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Shufflin'

"**M**ake friends with the shuffle." Hearing those words, spoken by instructor Sandy Gennaro at Drummers Collective twenty years ago, turned out to be one of those experiences that doesn't seem like a big deal when it's happening but that ends up nudging you in a new direction while being forever burned into your memory. At the time, the shuffle seemed to hate my guts, while I found it alluring yet very scary, and sitting there in Rock class I knew Sandy was right: The shuffle and I needed to patch things up.



This pattern, which is based on broken-up triplets, creates an elemental musical feel that a drummer must be able to conjure. Without it, you can just forget about playing jazz or blues, but even if straight-up 8th-note rock is your bread and butter, you'll find the need for a decent shuffle lurking around many a dark corner. You might be able to fake it for a while, but you will be exposed. I was. I limped along with a half-hearted right-hand shuffle in my early drumming years, but a disastrous blues gig during college with a much older bandleader brought this shortcoming to the foreground. So, a few months later, when Sandy told us to make friends—he uses similar words in his April 2014 *MD* feature—I heeded his advice and got to work in earnest.

Modern Drummer, of course, is always a good source of shuffle inspiration. In an exclusive interview on moderndrummer.com, Brad Wilk traces back his mean shuffle beat on the Last Internationale's "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Indian Blood" to another killer shuffle, by Martin Chambers on the Pretenders' "Message of Love." Listening to these two tracks alone should have you itching to run to the kit to play some broken triplets on the toms.

In this issue, Zoro concludes his series on the ultra-useful half-time shuffle—just one backbeat per bar in this version—with ten songs for you to listen to, featuring players ranging from Steve Gadd and Vinnie Colaiuta to Jason McGerr and Chris Dave. In his two earlier installments, Zoro discussed some of the beat's most famous examples, including Bernard Purdie on Steely Dan's "Home at Last," John Bonham on Led Zeppelin's "Fool in the Rain," and Jeff Porcaro on Toto's "Rosanna," all of which are masterful and delightfully unique.

If anyone out there reading this feels inadequate in his or her ability to play a shuffle, I assure you that by confronting the situation head on, with a little time and patience, you can turn a liability into a strength. Just sit down together with a cool drink, an issue or two of *MD*, and some good tunes—maybe some electric Chicago blues, some classic Monk, some early Beatles—and, not too many hours later, you and the shuffle will be grooving together like old pals.

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Ronald Spagnardi
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Isabel Spagnardi

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The *Modern Drummer* Pro Panel is an open-ended group of professional drummers who contribute regularly to the magazine's content. It represents an unparalleled amount of musical experience, which members share with readers across the spectrum of the magazine's editorial mix. The Pro Panel was established in 2011, with multiple players added to its ranks during each of its first three years. Beginning in 2014, players are being added one at a time.

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:
Patrick Berkery, David Ciauro, John Ehrlich, Bob Girouard, Mike Haid, Dr. Asif Khan, Rick Mattingly, Ken Micallef, Mark Parsons, Martin Palmos, Jeff Potter, Will Romano, Bernie Schallehn, Ilya Stenkovsky, Robin Tolleson, Lauren Vogel Weiss, Paul Wells.

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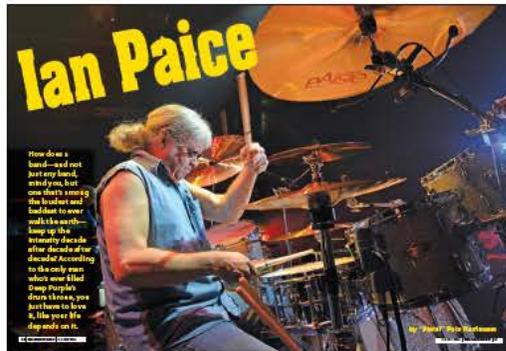
More Love for Ian

Thank you for the long-overdue cover story on Ian Paice in the October issue. He's always been one of my favorite drummers, and it's good to see him get the credit he deserves, as he can be very underrated sometimes. I've been influenced and inspired by his drumming on the classic Deep Purple records, as well as by drummers like John Bonham, Buddy Rich, and Cozy Powell.

He's a perfect example of a player that has technical ability as well as being able to play well with the rest of the band and play the song to make it the best it can be. And he swings, rather than just plodding and bashing, and has a great combination of finesse and power, which makes him unique in rock 'n' roll.

Mario Vazquez

Loved the interview with Ian Paice. And Billy Amendola's editorial put it so well: There's something special about Ian's playing that caused some of us to gravitate to his style more than, say, Bonzo's or Ginger Baker's. The speed and power of his hands, the swing...powerful yet graceful! I have often thought of him as the Joe Morello of the rock world—understated, modest,



but simply amazing when you pay attention to his musicality.

Wayne Henry

A Question of Size

As a longtime subscriber (since issue #2) and someone who remembers when a cell phone was something you used to make your one phone call to an attorney, I've noticed a quirky little detail in some of your setup profiles that perks up the drummer OCD in me. It's highly unlikely that Victor Indrizzo is using a 16x22 vintage Ludwig

bass drum or that Darren King's beat-up Rogers bass drum is also 16" deep. And, while possible, I'm willing to bet that the bass drum in Rob Bourdon's late-'70s/early-'80s Gretsch kit used in the studio was also not 16x22.

I know deep bass drums have been de rigeur for quite some time, but it's worth remembering that for decades prior, 14" was the predominant depth for bass drums. As a chronicle of drumset history, it might be worth sweating those details in your pages, or the next thing you know we'll be reading about the Dunnett snare drum Chick Webb was so fond of using.

Donn Deniston

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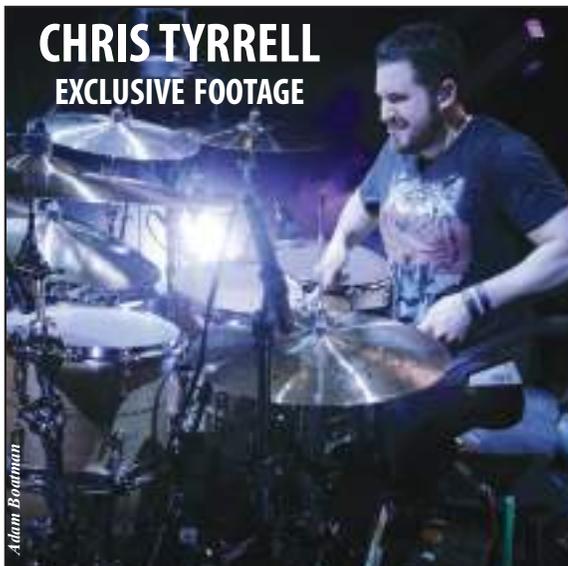
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THE MD PODCAST

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Omer Avital New Song

"I've known Daniel Freedman for over twenty years," says bassist/composer Omer Avital, who began working with the drummer in the '90s at the New York City jazz club Smalls and later played with him in the Jason Lindner Big Band, among other groups. "His understanding of Middle Eastern and North African rhythms makes it easier for me to bring my musical vision to life."



The Velvet Underground 45th Anniversary Editions

The Velvet Underground's 1969 self-titled third album is notable for many reasons, not least for including drummer Maureen Tucker singing lead on the group's classic track "After Hours." "In my opinion, everybody plays way too loud today," Tucker told *Modern Drummer* in 2005, though her sentiment could easily have applied when this album initially shocked fans of the avant-garde rock band, with its quiet arrangements and warm production. It's now available as a sixty-five-track, six-CD package housed in a case-bound book; a single CD; and a two-CD deluxe edition.



Percussion Icon Milton Cardona Passes

This past September 19, Milton Cardona, a fixture of the New York salsa and Latin-jazz scene, died of heart failure. He was sixty-nine.

Cardona, who was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in New York City, came into prominence in the 1970s via the historic recordings of Willie Colón and Hector Lavoe. Cardona went on to play and record with many well-known artists within and outside Latin music, including Michael Brecker, Tito Puente, David Byrne, Paul Simon, Herbie Hancock, and Ruben Blades. He was an advocate of playing in the classical tradition, often on just one drum. "If you start out the tune

playing on five conga drums," he was known to say, "where are you going to go from there?"

Cardona, who was also a singer, a sacred drummer (Olubatá), and a high priest (babalawo) in the tradition of Ifá, was among the first to bring the sacred rhythms of the batá to a secular setting. In 1986, he recorded his own album *Bembé*, which is now regarded as one of the all-time classic recordings of Afro-Cuban folkloric music. Colleagues and friends remember Cardona as a fierce warrior who played hard but had a good-natured spirit.

Victor Rendón and Ken Ross

Chris Adler, Restaurateur

Chris Adler recently announced his new partnership with restaurant owner Will "Mac" McCormack to open the Big Whisky Grill near the West End of Richmond, Virginia, which Adler says will be one of the largest and most extensive whiskey bars in the nation. "Anyone who knows me knows I'm not good at sitting still," says Adler, whose band, Lamb of God, was effectively put on hold in 2013 while its singer was involved in a well-publicized trial overseas. "The downtime has been a great way for us to reconnect with family and friends, and in doing so I've found myself in a position to keep pushing." Adler says that he is most proud of the restaurant's ability to safely serve patrons with food allergies or dietary restrictions, and adds that he doesn't exactly intend to be a silent partner in this venture. "I won't be in the back behind a purple rope holding court," he insists. "I'll be behind the bar serving up the gold."



