 4/4 pattern and the polyrhythmic groove. Example 4 begins with a two-measure four-on-the-floor quarter-note pattern and is followed by the polyrhythmic groove from Example 2.



Example 5 features a two-measure quarter-note beat, followed by the polyrhythmic groove from Example 3. Examples 4 and 5 should be practiced back to back to help you further internalize the polyrhythm.



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It takes three measures to make one complete pass through our 16th-note-based four-against-three polyrhythm. Most music, however, consists of phrases of even numbers of measures. So it's also important to practice these patterns in two- or four-measure groups. Example 6 consists of two-measure versions of the polyrhythms in Examples 2 and 3, played back to back. Make sure to count out loud when practicing this exercise.



In Example 7, the polyrhythm is played with one limb (on the ride) for two measures, then two limbs (ride and snare) for two measures, then three limbs (kick, ride, and snare) for two measures.



Example 8 has the ride/snare polyrhythm playing over constant 16th notes on the bass drums.



Example 9 starts with two measures of a standard backbeat groove. This is followed by just the ride playing the four-against-three pattern, and then the ride and snare alternate the polyrhythm.

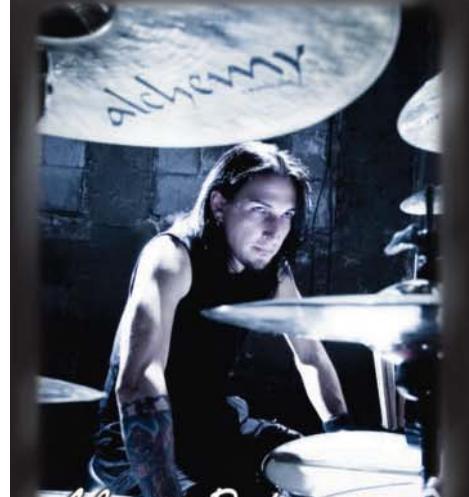


Next time we'll explore half-time feels and shuffles.

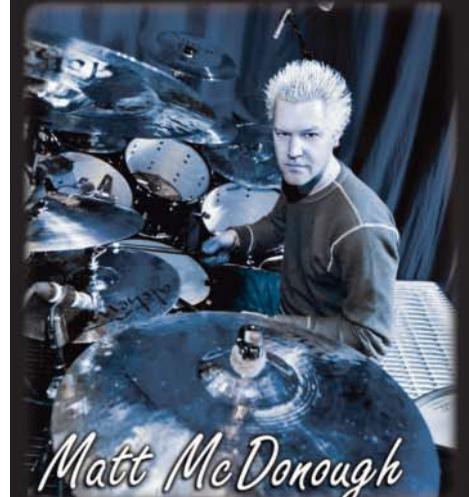
**Rod Morgenstein** is a founding member of the groundbreaking fusion band Dixie Dregs. He was also a member of the progressive Steve Morse Band, as well as the pop/metal band Winger. In addition, Rod has performed with the Rudess/Morgenstein Project, Jazz Is Dead, Platypus, and the Jelly Jam. Morgenstein is currently a professor of percussion at Berklee College Of Music.



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# When To Lead And When To Follow

## THE INNER WORKINGS OF GROUP TIMEKEEPING

by Jeremy Hummel

**T**here are three ways to keep time when you play with an ensemble. One is to lead, another to follow, and the third is something often referred to as “band time.” Let’s take a look at each of these and see how the role of the drummer can differ.

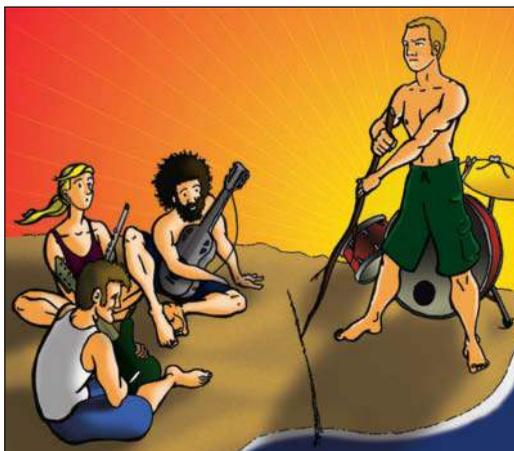


Illustration by Jeff Harty

### TAKING THE LEAD

Leading a unit in terms of time is the traditional and most common role of the drummer. The band is relying on you to be “the rock,” the foundation. The other players depend on you to provide the pulse and the groove.

In this situation, the feel of the band is generally solid, assuming the drummer is solid. At times, however, there can be a feeling of disconnect, as there’s the potential for other members to rely too much on the drummer for the time. As Thelonious Monk once said, “Just because you’re not the drummer, doesn’t mean you don’t have to keep time.”

### FOLLOWING OTHERS

This approach involves relinquishing your position as time controller to someone else. In these instances, you may not be feeling the music as you would like to, but you have to sacrifice some of your comfort for the greater good. If you’re a musician who works with many different artists or does a lot of fill-in gigs, it can be challenging to constantly place yourself at the mercy of another player’s perception of time.

There have been many instances on gigs where I became frustrated by how much the other musicians were pushing or pulling me. It’s important, how-

ever, to understand that tempo issues aren’t always the fault of the other players. Perhaps their meter is good but they’ve spent years performing with drummers who had bad time, which forced them to adapt.

On the nights when I’ve had to give in to someone else’s tempo, I’ve realized that few people in the crowd, if anyone at all, would perceive the song as too fast. If the band sounded tight and was playing together, then everything would seem just fine. Conversely, if I had selfishly held my ground, then the tension in the music would have definitely stood out.

During a conversation with Andy Seal, a bassist I play with often, he brought up an experience that illustrates what can happen when musicians refuse to make sacrifices for the greater good of the music. In his words: “For the last eight years I’ve been the bassist for a Sunday jazz workshop, where it’s a given that the bassist and drummer will provide the appropriate support. Nevertheless, I have learned that some musicians will still come to the gig with their own ideas and musical senses. When I have guest drummers sit in, their sense of time is the first thing I notice.

“One day a drummer sat in to play a

fast samba. When I play a fast samba, I like to push it forward and stay very much on top of the beat. When I did this, the band followed me, but the drummer scowled and almost stopped the song—a big no-no—to tell me that I was rushing, even though I wasn’t. Because of the arrogance between us, this drummer and I failed to communicate. But we could’ve found a common ground in seconds, and everything would have been fine.”

### WHEN EVERYONE HAS GREAT TIME, FUN THINGS CAN HAPPEN

The best gigs are those where there’s trust and respect among the musicians. I personally wouldn’t let just anyone dictate the mood or tempo of a song, but if a certain level of trust is present, it’s great fun when the drummer can act as a painter, as opposed to always being the canvas.

I once took a few students to see Steve Smith with Vital Information. Afterward we were all reeling over Smith’s stellar performance. That’s when I felt it necessary to point out the excellence of the *other* musicians in the group. I explained that each band member must have an impeccable sense of time in order to allow Steve to break away from the groove and solo so freely.