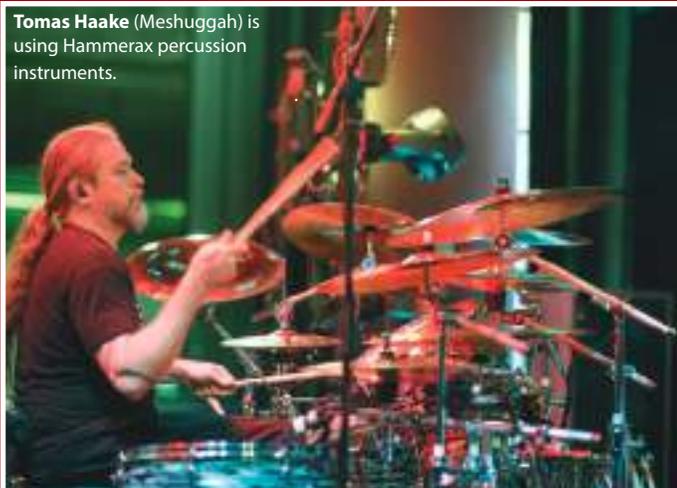
Heather Smith Named New KMC Marketing Team Member

KMC Music has appointed Heather Smith to the position of marketing manager in the company's Garfield, New Jersey, offices. Smith's primary responsibilities will include overseeing media relations, coordinating events and trade shows, and developing emerging social media strategies for the company's musical-instrument brands, including Gretsch Drums, Gibraltar Hardware, and Latin Percussion.



Who's Playing What

Tomas Haake (Meshuggah) is using Hammerax percussion instruments.



Jared Shavelson (the Rentals, Boysetsfire) is playing Sonor drums.



Famed new-music percussionist **Thomas Burritt** has joined the Mapex/Majestic Marching and Concert Percussion roster.



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**On
Tour**



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David Baynton-Power is out with James, which is touring behind the new album *La Petite Mort*.



Courtesy of Adrenaline PR

Tom Hunting is out with Exodus.

Also on the Road
Nick Murray with Thee Oh Sees /// **Matt Byrne** with Hatebreed /// **Andrew Tkaczyk** with the Ghost Inside /// **Chris Turner** with Orange Goblin /// **Joe Seiders** with New Pornographers



Brian Weber

Luke Holland is on a U.S. tour with the Word Alive.

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How Do I Treat a Pinched Nerve?

by Dr. Asif Khan

You're in the middle of a set and playing better than you ever have. Then it hits you—a pain like no other, like pins and needles going from your neck down your arm. It slows you down a bit as your arm weakens, but you play through it. After the show you can still feel it. What is it? You take care of yourself, exercise, stretch, and do all the right things. Well, you may have just experienced a pinched nerve.

Is it safe to say that many of us drummers have experienced this sensation? Maybe so, but what causes it? It's a tough question to answer. Regretfully, if you put yourself at risk, as described below, there's better than a 50 percent chance that you'll find it happening to you.

Pinched nerves nearly always evoke a problem in the back or neck, but the condition can happen anywhere in the body, most commonly in the lower back. But what's going on? The nerve is compressed or constricted by a bone, tendon, muscle, or cartilage. This can be caused by various other medical conditions, such as obesity, but I will focus on poor posture and conditions that occur in the neck. When a pinched nerve occurs in the neck, the area below it (the thoracic or middle spine) becomes less mobile. (Mobility issues can also happen above the joint that is affected.) When a drummer plays using mainly the shoulders and arms, the thoracic spine becomes less mobile, and there's greater pressure on it because it has to take up the slack. Ironically, we are often taught to be less mobile, or decrease unnecessary movements, in order to play more efficiently.

Some initial symptoms of a pinched nerve are numbness, tingling, increased

pain, and possible weakness or muscle atrophy (diminished muscle mass). When any of those occurs, the most obvious first step is to stop the activity, in this case drumming, and get plenty of rest. Give yourself ample time for the pain to go away. Some studies have shown that moist heat for fifteen minutes, three or four times a day, helps. Try taking aspirin or other pain relievers. Couple those measures with rehabilitation once the pain is low enough. There are excellent stretching videos online; some can be seen at coreperformance.com.

Once you are healthy enough to play again, try to maintain proper posture (head up, shoulders back, sitting up straight, and no slumping), take regular breaks, and stretch during breaks in gigs or practice sessions. Ergonomics is important here, so you may have to readjust your kit and throne to minimize pressure on your body. What you're trying to do is not only prevent reinjury but also avoid costly support braces, steroid injections, and surgery.

I recently spoke with Glen Sobel, the drummer with Alice Cooper, who suffered severe nerve impingement in his neck. He admitted to being a very active drummer, and his heavy, intense playing over the years was a big factor. He was advised by his doctor to undergo surgery. He took that advice, and incredibly he was back to playing just three weeks after the procedure. He stressed the importance of proper posture with small adjustments to



his drumkit and a discipline of daily stretching exercises, and he took supplements to help keep his joints and muscles in excellent shape.

About 90 percent of people who engage in repetitive movements will develop a pinched nerve, but thankfully 90 percent of those people can be helped with education, anti-inflammatory medication, and rest. This means that although almost anyone who plays drums is at risk, by understanding the condition you can either decrease the likelihood of suffering from a pinched nerve or take care of it yourself.

Dr. Asif Khan is a board-certified internist specializing in immune disorders, asthma, and allergies and is currently in private practice in Ohio. He has been an avid drummer for over twenty years. Some of his past work can be heard at johnnyfi.com.



What's This '80s Tama Pedal?

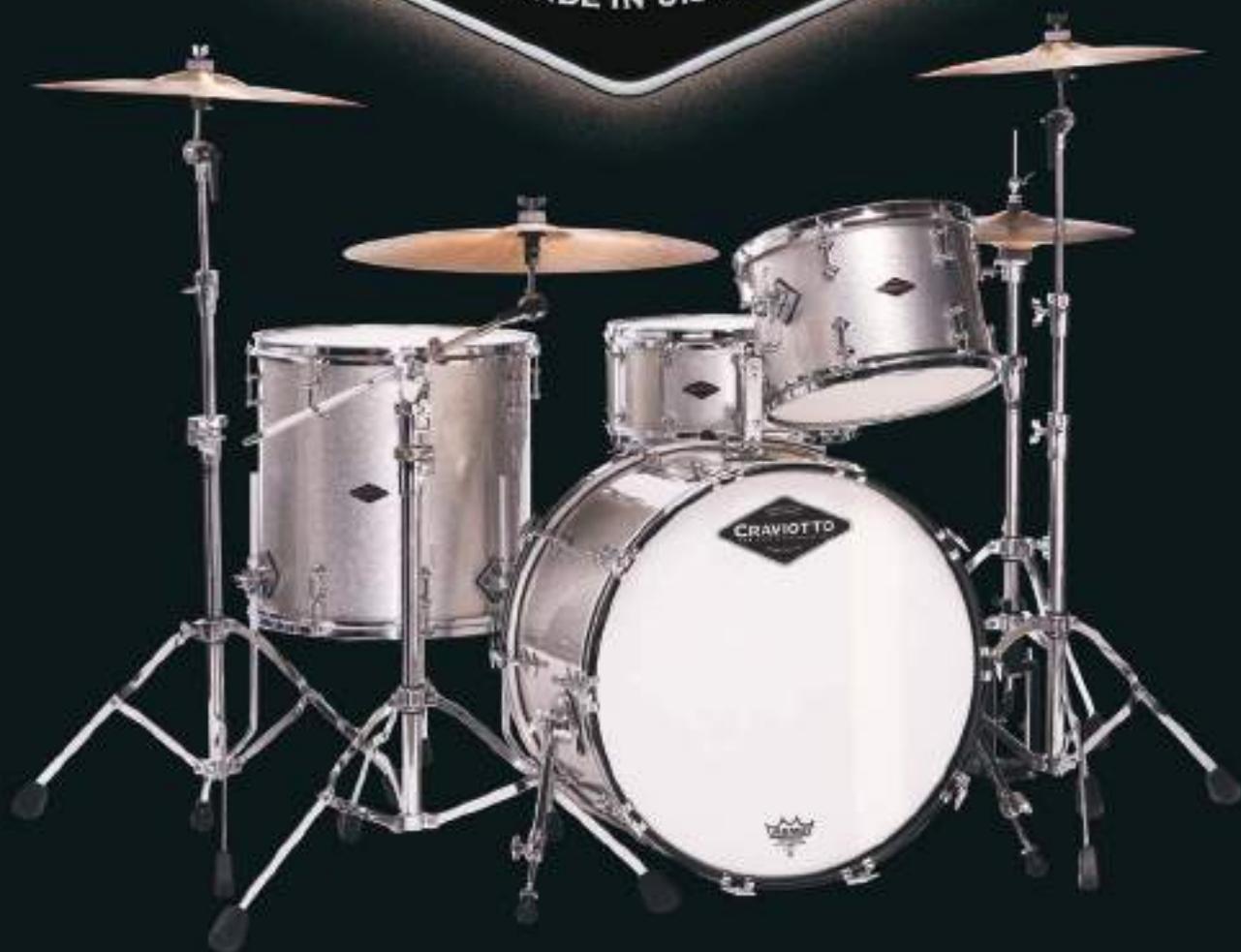
I picked up this Tama pedal back in the 1980s, after using the once-popular Ghost pedal. I was wondering if you could give me some information on it.

Mike Reo

According to drum historian Harry Cangany, "It's the King Beat pedal, shown in the 1982-83 catalog. By the next catalog, the footboard had

changed a little. The design is similar to the 1960s Rogers Swiv-o-Matic—the first single-post pedal in a world of double posts. This pedal, along with heavy stands, is really what got Tama going in the U.S. in the early '80s. A lot of high-end players switched to Tama at that time, including Neil Peart, Elvin Jones, Bill Bruford, Stewart Copeland, Billy Cobham, and Terry Bozzio."





Vintage Series Drum Sets and Snare Drums

Featuring Craviotto's signature one-ply, solid Poplar shells, exclusive Baseball Bat bearing edges, and choice of Red, Silver, or Vintage Champagne Sparkle Lacquer finish.

The Vintage Series was a joint effort between Johnny Craviotto and our family of artists. Our goal was to capture the warmth of the big band era and combine it with the fat, punchy sounds from the classic rock era. We set out to create a tonal offering featuring a warm introduction, graceful midrange, with a breath of support underneath.

If you're looking for that warm, fat sound found on your old LP collection, this is it.
Craviotto Vintage Series drums make you feel warm and fuzzy.

For more information, visit craviottodrums.com or email: craviottosales@gmail.com

Craviotto Vintage Series Poplar Drumset

Where big band and classic rock fatness meet modern-made strength and consistency.

The California-based Craviotto Drum Company began offering custom 1-ply solid-shell snares and kits back in 2004, but founder Johnny Craviotto has been honing his craft since becoming infatuated with drum construction shortly after launching his professional playing career in the 1960s with rock 'n' roll greats like Ry Cooder and Neil Young. After a stint with another manufacturer, Craviotto went out on his own and has since become a legendary figure in custom drum building, with his Radio King–inspired solid-shell snares and kits being heard on hundreds of hit records and seen on stage with some of the finest drummers working today, including Matt Chamberlain, Chris McHugh, Chad Cromwell, Ronnie Vannucci, Billy Martin, and Marcus Gilmore.

In the early goings, Craviotto focused primarily on simple wood finishes to accentuate the natural beauty of the shells themselves. Recently, the company added some gorgeous high-end lacquers, like the champagne sparkle included on our Vintage series solid-poplar review kit. Let's take a look!

Vintage Series Specs

In addition to offering solid shells made from most of today's popular woods, including maple, ash, cherry, walnut, and mahogany, Craviotto also combines them for hybrid shells, and it recently redefined poplar, a species that was often used as filler for ply drums in the '60s, as a viable solid-shell option. These poplar drums, called the Vintage series, are meant to "capture the warmth of the big band era and combine it with the fat, punchy sounds from the classic rock era," as stated on the company website. Johnny Craviotto assures us that the wood used in these models isn't the cheap stuff found in ply drums but is premium North American poplar, hand-selected by him and his crack team of drum-building experts.

Our review setup came in classic sizes, with a 9x13 rack tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and a 14x22 bass drum. A 7x14 matching solid-poplar snare was also included. All of the drums have Craviotto's "baseball bat" bearing edges, which, as the name implies, are round and fat and were conceived to pay homage to similar edges found on vintage American drums. The baseball bat edge offers the thickest, punchiest sound possible and is recommended for drummers who prefer larger drum sizes and low to middle tunings. The stunning champagne sparkle finish on this Vintage series kit is a new offering from Craviotto, and it was flawless. (The two other finishes for this series are red and silver sparkle.)

Like all Craviotto drums, the Vintage came with Diamond clamps and memory locks, 2.3 mm triple-flange chrome-over-steel hoops, a Gauger RIMS mount for the rack tom, heavy-duty 12.7 mm floor tom legs (with hollow rubber feet for increased sustain), Remo drumheads (Coated Ambassador snare and tom batters, Clear Powerstroke 3 kick batter, and Fiberskyn Powerstroke 3 front head), Diamond mini-tube lugs, and telescoping bass drum spurs. The kit also came with a signed certificate of authenticity, which collectors

will appreciate if and when it comes time to cash in on an investment and put the kit up for resale.

That Warm and Fuzzy Feeling

As the proud owner of several vintage '60s kits, I can attest that there's something special about the feeling you get when you lay sticks to drums made during that era. As quirky as older pieces can be, especially when it comes to hardware stability and shell roundness, every time I set one up in my studio, I'm more emotionally connected to the instrument, and when it comes time to press record, the kit performs beautifully, emitting a woody attack and a round, midrange-laden tone that seems to always sit perfectly in the mix.

When I set up the Craviotto Vintage series kit, the emotional



response was similar, but it was as if everything was on overdrive. I was able to get a huge, mix-ready sound from the drums within minutes. Even the bass drum, which had no porthole or additional muffling beyond the internal ring included on the batter head, played very nicely with microphones. It had great low end, a big but not reckless sustain, and a clean, warm attack. As much as I love the sound of a well-tuned, unmuffled bass drum, I rarely find them usable in most contemporary recording or live gigs. The Vintage kick was an exception; it sounded amazing acoustically and under mics, without any further tweaking beyond getting both heads just above their lowest possible pitches.

The toms on the Vintage kit were reminiscent of the drums in my collection, but their attack was punchier and they had a more hi-fi presence. Craviotto says poplar speaks “with a softer voice and a rich, warm glow,” and while I found that description to be accurate, the Vintage series drums had extra clarity and strength that kept them from being dark or muddy, which can happen with some older toms. The 13" rack tom sounded perfectly fat and round, while the two floor toms had a bit more brightness than I expected. I'd place their tonal character somewhere between mahogany and maple, but with the added punch and power of a solid shell.

The Vintage 7x14 snare is another gem of nostalgia meeting modernity. It's one of those rare drums that can be played

completely wide open, at a medium tuning, without any dissonant overtones distorting the experience. Crank it up for Buddy Rich-type response and “crack,” or tune it lower for a super-soft feel and fat tone with an analog-tape-like sparkle.

Who Needs Them?

I have to admit that I was a bit apprehensive about a solid-shell drumset made from what the drum world has branded a “cheap filler” wood. But I should have known better, as Johnny Craviotto isn't one to slap his signature on anything that he wouldn't take to a gig himself. The Vintage series proved to be another excellent offering from one of the world's premier drum builders, and I see the line serving two types of drummers in particular. First off, it's a no-brainer for collectors who have a special place in their heart for vintage drums of the '60s but want to add something “new” to their collection. Then there are the players who often rely on the warm, punchy sounds of vintage drums in the studio and want to take that classic American-made vibe to the stage with the added strength, durability, and reliability that modern-made instruments provide. In either case, it's a worthwhile investment (street price: \$9,925) that will most certainly pay for itself over time.

Michael Dawson



Dunnett Classic Drums 2N Series Snares

The tireless Canadian takes a crack at the time-tested center-bead shell...and wins.



Stainless steel

In 2012, inventor/drum builder Ronn Dunnett released the R4-L, a version of his popular swiveling R4 throw-off that incorporates a cutout to accommodate the center bead found on Ludwig and Ludwig-style metal snares. While the R4-L works great for Ludwig users, Dunnett didn't offer any drums with a center-bead design. So what did he do? He came out with three models of his own, the 2N-SS stainless steel, the 2N-B brass, and the 2N-A polished aluminum. We were sent 6.5x14 versions of each to review.

2N-SS Stainless Steel

A professed lifelong fan of Led Zeppelin, John Bonham, and the drummer's beloved Ludwig 402, Dunnett began his quest for the ultimate center-bead shell with a material he was already familiar with, the same one he used to build Ludwig's Bonham tribute kits:

stainless steel. This snare, the 2N-SS, features triple-flange hoops, eight tube lugs, the R4-L throw-off, forty-two-strand Dunnett Presence wires, a Remo Coated Ambassador batter head and Dunnett Cristal snare-side, an adjustable air vent (called Hypervent I), and a red snare ribbon and matching plastic tension-rod washers. The drum weighs 11.5 pounds, which is hefty but not unusually so. As with most Dunnett metal snares, the edges are straight (not flanged), and the snare beds are meticulously shaped so that the wires sit flat and evenly against the resonant head.

Dunnett describes the 2N-SS (\$699) as being "warm, focused, and delightfully sensitive." I'd add to that description balanced, powerful, versatile, and pleasantly bright. This bad boy is a strong contender for the title of ultimate workhorse, which we can infer was part of its design, given that the name 2N is an homage to



Brass



Aluminum

Dunnett's cherished Ford tractor from the '40s.

Tuned tight, the 2N-SS was ultra-articulate, bright, and popping and had a short decay, making it great for funk, R&B, and modern jazz. Medium-tight tunings (my personal favorite) had a lot more body, spray, and throatiness, while retaining a strong crack, and the drum sounded great in the studio as an all-purpose pop/rock voice. Lower tunings brought out the most punch from the stainless steel shell but with minimal overtones, thanks to the muting quality of the center bead. Snare sensitivity was supreme at all tunings. If push came to shove, I'd say get one of these drums and call it a day. But we have two other equally impressive snares to talk about first.

2N-B Brass

Following the success of the 2N-SS, Dunnett released the 2N-B brass model. This drum was originally offered with a hand-applied patina finish, but the latest incarnation features a rough sandblasted outer surface that gives the drum a rugged industrial appearance that will change over time, depending on how often the shell is exposed to fingerprints and various environmental elements. It too comes with forty-two-strand wires, eight tube lugs, a Hypervent I adjustable vent, an R4-L throw-off, and a Remo Coated Ambassador batter and Dunnett Cristal resonant head. The tension-rod washers are colored to match the brass shell, the wire ribbon is black, and the shell is unflanged at the edges. The rims on our review drum were Dunnett's unique CR straight hoops, held in place with large clips.

The 2N-B (\$699) is already a favorite among a few players, including alternative-rock great Matt Cameron, who's used one of these drums on tour with Soundgarden. Weighing in at 14.5 pounds, this is a big, powerful snare with a strong, focused voice that will cut through in any style of music, especially when tuned to a medium tension and higher. It's not a vintage-style, early-twentieth-century brass knockoff. In fact, I'd put the 2N-B in closer proximity to the strong, no-BS sound of the highly coveted bell brass snare. My favorite sound from the 2N-B was with the batter head detuned

almost all the way and the snare wires rather taut, for a fat yet ultra-articulate Steve Gadd-type tone.