I have also learned over the years that some people don’t always want rock-solid time behind their solos, feeling it can sometimes restrict them from expressing their ideas freely. Here’s another jazz-workshop anecdote from Andy Seal:

“There’s a drummer in our area, Lou Feist, who I love to play with. Lou can play with great time when he has to. To some listeners, his drumming style may seem simplistic on the surface. But when I play with him, I hear things in his pulse that are very free and moving—he uses the pulse as part of his musical expression. To play alongside him you have to listen to what he’s playing, where he’s going, and what he’s feeling.

“One of my favorite experiences of playing a bass solo was with Lou on Cole Porter’s ‘Could It Be You?’ We let

go of the time, which was very liberating and brought forward the emotional power of the song. Then I realized that this is nothing more than a performance effect that European soloists, composers, and conductors have used for centuries. It's called rubato, and it means freely accelerating and decelerating the tempo. Rubato can be very effective when used subtly on slower, more dramatic pieces. Tunes such as Miles Davis's 'Blue In Green' and Charles Mingus's 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' are examples of songs that can benefit from a freer tempo."

### KNOWING WHEN TO PUSH AND WHEN TO PULL

Suppose a bandmate starts a song that's way too slow or fast. How do you reel in the groove and return the tempo to where it needs to be? You have to make adjustments gradually. It may take awhile—say, from the intro to the first chorus—to methodically pull or push the time to its proper pulse. The trick is to recognize the spots in the composition where you can adjust the tempo without it being obvious.

Suppose the tempo gets pushed in a natural place such as the chorus. There is usually a re-intro or "A" section without vocals before the next verse begins. This period, which is typically two or four bars long, is a good time to gradually realign the tempo. If you waited to make adjustments until the vocal came back in, the time shift would be more noticeable because of how the vocals are phrased.

The key word when discussing tempo shifts is *gradually*. My goal is to be slick enough, whether I'm playing live or in the studio, that even my bandmates don't notice. An engineer once told me, "The thing I like about you is that if you do get off the click, you know where to resolve."

### THE ULTIMATE: BAND TIME

This is the summit. Here, the band breathes as one unit, one entity. No one in this situation is leading or following, and that's what many musicians strive for. But even among the greatest play-

ers, it's not present all the time.

When this cohesive group groove *does* happen, there's sometimes a floating, fuzzy feeling that comes with it. Nothing is forced. Instead of the time having rough edges, the pulse just glides along and everyone is in the zone.

There are many recorded examples of great band time. One is Jeff Buckley's now-classic album *Grace*. Buckley's vocals are what most people cite as the greatness in the record. But the chemistry among the musicians was magical as well. The music contains not only amazing dynamics but also moments where the band holds on a chord and waits for Buckley's reentry. They do this seamlessly, with everyone breathing together.

Another example of great band time is Stuff's *Live At Montreux 1976*. The band, with Steve Gadd on drums, includes some of the finest session musicians of the era. The music on this record is a plethora of styles wrapped into one—funk, jazz, blues, gospel... It has it all.

A third example is the song "Polly Come Home" from the award-winning album *Raising Sand* by Alison Krauss and Robert Plant. Recorded with no click, this tune is played at about forty beats per minute. The amazing thing is that drummer Jay Bellerose plays only on beats 1 and 4 of each six-beat measure, and the band is as smooth as silk.

### KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS!

Of all musicians, drummers work the hardest on their time. It's our job and our primary role. Yet it's when *all* of the musicians in a group are connected to the same universal pulse that the music can flow effortlessly. Sure, there will always be times when we need to call an audible and make sacrifices to help the tune sound good. In the end, it's the music that matters.

**Jeremy Hummel** was an original member of Breaking Benjamin. He helped that group achieve platinum status with its second release, *We Are Not Alone*. He has since turned his efforts to session work and drum instruction in Pennsylvania. Jeremy can be reached at his Web site, [jeremyhummel.com](http://jeremyhummel.com).

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## THE DOORS'

# JOHN DENSMORE

by Michael Parillo

**T**he original four-piece lineup of the Doors was together for around six years, from its formation in mid-1965 until the death of frontman Jim Morrison in July 1971 at age twenty-seven. Over that span, the band—Morrison, keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger, and drummer John Densmore—released six studio albums and nurtured the impressive ability to write both the most confectionary pop songs and far darker, more complex bits of psychedelic art rock, ping-ponging between the two on each recording. The quartet, which also put out *Absolutely Live* (1970) and Morrison's posthumously released spoken-word collection, *An American Prayer* (1978), remains to this day one of the best-selling and most popular classic rock groups.

Working without a regular bass-playing foil—the Doors often recorded with a bassist but hardly ever gigged with one—Densmore favored a lean, crisp, clear style in feel-good rhythmic explorations that, like the band's songs, gathered together ideas from blues, pop, jazz, classical, and Latin, Eastern, and African music. There are many reasons to love this slyly inventive, often underrated drummer. Here are just a few.

### "THE END," *THE DOORS*

From the haunting opening cymbal clangs it's clear this is going to be a deep affair, and sure enough the nearly twelve-minute opus plays out as one of the band's most emotional—and, with its Oedipal lyrics, most confrontational—songs. The ever-sensitive Densmore rides the Morrison wave with gigantic tom rolls and exploding canyon-echo fills (2:09, 7:42). He

reacts to Morrison's narrative as if they're of one mind, building to a froth when Jim summons the shaman at the climax (8:47–10:20). The drummer then returns for a beautiful hushed coda.

### "MOONLIGHT DRIVE," *STRANGE DAYS*

This track from the Doors' second album—supposedly containing the first lyrics Morrison shared with Manzarek before the band's inception—showcases Densmore's perfectly orchestrated part playing. The verse features quarter notes on the snare with tasty buzz rolls stringing the bars together. John opens up a bit with more rolls near the middle of the verse (0:35), then goes to the bell while playing a subtly funky R&B-style ghost-note groove (0:56). Finally, it's back to quarters on the snare (1:55), but in more of a classic pop context than before. Lip-smacking '60s drumming.

### "WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER," *STRANGE DAYS*

Densmore's opening hi-hat foreplay and intro fills alone make this one worth the price of admission. But there's much more to the track, a sort of sequel to "The End" in the hair-raising epic department, including one of Krieger's finest guitar solos (the effects-drenched multitrack masterpiece at 2:54). "Music's Over" also highlights Densmore's special way with the single-stroke roll. His tight, brisk, swelling singles can be heard all over the Doors' studio and live canon but reach a pinnacle of effectiveness here, especially around 2:32 and 2:45 (snare drum) and 8:01 (floor tom). This song finds the dynamic drum-



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## JOHN DENSMORE

mer at both his loudest and his softest, applying equal conviction to every stroke.