2N-A Aluminum

While the 2N-SS and 2N-B are Dunnett's unique slant on the classic center-bead shell design, it wasn't until Ronn decided to explore an aluminum option that he went head to head with his own version of the beloved Ludwig 402. One feature of the 402 that Dunnett avoided with the 2N-SS and 2N-B was the flanged bearing edges, mainly because his method for installing snare beds is possible only on a straight shell. So rather than sacrifice the supreme sensitivity that comes with the Dunnett snare bed, Ronn simply kept the bottom edge straight and flanged the top. The result? The 2N-A (\$699).

Aside from the flanged top edge, the 2N-A looks very similar to the 2N-SS, if just a bit less shiny. The aluminum shell is polished (not chromed), so it won't pit or flake over time, and the tube lugs are made of aluminum instead of brass, which contributes to the 2N-A's light weight (7 pounds). The top bearing edge extends a bit further inside the counterhoop than on the 2N-SS or 2N-B, which is a concern only if you like to play all the way out to the edge for extremely quiet dynamics.

Otherwise, this is another supremely sensitive, highly musical, and versatile snare that can produce just about any sound you want with a few twists of the tension rods. Again, the beaded shell helps break up the overtones, so no muffling is necessary unless you want to shorten the sustain for an ultra-dry tone. When compared side by side with an old 402 that I've used for many years, the Dunnett had a slightly darker and more controlled tone with fewer overtones but had a comparable open voice with plenty of bark. My favorite tuning for the 2N-A was right in the middle of its range, where I could accentuate the overtones by playing slightly off center or achieve a potent, focused snap by laying into it dead center. With the 2N-A, Dunnett didn't simply remake a classic—he redefined it.

Michael Dawson



Evans Heavyweight Series Drumheads

Durable and versatile, these models are poised to set a new standard for hard-hitting players.



To meet the demands of drummers looking for heads that will not only withstand hours of abuse but also provide full, musical tones, Evans created the Heavyweight series, which comprises a clear 2-ply EMAD bass drum head and a 2-ply coated snare batter with a Reverse Dot on the underside. Both models incorporate the company's Level 360 technology, which uses a steeper collar to ensure flatter and more consistent contact with the bearing edge for easier tuning, an extended tuning range, and a purer tone.

The EMAD Heavyweight is made with two plies of 10 mil film and comes with two interchangeable foam muffling rings that are held in place via a plastic channel adhered to the outside of the head. The EMAD ("externally mounted adjustable damping") system was designed to allow drummers to adjust the attack and focus of their bass drum sound without having to rely on internal muffling. We compared the EMAD Heavyweight with two other Evans batter heads, the GMAD 12 mil single-ply (which was originally conceived as a more durable alternative to the original 10 mil EMAD) and the EQ4, which is a single-ply 10 mil head with an internal dampening ring.

I expected the EMAD Heavyweight to be the least versatile of the three, but it ended up having a denser, fatter tone than the GMAD, along with a wider tuning range, while retaining the strong attack and controlled resonance that have made the EMAD system revered by many players. The Heavyweight didn't have the open,

round sound of the EQ4, which I personally preferred for most applications. But if you love the punch and premuffled impact of the single-ply EMAD yet find yourself tearing through them quickly, you might want to make the jump to the EMAD Heavyweight. It's a head that's easy to make sound good, and it's built to last.

The Heavyweight snare batter has two plies of 10 mil film and an EC Reverse Dot underneath the center of the head for added durability, focus, and attack. We tested this model on a heavy cast-steel snare with die-cast hoops tuned medium-tight for a modern-rock-type tone. My experience with some other thick "hard hitter" snare heads is that they often sacrifice tone and rebound for extreme durability. The Heavyweight, however, felt really good, had plenty of rebound, and provided a nice breadth of overtones, which could be tamed easily with a little bit of muffling or allowed to ring free for maximum sustain.

Compared with the coated 2-ply G2 that was originally on the drum, the Heavyweight performed pretty similarly, with rimshots providing a chunky crack and ghost notes being articulate and thick sounding. The one thing the Heavyweight didn't respond to as well as the G2 was super-quiet patterns played near the edge. But for hard-hitting situations that demand power, attack, and a fairly open tone, the Heavyweight is top-notch.

Michael Dawson



Istanbul Agop 30th Anniversary Additions

Big, bold cymbals for drummers with big, bold tastes.

Istanbul Agop's 30th Anniversary line is beautifully devoid of any ink, save a signature under the bell penned by the person who approved that specific cymbal. Wide lathing gives the series a distinctive sound that has the expansiveness of a tightly lathed cymbal tempered by the dry grit of an unlathed one. Aesthetically, these are fantastic creations. Acoustically, each is unique. We were sent a set of larger sizes (24" and 26" rides, 22" crash, and 15" hi-hats) that were introduced in early 2014.

26" Ride

Although fairly unusual by today's standards, a cymbal with this mighty wingspan is not without precedent. At the height of its powers, the Stan Kenton big band commissioned cymbals that included two 26" crashes and a 30" ride. Larger cymbals are becoming more popular again, to fit the demands of the spacious-sounding recordings being made by some of today's rock, pop, and jazz artists.

All the ride cymbals in the 30th Anniversary series are described as offering a "rich yet definitive sticking with a complex, dark roar underneath." That statement proved to be completely accurate. If you play these cymbals using an Erskine-esque grip, where the hand acts as a resonating chamber for the stick, you get a lovely woody attack from the giant 26" ride that's met from below by a smoky wash. There's also a noticeable dip in the midrange.

This ride is just the right weight for its size. It responded very well in feel and sound to every stick weight and bead design I tried. The shallow profile of the bell means it will not be as isolated from the rest of the cymbal sound as with the Xist model I reviewed a few months back, but the bell remained very clear.

24" Ride

This is a less rebellious sibling to the 26", retaining all of the complexity, the beautiful bell tone, and the woody stick definition. I could drastically change its timbre without much change in playing motion, making it a very useful and musical tool. I played this cymbal in a big band setting and in a Middle Eastern-flavored rock band, and while it was much darker sounding than the ride I

would have normally used, it had enough attack to be heard and enough bottom end to be felt.

22" Crash

The 22" 30th Anniversary crash was a joy to play. It reminded me of a cymbal sound I adore from a Brian Blade record. It had a big, dark crash tone that reduced right away to a simmer, and the bell was more about providing a texture change than an increase in volume. I had no trouble riding on this cymbal at any tempo or volume, partially due to the wide lathing and aggressive hammering disrupting the sound waves. Because the cymbal is so thin, its stick attack was less pronounced than that of the rides.

15" Hi-Hats

If you're in a playing situation that requires some real earthiness in your sound, you and these hi-hats may be well matched. They had the same stick sound and smoldering undertones as the rest of the line, plus the added midrange that's so important to a great hi-hat tone. Played with the pedal, they produced a solid and defined "chick." Played open or closed with sticks, their notes were wide and comfortable.

Conclusion

You may have noticed that I didn't get overly specific in describing the sounds of these cymbals. Other 30th Anniversary models will sound a bit different from our review set, since the cymbals are produced in an old-world fashion that can't be duplicated exactly each time. I recorded some audio of each of our review pieces alone and in the context of a drumkit, which you can listen to at modern drummer.com.

Like great single-malt scotches, these cymbals may take a while for you to learn to appreciate, and even if you develop a taste for their spicy or smoky tone quality, they may still not be for you, depending on your musical requirements. For me, it was a privilege to spend some time with these instruments, and I urge you to make efforts to do the same. They're a fine product to show off thirty years of work.

Colin Woodford

Off-Set Big Boy Bass Drum Pedal

High-end performance at a very competitive price.



Building on the Off-Set double bass pedal that allows for centered placement on the kick drum, the company's Big Boy single pedal is designed to give you the smoothness and ergonomics of a high-end pedal at a reasonable price. It's proved to be a serious contender in the marketplace because of its dual-spring-tension assembly, which is usually reserved for models that demand top dollar.

The Big Boy single pedal features a solid metal baseplate and a twin pedestal design with an upper hex rod for the beater assembly and a lower hex rod underneath to provide extra strength and stability. The 12.5" pedal board has a toe stop, and twin heavy-duty springs are designed for superior balance and speed of recoil. The pedal also has a drum-key-adjustable beater holder that allows for independent changes of the beater angle relative to the pedal board height.

The beater has soft and hard striking surfaces and a memory lock to ensure consistent height. A set of regular-duty springs is included, so users can mix and match for perfectly tailored spring pressure.

Every main adjustment area of the pedal is operated by a simple turn of a drum key, which makes for easy setup. For added grip and stability, the baseplate has strips of hook-and-loop fastener on the bottom and is equipped with two spring-loaded adjustable spikes.

The Big Boy arrived with the heavy-duty springs installed. After we experimented with different tensions and tried out the

regular-duty springs as well, we found that the lighter springs had a softer feel that seemed best suited for heel-down players, while the heavy-duty springs were great for those who like more tension for heel-up playing. Combining one of each spring type felt, as you might expect, somewhere right in the middle. When using the heavy-duty springs, you can disengage one of them entirely for an instant tight-to-loose feel, if a quick change is required. This feature can come in handy at a music festival or a venue where different drummers share one kit.

Essentially, this pedal can fit every player's preference. As a side note for drummers who prefer high-tension springs, the Big Boy's design spreads the stress over two springs, which reduces the risk for spring breakage. Ergonomically, the pedal performed incredibly well and had a silky, smooth feel. All of my hits were effortless and powerful, even under high tension. The wing nut for the hoop clamp is placed in an easily accessible location, making for quick setup and teardown. One thing I felt was missing was a small clip holder somewhere on the baseplate for the included drum key.