### “WINTERTIME LOVE,” *WAITING FOR THE SUN*

At under two minutes it's among the Doors' shortest songs, but it's a complete pop delight bursting with drumming inspiration. Set in waltz time with a double-tracked Morrison vocal, it features perfect buzz rolls, bouncing tom fills (like the one at 0:21), and a buoyant groove. Dig the chattering rimclicks at 0:48. And Manzarek's harpsichord ending.

### THAT LATIN-ISH THING

Call it what you like, but you know what we mean—the stuttering bell pattern with left-hand snare and tom notes, which Densmore works to great effect across the Doors' catalog, from “20th Century Fox” off the first album to “Ship Of Fools” off *Morrison Hotel* to the title track of *L.A. Woman*. The drummer loved the groove enough to keep playing it, with various nuances, and the Doors wouldn't be the Doors without it.

### “TOUCH ME,” *THE SOFT PARADE*

It's tempting to overlook this smash hit because...well...it's still wildly overplayed on classic rock radio. (C'mon, throw us a “Shaman's Blues” now and then!) But that would be a shame. Here Densmore works one of his patented tom-based beats, with the twist being that he doesn't play a ride pattern at all. Instead he's phrasing constantly, around the tune's central rhythm. Savor the way he moves his licks around the kit, from the rack tom to the floor tom to both hands on the hi-hat. Stronger than dirt.

### “THE SOFT PARADE,” *THE SOFT PARADE*

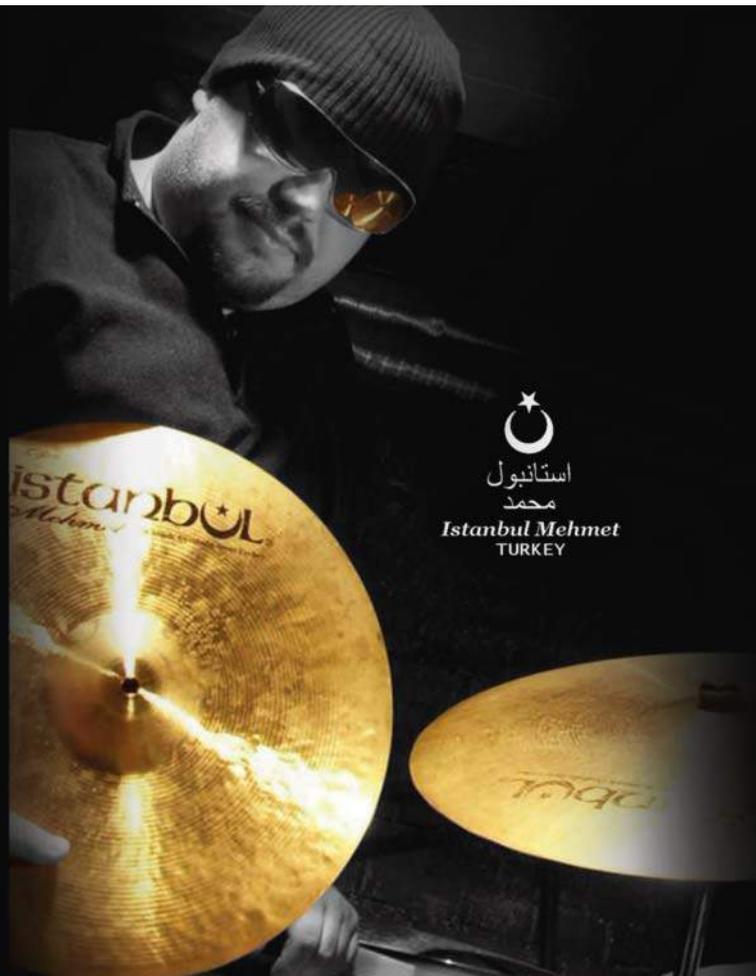
Morrison's bizarrely fun lyrics threaten to steal the show here (“The monk bought lunch/Yeah, he bought a little/Yes, he did”), but there's magical music taking “soft asylum” beneath the wordplay. Densmore's work is a diverse tour de force, encompassing snazzy hi-hat propulsion (1:31), chilled-out jazz brushes (2:21), and tom-heavy tribalisms (3:04). The cymbal-catch fill at 5:36 is pretty sweet too.

### PERFORMANCE ART

The Doors could do a song like the 138-second sugarpuff “I Looked At You,” but on stage (and sometimes in the studio) they would *stretch*. Densmore and the other players watched Morrison intently, kept their ears open, and flanked Jim wherever he wandered. During a wild thirty-three-minute span on the newly released six-CD, 1970-recorded set *The Doors Live In New York*, the band plays “Celebration Of The Lizard” and “When The Music's Over” (with a short blues ditty, “Build Me A Woman,” in between). Densmore, with his mates, navigates the sequence like an avant-garde pro, crashing and catching and rolling to highlight the unpredictable Morrison's snowballing incantations.

### “PEACE FROG,” *MORRISON HOTEL*

From the moment Densmore joins Krieger's choppy guitar riff with a four-on-the-floor kick and a funky two-handed hi-hat groove, you can tell you're in for a rollicking good time, despite the bloody lyrics. John's little fills, like the snare-hat-tom lick kicking into the second verse (0:46), just elevate the proceedings further. He plays another cool fill at 1:16, leading into a syncopated ghost-note-leavened pattern that helps set up the



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## JOHN DENSMORE

guitar solo. And the way "Peace Frog" leads so seamlessly into "Blue Sunday," with its elegant, relaxed brushwork, is yet another reason to love Mr. D.

### HIS RIDE CYMBAL

Densmore has one of the most recognizable rides in classic rock. Sometimes, like on the "I see your hair is burning" section of "L.A. Woman," the bell sounds so gloriously brittle that you think the cymbal might just shatter. On "Riders On The Storm" John's ride itself is like falling rain, creating a sustained cinematic atmosphere that lifts the song to the point where it renders the backing-track rainstorm almost unnecessary.

### "LOVE HER MADLY," L.A. WOMAN

One of the wonderful things about Densmore's drumming is the distinctive way he feels the time. On several Doors tracks, like this one and "L.A. Woman," he favors a pulse that isn't perfectly straight but rather has a little in-between seesaw action to it. And on "Love Her Madly" the snare-hat-snare fill before the second "All your love" section (1:56) is among Densmore's cleverest and most delicious licks. Did he prepare that figure beforehand or bust it out on the spot?

### "L'AMERICA," L.A. WOMAN

The Doors' bluesy final album before Morrison's death features some of Densmore's loosest and best-feeling drumming. This track is a journey through the United States via the snare drum. John begins with a simple, rudiment-style military pattern (0:57). He crashes where you least expect it (1:39) and later fills his way into a shuffle (2:06). For the instrumental break he shifts his original snare pattern into a version that has a bit

more forward motion (2:30), and then he breaks into an active all-snare shuffle (2:54). For the last minute he weaves it all together (3:31), leading a tight group accelerando and adding ferocious snare smacks (4:22) at the very end.

### AN AMERICAN PRAYER

This divisive album, which sets Morrison's spoken-word recitations to old and new Doors music, is adored by some fans for its sonic clarity and sheer zaniness and disregarded by those who prefer Morrison's songs to his poems. But *American Prayer* contains some of Densmore's deepest grooves ("Ghost Song"), plus it's a hoot learning everything you didn't want to know about Morrison's fetishes and obsessions. Sure, sometimes the new stuff is a little smooth, with its disco and Latin textures—and without the unruly frontman in the studio to muss things up—but the material that weaves Jim The Bard through original Doors tracks ("Newborn Awakening," "The Hitchhiker") leads to hearing familiar sounds in a new way.

### HE REMEMBERS HIS '60S IDEALS

Long after Morrison's death, despite protestations from the other surviving Doors, Densmore has repeatedly exercised his veto power in order to prevent the quartet's music from being used in TV commercials. These days, supplying music for ads may be one of the only ways for a young band to get ahead. But for classic fat cats who got huge the old-fashioned way—through radio popularity and record sales—it can be seen as either greedy or desperate, or both. And Densmore's reasons are noble. "On stage, when we played these songs, they felt mysterious and magic," he told the *Los Angeles Times*. "That's not for rent."



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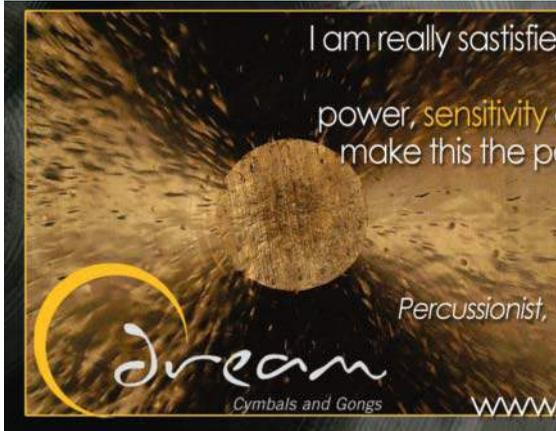
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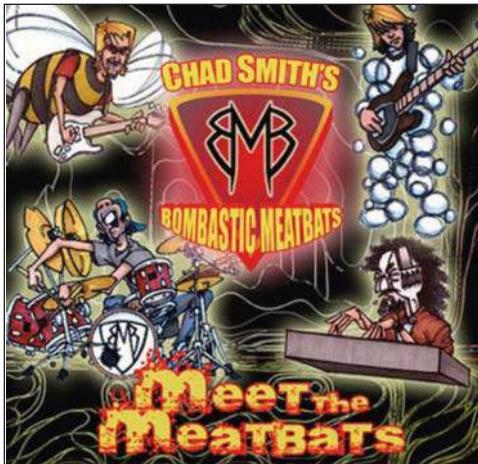
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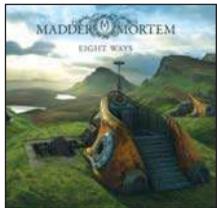


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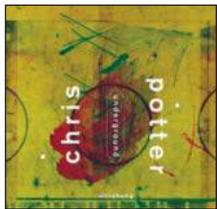
★★★★★ **CHAD SMITH'S BOMBASTIC MEATBATS MEET THE MEATBATS**

The Chili Peppers/Chickenfoot madman releases his inner fusion child on this guitar-driven instrumental collection. It's reminiscent of '70s-era Jeff Beck, with mostly heavy funk-flavored tracks that ooze with groove and wide-open, monstrous drum tones. It's obvious that Smith is enjoying himself, and at times he really goes for it. Nasty, swampy, soulful, emotional, entertaining, and—hell, *yeah*—bombastic! (Warrior) **Mike Haid**



★★★★★ **MADDER MORTEM EIGHT WAYS**

On its latest release, Norwegian prog-metal outfit Madder Mortem turns on a dime from heavy riffs to sparse jazz-tinged passages. The guitars often orbit each other in contrasting yet complementary voices, and drummer **MADS SOLAS** provides sturdy support of the axes and Agnete Kirkevaag's vocals with patterns that are always tasteful, if never crazy. Solas handles the radical mood changes on songs such as "Resolution" with grace, accentuating the schizophrenia of the shifting sections with an excellent sense for using his cymbals to get the best sound for the track. Madder Mortem's songs might not be as wild as those of some other contemporary metal bands, but the unit shows a greater mastery of emotion than most of its peers. (Peaceville) **Sean Bertrand**



★★★★★ **CHRIS POTTER UNDERGROUND ULTRAHANG**

Aggressive jazz-funk, odd-time fusoid freakouts, and world-class group improvisation are all thrown into a blender on Chris Potter's latest. The quartet (sax, guitar, Rhodes, drums) sounds tight and inspired, and Potter and **NATE SMITH**, both members of bassist Dave Holland's group, constantly feed each other rhythmic ideas. On cuts like "Rumples," with its pulsating four-on-the-floor beat and crafty displacements, Smith shows himself to be a drummer in full command. His gnarly solo on "Boots" contains razor-sharp snare flurries, and he puts his soft side on display with delicate ride cymbal work on "Time's Arrow." A band—and a drummer—to watch closely. (artistshare.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

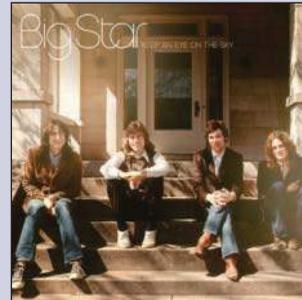


★★★★★ **BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW EATING US**

**D. KYLER** brings a human touch to the surreal psy-scapes of BMSR, her brittle drum sound and flowing beats grooving the group's '60s-style analog freak show. Whether slapping a swooping hi-hat funk pattern in "Smile The Day After Today" or replicating the sound of a broken drum machine elsewhere, Kyler maintains a levelheaded grit, no easy feat given the band's experimentalism. Her Bonham-y beat on "Born On A Day The Sun Didn't Rise" sounds cut up and reassembled, she recalls Portishead's Geoff Barrow on "Dark Bubbles," and she even taps Ringo Starr on the Lennon-ish "Gold Splatter." (Graveface) **Ken Micallef**

ENCORE

by Patrick Berkery



**BIG STAR KEEP AN EYE ON THE SKY**

That famous Brian Eno line about how not many people bought Velvet Underground records but the ones who did all started a band... ditto for Big Star, the power pop cult fave from Memphis. Label woes kept the three studio albums they released in the '70s from finding much of an audience. Consequently, drummer **JODY STEPHENS**—a guy whose meaty wallop perfectly underscored the agitation and heartache teeming through songs like "Don't Lie To Me" and "September Gurls"—never got his due as a top-shelf rock timekeeper. As the new box set *Keep An Eye On The Sky* shows, whether playing in the pocket, going off the rails (the alternate take of the wiggled-out "O My Soul" is a revelation), or singing lead ("Way Out West"), Stephens was Big Star's secret weapon. (Rhino)

**MD:** As you were coming of age, the British Invasion was exploding and classic R&B records were being made in your hometown. Did that shape your drumming sensibilities?