Off-Set's Big Boy single pedal retails from \$159 to \$179, which is an incredible price given the quality of the features and design. If you're looking for one of the most comfortable, ergonomic, smooth, and lightning-fast bass drum pedals out there, check out this one. It's the real deal.

Eric Mezzo





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Agop Handmade cymbals from Turkey.

Drum Miking 101

Part 1: Single-Microphone Setups

by John Emrich

In this series we'll look at how to mike a drumset, starting with a single microphone and adding one each time until we arrive at a complete close-mike configuration. The idea behind the series is to help you fully understand how the placement of the microphones and their distance from the drums affects the overall sound.

You may not think a single mic can do that great a job of capturing a full drumset sound, but you'd be surprised. There are no hard-and-fast rules in drum miking. The bottom line is the final outcome. By starting with just one mic, you can really focus on the acoustic balance of your drumset. Are you getting too much hi-hat in the mix? Maybe you're hitting it too hard. If the tone is dead and lacks sustain, you may need to look at the condition of your drumheads and adjust your tuning. My point is, don't automatically assume that it's a bad microphone or bad mic placement that's preventing you from getting a good sound. It could just be a matter of addressing your touch and dynamics.

There are many options for where to place a single mic to capture an entire drumset, but we'll focus on three positions. If you're not able to record your drums yourself, check out the sample video we've posted at moderndrummer.com. As you're watching, listen for the sonic differences between the three mic positions and how the changes in distance from the drumset affect the attack, tone, and definition. Ask yourself the following questions: Do I get a clear representation of the drumset and a good overall tone? Do I hear the attack of each instrument? Is the sound clearly defined? And are all of the drums and cymbals evenly balanced?



Position 1: Far Room Mic

Our first position is with the microphone placed 10' in front of the drumset and pointed directly toward the center of the kit. We used a Sony C-48 large-diaphragm condenser, 4.5' off the ground. Listen through headphones to the sound this position gets. It captures a very good representation of the overall character of the kit and is a good indicator of the tone of your drums. Do you hear a clearly defined sound? If you need super-clean, precise drum tones, this position may not be the best choice. If you're trying to play fast blast beats, the sound from this far away from the kit can get a bit muddy. I like this position for solo work that requires a natural presentation of the instrument.

Position 2: Near Room Mic

Our second position is 5' in front of the middle of the kit. The representation of the drumset from here is still well balanced, but now we're hearing a little more definition. The lower frequencies are more pronounced, so we have a slightly fuller sound than with the far room position.

Low-frequency information has a hard time getting into any mic. This is because middle and high frequencies are a bit more efficient as they travel through the air. You can still get a nice balance when miking drums from a distance, but the tone thins out the farther from the kit you go.

Position 3: Mono Overhead

Our third position is directly over the drumset and centered on the batter head of the bass drum. This placement allows the microphone to "see" the entire kit. If you use a very large drumset, you may find that you need to raise the microphone in order for it to pick up all of the instruments. This position gives you a well-defined sound that can be mixed in with other instruments fairly easily. The exception is that now the bass drum is getting a bit lost, but we'll address that issue in a future article.

You could spend days moving a microphone to a lot of different positions in your room to discover many other options, but try using these three as a starting point. If you can't get what you're looking for with one of these, and you're sure that your drums sound good and you're playing with good balance, feel free to experiment with some alternative placements. Next month we'll explore ways to employ stereo miking techniques at different distances, as well as a two-mic mono option. Until then!

Special thanks to Omega Recording Studios and Scotty O'Toole for helping us put this series together.

Check out a video demo of these three positions at moderndrummer.com.



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Interview by John Martinez • Photos by Alex Solca

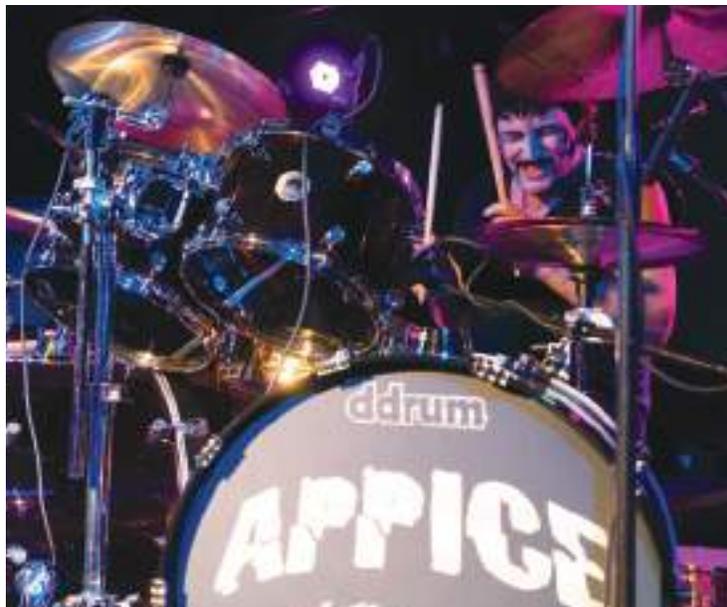
Drum Wars' Carmine and Vinny Appice

"Drum Wars came about in the '90s, when Carmine and I did a bunch of drum clinics together," Vinny Appice says. "It went so well, we said we should do this more often."

"It's taking into today's marketplace the old Buddy Rich/Gene Krupa drum battles they used to do with jazz songs," Carmine explains. "We do the same idea with rock and heavy metal stuff."

"We started coming up with some drum duets and ideas to put a show together," Vinny says. "It started out more a drum clinic kind of thing, then we realized the clinic market was limited, as far as getting shows together and bookings. We decided to tailor it more as a show that could be at night in a bar or theater. It evolved into more of a high-energy rock show with a lot of drums. The only drawback is we use different bands around the country because we don't have our own band to fly in."

"We play the music from our past, from Dio to Ozzy to Black Sabbath to Rod Stewart," Carmine adds. "Between



Carmine's drums: ddrum Paladin Maple series in candy apple red sparkle custom finish painted by Bill Detamore of Pork Pie Percussion

A. 5x14 Carmine Appice Signature brass snare with gold hardware and Canopus wires

B. 8x12 tom

C. 9x13 tom

D. 18x18 floor tom

E. 16x16 floor tom

F. 14x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Mehmet Carmine Appice Realistic Rock Signature series

1. 14" Medium hi-hats

2. 20" Medium crash

3. 15" ddrum Carmine Appice Shade cymbal

4. 22" Heavy ride

5. 18" China

6. 18" Medium crash

Hardware: ddrum stands and DX hi-hat stand with Pearl anchor attachment, DW 5000 bass drum pedals, Carmichael throne

Heads: Evans Power Center Clear (discontinued) snare batter and stock bottom head, G2 Clear tom batters and Resonant Black bottoms, and G2 Clear bass drum batters

Sticks: Vic Firth Carmine Appice Signature series

these songs or during, we take four-, eight-, or sixteen-bar breaks and do the battle kind of thing that we grew up with. It's not just for drummers. It's a very entertaining show. There's a bit of comedy in there, and it's a lot of fun."

"We use a Wavedrum in the show," Vinny says. "It's a nice instrument, especially when we're doing this drum duet and have both kits going. Then we stop, and this electronic thing starts. Some people don't even see the Wavedrum up there. It adds a nice flavor to that part of the show. Sometimes I'll punch something up during my solo—I won't even know what it is—and start playing to it. It's a cool drum."

In terms of tuning, Carmine explains, "The toms are always tuned to thirds. I don't have a specific note that I tune to, but when I hear and feel the right tone on the high tom, then I go to the next tom, like a chord." Vinny likes his drums "tighter and a little higher pitched than Carmine's."



Vinny's drums: ddrum

USA Custom Tour Tough in flat black finish with black hardware

- A. 5x14 Vintone Arbor Ebony snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 9x13 tom
- D. 15x15 floor tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Mehmet

- 1. 14" Funky hi-hats
- 2. 18" Session Medium crash
- 3. 20" Sultan Rock ride
- 4. 20" Carmine Appice Realistic Rock Medium crash
- 5. 19" X-Rubbish Medium crash

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B

Hardware: DW double tom stand and 5000 series hi-hat stand, ddrum Mercury bass drum pedal and Heavy Hitter throne, Tama Iron Cobra backup pedal

Heads: Evans EC1 Reverse Dot snare batter and 300 series bottom, G2 Clear tom batters and G1 bottoms, and EQ2 Clear bass drum batter

Electronics: Korg Wavedrum



Træna Festival, Sanna Island, Norway



The last time we spoke with Michael Blair, he was absorbed in Manhattan's music world, enjoying the critical attention of SNL music director Hal Willner's then recently released tribute to jazz legend Charles Mingus, *Weird Nightmare*, and recording NYC icon Lou Reed's *Magic and Loss* album. Blair would subsequently pull up stakes and move to Stockholm, Sweden, and he's since enjoyed a fruitful career recording and touring with a number of European acts, including Swiss performance artist Erika Stucky, Swedish Wagnerian tenor Lars Cleveman and composer Martin Rössel, and British performers Thea Gilmore, Nigel Stonier, Hugh Laurie, and Ed Harcourt.

As evidence of exactly how far from the Big Apple Blair has traveled, check out this photo from a recent concert that he played with Norwegian singer Stein Torleif Bjella, at the Træna Festival on the island of Sanna in Norway, north of the Arctic

Circle. Bjella performed in the famous Kirkehelleren cave, which locals refer to as a natural cathedral, due to the existence of an altar and pulpit (traces of one of Norway's oldest settlements have been found there) and sonorous acoustics. "The setting was breathtaking," Blair says, "and [playing there was] lots of fun—except for schlepping the gear up the very long hill to the cave. Ah, the glory of sad Norwegian folk-rock."