**Jody:** Ringo and Al Jackson were big influences. Also Charlie Watts, who had such a great feel, and John Bonham—he was the locomotive of all drummers. I liked B.J. Wilson from Procol Harum too. He seemed to come from an orchestral background. And Mitch Mitchell, of course. He had a feel like nobody else.

**MD:** "O My Soul" was atypical for you—very funky and fill heavy.

**Jody:** I had taken a percussion class at Memphis State University, and we were going over flams, flam-a-diddles, and different kinds of rudiments. That's where the inspiration for my part came from, to some extent. Then some of it was just absorbing influences like Bonham.

**MD:** Your drum sound really popped on those records. What kind of kit were you playing?

**Jody:** On the first record I used the first drumkit I ever got, a Ludwig with a 20" or 22" bass drum and two mounted toms—it didn't have a floor tom. After that we got a little money to upgrade our equipment, so I picked up an oversize Ludwig kit with 13", 14", and 16" toms and a 24" bass drum. That's the kit I used on *Radio City* and *Third*. I still use it today.

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★★★★★

### GAVIN HARRISON & O5RIC CIRCLES

Gavin Harrison & O5RIC unleash a seamless 16th-note maelstrom on their second release, *Circles*. The newest member of King Crimson, Harrison is a ceaselessly inventive drummer, rolling ghosted 16ths and dizzying displacements like so much drumming Silly

Putty. Guitarist O5RIC alternately recalls Bill Connors and John Wetton (vocally), and Harrison masterfully plies intricate snare/hi-hat combinations within slippery grooves on cuts like “Beyond The ‘A’” and “Last Call.” The pair’s flawless rhythms and mesmerizing melodies create a perfect fit. (Squatter Madras) **Ken Micallef**

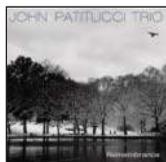


★★★★★

### SALLABERRY SAMBATUQUE

Drummer **SALLABERRY** mixes samba, baião, and other Brazilian rhythms on his newest, *Sambatuque*. Whether playing a lilting smooth-jazz bossa (“Cumbica”) or a Rio Carnival street

beat (“Balacobaco”), Sallaberry adheres to tradition. Some electro-guitar fusion rears its head, but the majority of these tunes should make you dance. (myspace.com/sallaberry13) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

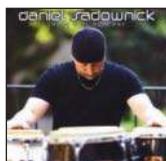


★★★★★

### JOHN PATITUCCI TRIO REMEMBRANCE

Drummer **BRIAN BLADE** and bassist John Patitucci have been playing in Wayne Shorter’s freewheeling group for years now, and that connection shows on *Remembrance*, a loose and exciting new trio disc with

tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano. No piano or guitar? No problem. It gives Blade ample space to funk it up on “Messaien’s Gumbo” and swing way behind the beat on “Sonny Side.” Blade’s greatest assets may be his superlative listening skills and his attention to rhythmic detail, and he interprets heads as if he’s composing parts. His brief solo on “Joe Hen” is filled with hip syncopations and tumbling rolls. (Concord) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



★★★★★

### DANIEL SADOWNICK THERE WILL BE A DAY

Percussionist Daniel Sadownick has been working in jazz circles and as a studio musician for several years, and the release of his debut album offers further

insight into his musicality. This effort is an intelligent, fairly straight-ahead jazz collection featuring some first-rate New York players. What’s captivating is the way Sadownick integrates his congas with the music, without leaning on a Latin jazz crutch and free of jazz conga cliché. Make no mistake, Sadownick respects tradition, but he’s also a player with color and fire who listens to those around him. With a range of tunes from upbeat to haunting, this solid album is worth hearing. (In Time) **Martin Patmos**



★★★★★

### STEFON HARRIS & BLACKOUT URBANUS

The opener on vibraphonist Harris’s *Urbanus* shifts so smoothly from a killer go-go rhythm to hyper-speed jungle breaks that you realize why drummer **TERREON GULLY** is in such demand. Gully works his high-

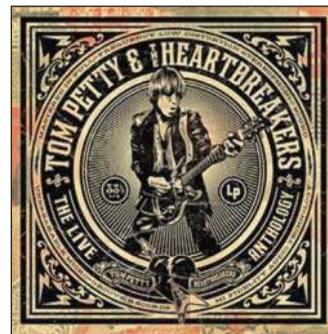
pitched snare on the 7/8 time of “Tankified” to great effect, and his dizzying solo on “Minor March” is technically striking. (Concord) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

★★★★★

### TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS LIVE ANTHOLOGY (WARNER BROS.)

by Patrick Berkery

Over the years Tom Petty has had two world-class drummers of different stripes pacing the Heartbreakers. **STAN LYNCH**’s loose swing and melodic fills and **STEVE FERRONE**’s top-shelf chops feature prominently on the *Live Anthology* box set, which collects three decades of performances and gives equal time to both players. Here are ten highlights:



#### “NIGHTWATCHMAN”

Is that Lynch or Ziggy Modeliste playing that funky groove?

“**A THING ABOUT YOU**” The young, hungry Heartbreakers killing it, with Lynch keeping the locomotive on the rails.

“**I’M A MAN**” An ode to the band’s British blues roots that finds Ferrone supplying a taut shuffle.

“**BREAKDOWN**” With Petty’s spoken-word delivery and a Ray Charles vamp, this is a great example of the live chemistry the singer and Lynch enjoyed.

“**IT’S GOOD TO BE KING**” A spacey twelve-minute jam, with Ferrone laying back and pouring it on in all the right spots.

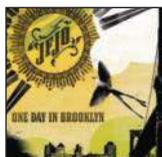
“**THE WAITING**” When Lynch spills triplets on those giant Tama toms, you feel them through the speakers.

“**MYSTIC EYES**” Ferrone’s quick right hand tickles the ride in the quiet sections, then abuses the crash when this Van Morrison cover explodes.

“**MELINDA**” A sprawling, previously unreleased Southern gothic jam that Ferrone pilots gracefully with bundle sticks.

“**SPIKE**” The Heartbreakers go a-chooglin’ as Lynch’s brushwork keeps things plenty swampy.

“**RUNNIN’ DOWN A DREAM**” An exercise in unrelenting, explosive precision from Ferrone.



★★★★★

### JACOB FRED JAZZ ODYSSEY ONE DAY IN BROOKLYN

The JFJO, lurking on the fringes of mainstream and avant-garde jazz for fifteen years now, sounds fresher than ever on this “live in the studio” EP. Led by pianist

Brian Haas and featuring decidedly non-jazz instruments such as lap steel guitar, the latest lineup allows new drummer **JOSH RAYMER** to prove his mettle. The beautifully schizophrenic “Black & Crazy Blues” finds Raymer whipping out daring second-line, up-tempo swing, and double-time church beats with assurance. The laid-back 16th notes of “Imam” give a nod to MMW’s Billy Martin, and the backbeat flams of “Drethoven” reveal Raymer’s fearlessness and musicality. (Kinnara) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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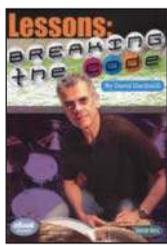
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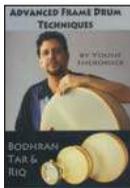
**DAVID GARIBALDI**

**LESSONS: BREAKING THE CODE**

**DVD LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$29.95

Tower Of Power's David Garibaldi personifies an entire style of drumming, and serious students with next-level aspirations must grapple with the master's advanced concepts, technical facility, and deep pocket. A companion to the *Code Of Funk* book, this loaded DVD dissects head-scratching TOP beats, sophisticated kick/hi-hat/snare relationships, and odd groupings and contains video demonstrations of material from Garibaldi's *MD* article series "Stretch That Groove." Mastering the drummer's ghost-note-laden linear funk is made easier by the quality audio/video production, and a forty-seven-page full-transcription PDF is included, so you can go at your own pace. (Hudson)

Ilya Stemkovsky



★★★★★

**ADVANCED FRAME DRUM TECHNIQUES**  
BY YOUSIF SHERONICK

**DVD LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$35

This DVD offers just what the title says, and it's a welcome video for percussionists who have the basics down. Sheronick, a student of Glenn Velez's, presents Velez's innovations as well as Indian drumming techniques brought to the frame drum. Collectively they expand hand drumming vocabulary while opening creative doors. Try the Indian split-hand technique, cleanly demonstrated through Sheronick's natural approach, and you're on your way. Closing with three solos incorporating these techniques—on tar, bodhran, and riq—the presentation is sure to inspire. (yousifsheronick.com)

Martin Patmos



★★★★★

**RUSH: 2112**  
**(ALFRED'S CLASSIC ALBUM EDITIONS)**  
TRANSCRIBED BY MARC ATKINSON

**BOOK LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE \$14.95

Presented here are all of Neil Peart's beats, licks, and fills from one of Rush's most famous albums.

The accurate transcriptions are fun to play, and it's interesting to study Peart's early style, considering how it developed on future Rush albums. "2112" and "A Passage To Bangkok" have plenty of Peartisms, but they're less complex than the drumming on the *Moving Pictures* album (also transcribed by Atkinson). And with some songs having a straighter rock feel, this acts as a good break-in book for the Peart fan or young prog drummer. (Alfred) **Martin Patmos**



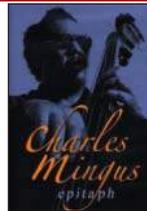
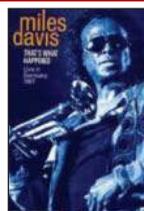
★★★★★

**BLOOD, SWEAT & RUDIMENTS**  
BY JOEL ROTHMAN

**BOOK LEVEL:** BEGINNER TO ADVANCED \$14.95

Prolific drum author Joel Rothman's seventy-first book focuses on rudiments. Part one covers the forty international drum rudiments, plus a few variations like the quadruple roll and three-stroke ruff. The exercises are written in a "rhythmic modulation" format—a measure in 8th notes, then triplets, then 16ths, and so on—to create controlled acceleration. Part two emphasizes hand technique with "extended rudiments." The last twenty pages apply the rudiments to the drumset. (For example, R = snare and L = bass.) The author also sets certain rudiments to rock and jazz cymbal beats. Although the concepts are not new, Rothman's ideas are written out in a clear manner for those drummers wishing to incorporate more rudiments into the set. (J.R. Publications/Charles Dumont & Son) **Andrea Byrd**

**PERFORMANCE DVDs** by Ilya Stemkovsky



**MILES DAVIS, CHARLES MINGUS, HIROMI, JAE SINNETT**

The Miles Davis of 1987 was a wholly different animal from the man who helped shape post-bop and fusion a quarter century earlier. Still, it's easy to appreciate the stellar sidemen appearing in *That's What Happened: Live In Germany 1987*. Cheesy '80s synth keys? Sure. But final Miles drummer **RICKY WELLMAN**'s relentlessly driving funk on the opening medley and percussionist **MINO CINELU**'s extended solo on "Tutu" should get your head bobbing. Wellman's smooth time-keeping is understated throughout, and the drummer and bassist Darryl Jones breathe together effortlessly, occasionally letting loose as on the polyrhythmic, offbeat ending rock vamp of Michael Jackson's "Human Nature." (Eagle Rock)

*Epitaph*, a 1989 performance of the late jazz giant Charles Mingus's two-hour piece for the jazz orchestra of the same name, features loosely connected movements in the bassist/composer's rollicking styles. Consummate swinger **VICTOR LEWIS** plays the refined big-band accompaniment role, but his fills and bombs run the dynamic spectrum like only Mingus's music would allow. (Eagle Rock)

Japanese keyboard virtuoso Hiromi leads her bands through a fusion hurricane of notes and time changes on two recent concert DVDs, both (a bit confusingly) titled *Live In Concert*. (The one attributed to Hiromi & Sonicbloom features guitarist David Fuczynski, bassist Tony Grey, and drummer **MARTIN VALIHORA**; the other has the same players minus Fuczynski.) Valihora's fiery precision and sensitivity suit the shifting compositions and intricate arrangements of both sets. Check out his sly cymbal work and wicked polyrhythmic trading on the Sonicbloom DVD's "Time & Space." (Telarc)

Virginia drummer **JAE SINNETT**'s ultra-light touch and penchant for cool arrangements are captured on his trio's 2008 TV performance DVD, *Live At WHRO*, during which the group ably dabbles in swing, backbeats, and odd times. Monk's "Well You Needn't" gets a particularly lively reading, with Sinnett's quick hand/foot combinations and melodic soloing on full display. (jaesinnett.com)

**STAFF FAVES**

**THIS MONTH: ASSOCIATE EDITOR MICHAEL PARILLO**



My proggy cravings are satisfied by the stellar album *Avanti!* by the longstanding Canadian group Miriodor. Continuing in the tradition of artsy European bands such as Gong, Univers Zero, and sometimes even Yes, the quartet, here augmented with horns, strikes a tantalizing balance between complex and groovy. Drummer **REMI LECLERC** is like a tour guide through fantasyland, making exotic odd-time terrain feel familiar and steering the music through unexpected twists and turns. Dig the circusy polyrhythmic fun of "La Roche." (Cuneiform)



International musical ambassador **ZAKIR HUSSAIN**'s latest inspired match-up is with banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck and bassist extraordinaire Edgar Meyer, on *The Melody Of Rhythm*. India meets Appalachia in the sonic blend of tabla and banjo, but that's only part of the story. On the album's small-group tracks, the interplay between Fleck and Zakir is at once serene and ferocious. And a concerto with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, written by the trio, finds various players and symphony sections passing the baton around, as elegant melodies mix with vivid rhythms. (Koch)



If those two releases seem too mainstream for you, get a load of the Japanese female trio Nisennenmondai's *Destination Tokyo*, which is most certainly *not* for the faint of heart. Like a pulsating strobe light, it could do you damage—but it could also bathe your world in a whole new glow. **SAYAKA HIMENO** builds serious tension with super-repetitive two-handed hi-hat grooves that evolve slowly over many minutes as the robotic slides into the organic, and back again. I probably shouldn't like this...but I love it. (Smalltown Supersound)

To find out what else the MD editors are listening to every month, sign up for the Wire e-newsletter at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).