Notice the unusual order of the toms in Blair's setup, which Michael explained in this post from his Facebook page: "I'm left-handed, even though I basically set up as a righty, like Ringo did. So having the single small rack tom in the middle and floor toms right and left works for me. [Blair didn't employ the right-side floor tom on this particular gig.] It also gives me more access to the cymbals—I'm a color guy all the way... deep frequency ranges, varied decays—as well as the metals and crushers." **Adam Budofsky**



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Elton John

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road

No matter how far out the pianist/singer takes things on this classic double album bursting with fresh ideas, drummer Nigel Olsson adds just the right touch.

Elton John's landmark 1973 album feels more like a career-spanning, seventeen-track "best of" collection than a batch of songs written, recorded, and mixed in a fevered seventeen-day burst. As often happens, the increased pressure raised everyone's game.

Like many of rock's great four-siders of yore, the album is a grab bag of styles. Side four's opening one-two punch of "Your Sister Can't Twist (but She Can Rock 'n' Roll)" and "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting" bears the mark of a scrappy young artist fresh out of the bars. The eleven-minute album-opening suite, "Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding," sounds as if we're catching up with the artist a few years down the line to find him exploring more sophisticated song forms, steeped in dynamics and tension. Then elsewhere

Hot Stuff

A light cymbal touch. Throughout the many changes and dynamic swells in "Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding," Nigel Olsson digs in while exercising great restraint with crashes. Without the cymbal wash and overtones gumming up the frequencies—and with a fairly low cymbal level overall—the sonic space is wide open for all those moving parts to blow minds.

A great little rhythm section. With a few records and lots of touring under their belts by the time of the *Yellow Brick Road* sessions, Elton John on piano, Dee Murray on bass, and Olsson on drums make a tight rhythm section. "Grey Seal" is a perfect example of their collective proficiency. They hit all the accents in the choppy verses without busying up the groove too much, and the surge they achieve by going to double time in the chorus feels totally natural.

Funky stuff. "Bennie and the Jets" landed John on *Soul Train* and on *Billboard's* soul chart for good reason—the track is *funky*. Olsson's slow and steady groove provides the perfect pulse for John's iconic glam-soul hybrid, and the song is a rapper's delight, being covered by the Beastie Boys and Biz Markie and sampled by Frank Ocean, among others.

we get the lilting "Jamaica Jerk-Off" (dig the early example of playing over a drum-machine groove) and the country-tinged ballad "Roy Rogers," where perhaps it's a few more years down the line and John is just having a laugh seeing how far out he can take things.

This is music that felt classier than so much of the blues-rooted guitar rock of the day. It needed a drummer who could lock in with John's piano, not the other way around. John's keys (not to mention his voice and heavenly melodies) are the thing here. Elton had long channeled his love of American roots music through his piano-based compositions, and that piano provides the key rhythmic link between Nigel Olsson, bassist Dee Murray, and guitarist Davey Johnstone. The songs, by John and lyricist Bernie Taupin, don't feel as though they were assembled from the bottom up, like traditional rock. Rather, they're rooted in Elton's piano. And that results in a unique vibe.

Olsson displays an empathetic ear and incredible feel for that musical chain of command on *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, particularly on the ballads. In many ways his impeccable playing on songs like the title track and "Candle in the Wind" establishes a blueprint for rock ballad drumming to follow. Olsson manages to play a starring *and* supportive role on the slow numbers, showing restraint when in the pocket and boldness when it comes time to fill (check out the measure-long beauties on "Candle" and the tasty hesitations and pauses during his licks in "Goodbye"), and he always enters and exits with grace. Behind the ragtime-shaded piano chords of the languid "I've Seen That Movie Too," he employs an arrow-straight feel in the verses, then swings ever so slightly in the choruses as John's vocal cadence grows a little looser. It's a subtle shift that takes the song to another place.



Goodbye Yellow Brick Road (1973)

Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding • Candle in the Wind • Bennie and the Jets • Goodbye Yellow Brick Road • This Song Has No Title • Grey Seal • Jamaica Jerk-Off • I've Seen That Movie Too • Sweet Painted Lady • The Ballad of Danny Bailey (1909–34) • Dirty Little Girl • All the Girls Love Alice • Your Sister Can't Twist (but She Can Rock 'n' Roll) • Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting • Roy Rogers • Social Disease • Harmony

Elton John: keyboards, vocals

Davey Johnstone: guitars, banjo, vocals

Dee Murray: bass, vocals

Nigel Olsson: drums, percussion, vocals

Plus guest musicians

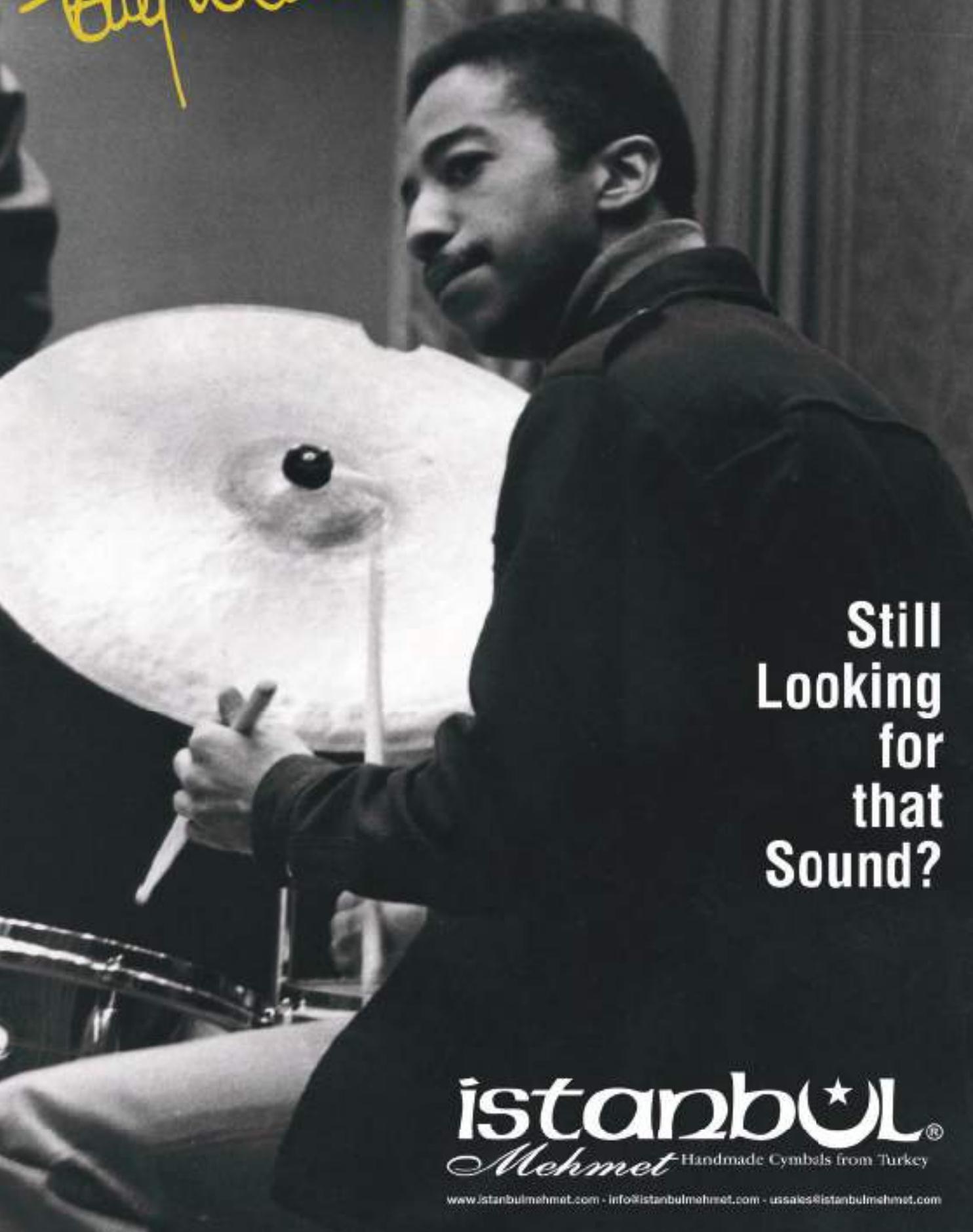
Produced by Gus Dudgeon

When the tracks rock a little harder, Olsson works the grooves with a firm hand that isn't overwhelming. Note how free and easy the shuffle feels on "All the Girls Love Alice," as Olsson's kick pattern plays off Johnstone's guitar part and lets the steady quarter notes of Murray's bass and John's piano push things along. Olsson whips some serious grime into "Dirty Little Girl" with a behind-the-beat thump that builds in intensity with the piano as the song progresses. And time has shown that some of Nigel's most straightforward parts—"Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting" isn't rocket science, but it sure does the trick—are as memorable as any drumming performances from the classic-rock canon.

Patrick Berkery



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Jeremy Harris

Godsmack's Shannon Larkin

The massive success of Godsmack's 2010 comeback album, *The Oracle*, kept the band on the road for nearly two years and produced the tour document *Live & Inspired*, which includes a four-song bonus disc of classic-rock covers. The band members then took some much needed time off, only to reconvene in 2013 for some festival slots—better off for the break, according to drummer Shannon Larkin. “We didn’t rehearse before those festival shows,” Larkin says. “We just went for it, and it reignited us. We realized that we have magic as a band, and that we needed to get back into the studio to start writing.”

Larkin and guitarist Tony Rombola, who both live in Florida, put together about twenty songs, while singer Sully Erna, who, along with bassist Robbie Merrill, lives in the Boston area, began writing independently. “By the time we all got together for preproduction at our studio in Florida,” Larkin explains, “we had a boatload of riffs.”