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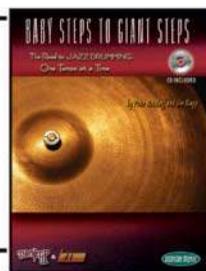
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# ARI GOLD'S ADVENTURES OF POWER

by Billy Amendola

**A**ctor/musician/writer/director Ari Gold (yes, that's his real name) has had an obsession with air drumming since he was a kid listening to his sister's Rush records. In the new comedy feature film *Adventures Of Power*, which he wrote, directed, and stars in, Gold brings his air drumming fascination to life.

"When I initially took notes about my character, Power," Ari says, "I was living in a small town in the Southwest. I thought about this person working in the mines down there, extracting the metal that's used to make cymbals yet never having a chance to play drums, and what a beautiful irony that would be—it could speak to anybody around the world who works in a job making things they can't afford. The feeling of being left out of mainstream culture and being left out of the American dream is something that so many people are experiencing now."

"Then I thought this air drumming thing is a great joke and it's funny to look at, but at the same time it can deliver a story that people can relate to, even if they're not drummers, and it can tell a story that means something to me on a deeper level as well."

*Adventures Of Power* also stars Gold's friend Adrian Grenier from HBO's hit TV show *Entourage* (Grenier plays drums and sings in the real-life band the Honey Brothers, with Gold on ukelele, vocals, and occasional drums) and was an official selection at the Sundance Film Festival. It features music by, among other artists, Mister Mister, Phil Collins, and Rush—plus a rare cameo appearance by Rush drummer Neil Peart—and its message is about believing in yourself and the power of music. **MD** caught up with Gold around the time of the movie's release.

**MD:** Do you play drums?

**Ari:** I do. At first I was an air drummer—as many drummers are when they start out. I got sticks when I was fourteen and played on pillows for about two years. Around sixteen, I got a drumset and pretty quickly joined the high school jazz band. I played drums until I formed the Honey Brothers. I'll get behind the kit when our drummer, Adrian, comes up front to sing a few songs.

**MD:** So what inspired you to do the movie?

**Ari:** Well, the initial thing was kind of just the joke of it. I went to an air guitar competition and played [Rush's] "Tom Sawyer" on air drums, and it was sort of a stunt just to mess with the air guitarist. I had been kind of stewing on this character of an air drummer for a while, but I'd never really taken it seriously as something I would pursue. But it went over so well with the crowd, and I started thinking that maybe I could make something of this.

Every drummer knows that drumming comes from the heartbeat. The first line in the movie is, "The first sound that we hear is the beat of our mama's heart," and that's what drumming is about. It's about reconnecting with that heartbeat. That's

the spiritual side of the drummer, and that's what it's all about for me.

**MD:** I love the line when Michael McKean's character, Power's dad, says, "Maybe if I bought him drums when he was kid, he'd be over it by now."

**Ari:** [laughs] That's definitely a nod to everyone who has played music, or has wanted to play music, and refused to let go of the dream. That's a really important line.

**MD:** Who were the first drummers you noticed growing up?

**Ari:** Neil Peart was always the one for me. I remember sitting on my sister's floor at eight years old with a record player and just being like, *What is that coming out of the speaker?* I remember air drumming to that and a lot of John Bonham and Kraftwerk—which is a strange one for a lot of people, but this band had two drummers in it, and they built their drums themselves! They made these crazy electronic drums and played them with these tiny little sticks. But it's *great* drumming, very musical and interesting. I got into Phil Collins around ten years old—I remember all of us air drumming simultaneously to him.

**MD:** "In The Air Tonight" is probably one of the biggest air drumming songs of all time.

**Ari:** Oh, yeah, we air drummed to that and also to a Genesis song, "Mama." I loved super-compressed drum sounds because they can be the most fun to air



in the movie—and I'd *love* to have *you* in the movie.

I wrote a lot of letters like that to various people who said no, but Neil was the one I really, *really* wanted. And they said yes, and I feel blessed to be working with everyone at their management company, Anthem. They have been so nice and generous and helpful, which is not always the case. I feel so fortunate to have met them and to have them in my life. I couldn't say enough nice things about Neil or about anyone in that whole organization.

We're also putting together some charity events where we'll raise money for music education for kids—which is thematically right on for the movie.



drum to. There are a lot of other drummers I got into once I started playing more, like Max Roach when I was playing jazz. I somehow missed out on Buddy Rich until later on, and then obviously I discovered him. I also really like Mitch Mitchell.

**MD:** How did you get Neil Peart in the movie?

**Ari:** That was largely my music supervisor knowing someone at Rush's management company and putting in a nice word. Simultaneously I wrote Neil a letter saying this is the message, this is why I'm making it, and this is why I'd love to have your song

It was what my mother was working on when she passed away.

**MD:** We wish you the best of luck with the movie and the charity.

**Ari:** Thank you. It's been four years of hard labor. And I appreciate *Modern Drummer* reaching out. I'm glad we talked.

*For more on the movie, visit [adventuresofpower.com](http://adventuresofpower.com), and for more on the Honey Brothers, visit [thehoneybrothers.com](http://thehoneybrothers.com).*

# WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

**Tommy Clufetos** (Rob Zombie) has joined the Meinl Cymbals family of artists.

JingleMute endorsers include **Frank Vilardi** (Bacon Brothers), **Van Romaine** (Steve Morse), **Brendan Buckley** (Shakira), **Brian Young** (Fountains Of Wayne), **Billy Ward** (Joan Osborne/Bill Champlin), **James Wormworth** (*Tonight Show With Conan O'Brien*), **Meg White** (the White Stripes), **Shawn Pelton** (*Saturday Night Live*), **Matty Amendola** (multi-instrumentalist/producer), **Jay Bellerose** (Robert Plant and Alison Krauss), **Anton Fig** (*Late Night With David Letterman*), and **Patrick Keeler** (the Raconteurs).

**Gray LeGere** (session musician and clinician in Austin, Texas) is an artist rep for Longo Drums.

Joining Pearl's artist roster are **Tim Smith** (the Killdares), **Blake Dixon** (Saving Abel), **David Agolia** (Rev Theory), **James Ethridge** (Scary Kids Scaring Kids), **Matt Marquez** (Haste The Day), **Ian Eanes** (Ashanti), **Denton Hunker** (Green River Ordinance), **Andreas Brobjer** (Lady Gaga), **Nomar Negroni** (Negroni's Trio), **Michael Humbert** (SteelHeart), and **Trevor "Tre" Stafford** (Adelitas Way).