“We never want to make the same record,” Larkin continues. “*Faceless* [2003] was a precise metal record; *IV* [2006] was a bit more

“We felt more of a punk-rock feel right away. The tempos were faster, and there was more raw energy.”

bluesy, paying tribute to our idols, like Sabbath and Zeppelin; and *The Oracle* was the heaviest record we could make for

Godsmack fans. With *1000hp*, we felt more of a punk-rock feel right away. The tempos were faster, and there was more raw energy without changing our overall sound.”

The band's rekindled passion was a driving force that allowed the songs on 2014's *1000hp* to maintain a purity of purpose. “In the past,” Larkin says, “there was some mystery as to where everyone's priorities were, due to different side projects and solo projects. We're no longer starving artists, so we've always said we'd do this until it isn't fun anymore. This record wasn't done for money, or even for the fans. We just felt this magical chemistry between the four of us, so we put all negativity in the past and enjoyed playing and writing songs together.” **David Ciauro**



Lady Antebellum's Chris Tyrrell

After twenty years as a pro drummer, Lady Antebellum's Chris Tyrrell has developed a certain worldview. "My strengths revolve around my desire for each song to feel good," he says, "so my philosophy is that I want to be *felt*, not heard."

Tyrrell, who has also worked with the contemporary country stars Luke Bryan, Love and Theft, and Josh Kelley, is equally passionate about creating the ideal parts for each unique situation. "I spend *hours* studying the physical movements and tendencies of every artist I work with," he says. "That helps me immensely when problems arise or something happens on the fly."

"Following your artist's lead on audible adjustments is heavily based on instinct," Tyrrell continues, "and the more in tune you are to his or her tendencies, the smoother those adjustments will play out. Every musician has some area of focus, some aspect that they zero in on musically. I consider it my job to not only understand what each player is focused on, but to be the glue that ties all of those aspects together."

"I consider it my job to not only understand what each player is focused on, but to be the glue that ties all of those aspects together."

Regarding his role in Lady Antebellum, which involves translating hits like the ubiquitous "Need You Now" to a live

situation, Tyrrell says his focus is on the emotion of each song. "It's much more important to translate the feeling and the movement of the song," he explains, "than it is to get caught up trying to replicate every drum sound exactly."

Not that Tyrrell is indifferent to sonic details—far from it. With the variety of drum sounds coming out of modern Nashville, Chris has learned that preparedness is huge in terms of earning a living. "I travel with multiple snare drums," he says, "and I have two hi-hats set up on my touring kit. So I can get pretty close to mimicking the major sounds for each song by [doing things like] swapping snares between songs."

"There's such a huge opportunity for the lines between musical genres to be blurred," Tyrrell adds, "especially through drumming. The key is to be flexible and adaptable to each artist you're working with, while maintaining your musical identity."

Steven Douglas Losey



Dave Weckl

For more than thirty years, his drumming has been put under a microscope so often that it might as well be given its own genus and species name. Two exciting new projects get us even closer to understanding its true nature.

Dave Weckl burst onto the international scene in the mid-'80s with jazz piano master Michel Camilo, after which he began a long affiliation with fusion pioneer Chick Corea's closely watched Elektric and Akoustic bands. Meanwhile, Weckl was building a remarkable résumé of freelance recording and touring credits with artists as diverse as contemporary jazz giant Mike Stern and folk-rock legends Simon & Garfunkel. Like Steve Gadd and Billy Cobham before him, Weckl became a magnet of attention among players who were awed by his stylistic flexibility, ambitious interdependence concepts, and game-changing precision. Today an entire generation of drummers shares fond memories of having gone through their "Weckl phase," which for many meant focusing on incorporating Dave's advanced techniques into their playing.

Interestingly, around 2000, the year *MD* readers voted Weckl into the magazine's Hall of Fame, the drummer, fueled by studies with educator Freddie Gruber, began to focus his own attention on the more slippery issue of groove. "The whole feel of what's being created has taken precedent for me over the past fifteen years," Weckl says today. "I'm not at the point where I'm going to get, or care about getting, any faster around the kit—or any of the stuff that takes more physical input than I want to give. It's about the *emotional* aspect of what's being said and created, and how that makes somebody else feel. That's where I'm at."

If you're worried that Weckl has become some sort of fusion minimalist, though, you needn't be. Dave is absolutely *ripping* on two distinct new projects. The Dave Weckl Acoustic Band, a swinging and funky collaboration with keyboardist Makoto Ozone, saxophonist Gary Meek, and kindred spirit bassist Tom Kennedy, has just released its debut album, *Of the Same Mind*. Meanwhile, the electric (and electrifying) *Convergence*, a multifaceted album by Weckl and keyboardist Jay Oliver, represents the latest chapter in the duo's long-running collaborative output, which includes Weckl's 1990 solo debut, *Master Plan*.

"There's so much diversity on *Convergence*, a lot of different styles," Weckl says. "There are three vocal tunes, a couple of jazz-oriented ones, and the full-on fusion type of thing that we used to do. It's sort of going back to the *Master Plan* concept, where we pulled in a lot of different vibes." The crowd-funded *Convergence* is also a multimedia embarrassment of riches, featuring charts, videos of the drummer tracking, and separate play-along material for all instruments, including mixes with and without drums. Weckl fans will no doubt be pleased.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky

Photos by Alex Solca



MD: On *Convergence* you reconnect with your old mate Jay Oliver.

Dave: Jay and I were partners on all my early projects, and our friendship goes back to the mid-'70s, playing and learning and doing things together musically. My schedule over the past ten years has been a bit crazy, going back into the sideman world with people like Mike Stern, Oz Noy, and Jeff Lorber.

Along with my own studio work here at home, that's been keeping me quite busy. But in order to do *Convergence*, the reality was that we needed some funding. Back in the day, when record deals were more prominent and everybody, including me, had one, budgets were such that they allowed us to stay home and work and not do other things. I could go into complete creation mode, writing, doing preproduction, and just making the record. We wanted to see if our fans would invest in us, so we tried this crowd-funding direction.

We went with Jayce Varden and the people at PledgeMusic, who were huge fans of our work. In order to plan far enough ahead to stay home and reach our goals, we came up with some investment tiers for fans. That idea snowballed into all the things that we could do beyond making the CD. To my surprise it actually worked, and I had to stop booking myself and stay home to do this thing. It turned into a mega-project beyond my wildest expectations.

MD: It's also an instructional multimedia wonderland.

Dave: As far as drummers are concerned, it's pretty deep. There's video of me playing every tune, and there's a mix without the drums or percussion, with and without a click. We went into recording the CD with the realization that we had to do a play-along for every song, so complete separation was necessary. The videos are the actual takes of the tunes you hear on the CD. Quite an undertaking. We're selling *Convergence*, the DVD play-along data disc, and the Acoustic Band CD via daveweckl.com.

MD: Without a label, are you free to do whatever you want, or are you creatively going about things the way you always have?

Dave: I'm pretty much going about it artistically the way I always have. And that's always been with no constraints stylistically or content-wise.

MD: Was there ever pressure put on you to have a hit record back in the GRP days?

Dave: Back in the GRP days, most of my stuff was up to me, and I was given free rein to create and compose and put the record together however Jay and I wanted. When I was with them in the late '80s, early '90s, smooth jazz hadn't hit yet. It was a mishmash of different styles—fusion, funk. It's funny, because when I started to do a lot of records for different people, I was always confused as to what I was supposed to play. I always had to ask the question, "What are we doing here? Are we doing a groove record? Or are we doing dialogue, conversation, improvisation...?"

In other words, was I supposed to play simple, or busy? So it was kind of a confusing period. But for my own stuff, I wasn't taking commercial aspects into consideration at all. Maybe only song lengths, to try to keep things in the five- or six-minute range, in order to get them on the radio. Other than that, it wasn't about conforming to something the record label or some producer wanted. We always produced our own stuff. Later on, GRP was sold and they began to concentrate more on smooth jazz with more constraints, which is when I left and went to Stretch Records, Chick Corea's label at the time with Concord Records. And on Stretch/Concord, I also had free rein.

MD: There's some programming and some loops on *Convergence*. Does Jay handle most of that?

Dave: Over the last ten or fifteen years Jay has gotten way into production, loops, and what he does to create his vibe, and I've gone sort of in the other direction. I've completely gotten out of the electronic thing and have gone back to being an acoustic drummer. Most of the stuff I've been doing over the past few years has been a bit more spatial, with not as much content with synths or loops. So that bag was completely his voice on this record.

MD: *Convergence* is somewhat reminiscent of your 1998 album, *Rhythm of the Soul*, with its mix of acoustic and more blowing tunes.



“One of the things Freddie Gruber taught me was to really understand how the continuum of energy can happen—if you get out of the way and let it.”



Dave: *Rhythm of the Soul* was the first project I did that was written for a band with the intention to perform it live. We had no concept of performing any of the *Convergence* stuff live. We wanted to make it sound as live as we could, but it was pretty much completely a layered record.

MD: Is that you taking a timbale solo on “Apocalypso”?

Dave: Yeah, it’s me. I’ve always been attracted to timbales and have been studying the great timbale players over the years. I’ve played timbales on a few records that I’ve done for other people, but I don’t think I’d ever taken a timbale solo on one of my own records. With “Apocalypso” I had tried a couple of more flamboyant solos, but Jay and I decided to keep it more groove oriented, so it wasn’t completely a timbale feature. So the take that got on the record was more subdued.

MD: Can you offer any tips on how non-percussionists can build chops to play that stuff convincingly?