**Mike Marsh** (Dashboard Confessional) has joined Sonor's artist family.

Craviotto artists include **Tom Meadows** (Duffy) and **Jeremy Taggart** (Our Lady Peace).

**Ray LeVier** has joined the artist rosters of Yamaha and Paiste.

**Ron Gannaway** (Gretchen Wilson) is playing Pro-Mark drumsticks.

SJC Custom Drums players include **Stacy Jones** (Miley Cyrus), **Zac Hanson** (Hanson), **Spencer Smith** (Panic! At The Disco), and **Derek Ries** (Push Play).

Dancing Drum's **Steve Campbell** and **Lindsay Rust** have joined Tycoon Percussion's artist roster.

Joining Shine Custom Drums & Percussion is **Jerome Flood II** (Guitar Center Drum-Off 2008 winner).

KickPort artists include **Dante "Taz" Roberson**, **Mike Johnson**, **Kenny Aronoff**, **Gerry Brown**, **Jonathan Moffett**, and **Dennis Chambers**.

**Christoph Schneider** (Rammstein) has joined the Sabian family of artists.

MRP Drums has added **Steven Allen** (Eddie Testa band) to its list of endorsers.

Tommy Clufetos



Jeremy Taggart



Tom Meadows



Mike Marsh



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# INTERSTELLAR OVERDRIVE

This month's kit comes to us courtesy of Doug Byrd, an active club drummer and private instructor—and a gear fanatic ever since he successfully re-covered his first drumset at age thirteen. He tells us that he's played, sold, and modified drums for twenty years, but this is the first and only custom kit he's ever built. "It was a real labor of love," Byrd says of the kit, which he finished in 2005. "From the raw maple shells on up, I conceived of, chose, and assembled every component and created my own one-of-a-kind RockenWraps graphic."

Doug spent months doing research, and the knowledge he'd acquired over more than ten years of managing retail drum departments aided the painstaking process of selecting every little feature. The result combines some of the drummer's favorite elements from major companies with custom features not found in any store. "The graphic is my own design, called Dragon Nebula," Byrd says, "which started as a Hubble Telescope photo from the NASA Web site. It was enhanced with the help of Photoshop artist Ron LaFond, then printed on drum plastic by RockenWraps."

Assembling the kit took two years from start to finish. The setup consists of 8-ply Keller VSS maple shells (6x14 snare, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 13x14 and 15x16 floor toms, 17x22 kick)



with Precision Drum Co. custom bearing edges. The lugs were custom machined to spec by Ego Drum Supply, and the tension rods are by TightScrew. The snare and toms feature Pearl MasterCast aluminum hoops, and the suspension mounts are Gauger RIMS. The floor tom brackets and legs are by Gibraltar.

Byrd "wraps" things up by saying, "Many thanks to the above manufacturers. Back in the day you could never have built something like this on your own. DIY drum building has come a *long way!*"

Correspondence with the drummer is welcome at [dougbyrd@msn.com](mailto:dougbyrd@msn.com).

**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](mailto:billya@moderndrummer.com). Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.



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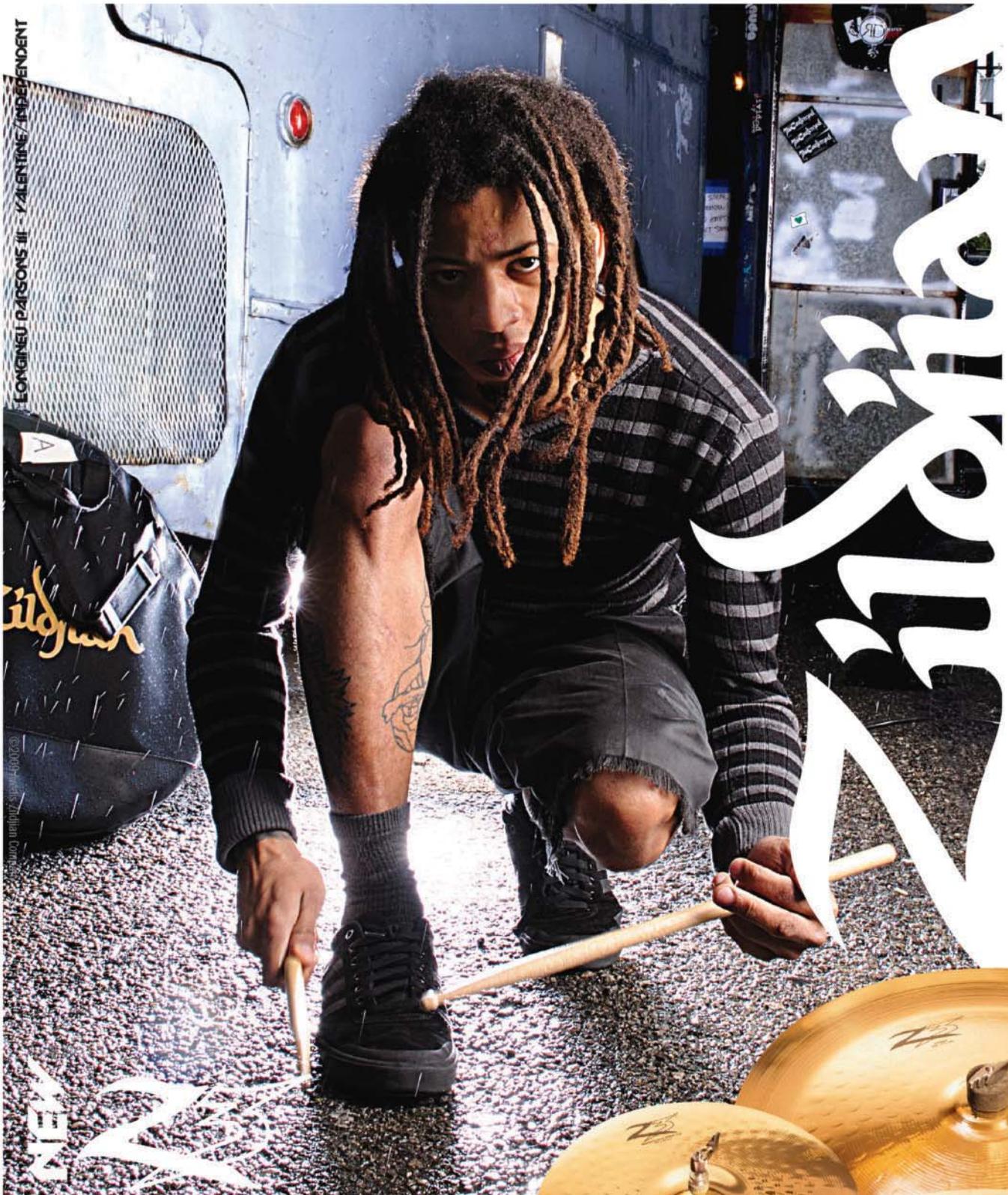
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