Dave: You have to really study the players and understand the parts—not that I *fully* do. Though Luis Conte and I were once at a

festival, hanging out afterward, and we both sat in with this Latin band playing at our hotel, him on congas and me on timbales—and he was surprised. He looked at me and said, “Hey, man, you’re speaking the language!” You have to study the touch and feel of it all, no matter what the style or instrument. Even on the drums, you have to understand the real feel of a style to get into it. I spent a lot of time hanging out with Joey Heredia and guys here in town, like Ronnie Gutierrez, who is one of my favorite timbale players.

MD: “Road to Connemara” features you playing with a tap dancer. Was that live?

Dave: No, we recorded step dancer Mick Donegan in Ireland to a demo track of mine. Then I overdubbed my drum part here. We spoke on the phone about the concept and how to structure the idea, and there were some directives from me about doing the ending lick together and the triplets coming out of his last trade. But we never actually met. In a tap dance sense, I was pulling out some of my Buddy Rich references here and there, going into that frame of mind.

I’ve always loved and respected tap dancers. We drummers all know that Steve Gadd is a tap dancer, and there are others who do it well. On “Road to Connemara” it wasn’t a competition, like “Let’s see what you can do.” I wouldn’t have approached it that way, even if we had done it live. It was more of a call-and-response type of thing. I think it came out fairly convincingly. Jay and I have a term for what we do—preplanned spontaneity.

MD: You do a nice homage to Elvin Jones on “Twelvin.” Did you immerse yourself in some Coltrane, or is it just part of your DNA at this point?

Dave: It’s DNA. People don’t hear me do that stuff that much. Not that I do it completely authentically. And that wasn’t my goal. But the play on words there with the title came with the groove I wanted to play, that whole 12/8 triplet thing, which he was so great at. Everybody tries to emulate it, but nobody can get it to feel like that.

MD: Is there a track you can release exclusively to fans where we can hear you growling?

Dave: [laughs] I used to hum when I was

Dave’s Setup

Here’s the setup that Weckl uses with his acoustic band. This configuration provides the basis of his fusion setup as well, with notable changes, which he details below.

Drums: Yamaha Phoenix

- A.** 5.5x14 brass-shell 30th Anniversary signature snare
- B.** 15x16 floor tom
- C.** 8x12 tom
- D.** 13x14 floor tom
- E.** 16x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1.** 14" Legacy hi-hats
- 2.** 17" HHX Evolution Effeks crash with three rivets
- 3.** 7" HHX Evolution splash (upside down on top of Effeks crash)
- 4.** 20" Legacy ride
- 5.** 10" HHX Evolution splash (upside down on top of 20" ride)
- 6.** 22" Legacy Heavy ride with one rivet
- 7.** 18" HHX Evolution crash/14" HHX Evolution China stack
- 8.** 17" O-Zone (special order)

Percussion: 14" LP Tito Puente timbale, Mambo cowbell (mounted on ride cymbal stand with Yamaha CSAT-924A multi-clamp), blocks, and other items

Hardware: Yamaha, including DFP-9500C double bass drum pedal with nylon straps (in place of chains), DS-840 throne (“The most important part of the kit!”), HS-1200T hi-hat stand, SS-950 snare stands, Hexrack II, CS-865 boom cymbal stands, and CH-755 boom cymbal holders (mounted on Hexrack)

“The differences between this and my fusion kit,” Dave says, “are that I’ll use either a 16x22 or 16x20 bass drum, and I’ll add a 7x10 rack tom mounted on the Hexrack. The way I tune the bass drum [hole or no hole, muffling] depends on the music and band. At times I’ll use a 5x13 signature snare on my left, in which case I’ll move the 15x16 floor tom to the right of the 14" floor tom. Also, there will be one additional CH-755 boom cymbal holder on the Hexrack for the splash, the 20" ride gets replaced with either a 17" or 18" Evolution or Legacy crash, and the O-Zone is an 18".”

Sticks: Vic Firth SDW and SDW2 (“I mostly use the latter”), Rute 505, brushes, mallets, etc.



Heads: Remo, including Coated Ambassador snare batter and Clear Ambassador bottom, Coated Ambassador tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Coated Ambassador bass drum batter and Yamaha logo resonant with no hole

Accessories: Remo Active Snare Dampening System and prototype external bass drum muffler; Gator/XL cases

Electronics: Yamaha O1V96i digital mixer (for front-of-house and in-ear stage monitoring for all musicians on stage); QSC KW122 and KSub monitors; Shure mics and monitoring, including Beta 52 on 18" bass drum (Beta 91 inside), SM57 on snare (top and bottom), SM98 (discontinued original model) or Beta 98 on toms, KSM44 for overheads, SM81 on hi-hat, and in-ear pack with E550 earpieces

around ten years old. My dad and I would record me playing drums and we'd listen back and ask, "What the hell is that hum?" I got rid of my Elvin-esque vocal tracks early.

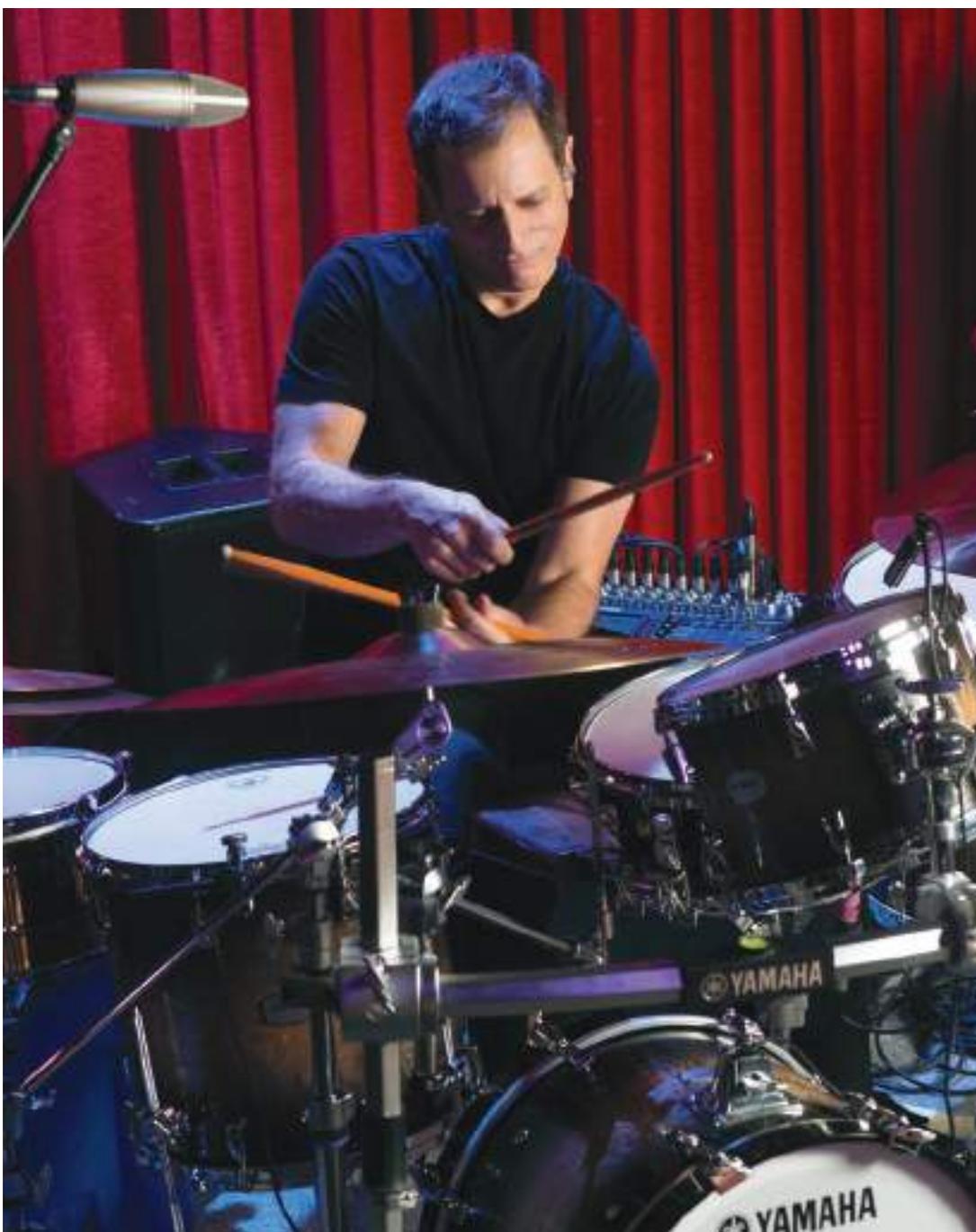
MD: "Twelvin" and "Sternoids" are acoustic based, as is some of your recent sideman work. Is this where your head is now?

Dave: "Sternoids" was written for Mike Stern. We have a long history of playing together in different situations. I played a 20" bass drum, full double heads, because most of the tune was bebop oriented, even though it goes into Mike's overdrive section at the end. And I approached it that way: I had two rides instead of my normal fusion setup with only one ride and multiple crashes, and Tom Kennedy played electric bass. I wanted to make "Twelvin" more acoustic oriented, so I used an 18" bass drum, only one rack tom, and two rides, and Tom played acoustic bass on it.

I grew up playing acoustic music. As teenagers, Tom and I used to play with his brother Ray, who's a great piano player, and all we used to do was swing. It's something I've always enjoyed doing. I've never considered myself an authentic jazz player, though, and I don't think most people would. My new Acoustic Band isn't only doing bebop. There are some groove-oriented tunes. But I've always loved the style. This is the band I've always wanted to have.

MD: How'd the Acoustic Band come together?

Dave: It had to. Tom and I were playing with Mike Stern in Japan, and on the gig was piano and B3 player Makoto Ozone, who's a megastar in Japan. We were all having a great time, and the rhythm section had such an incredible chemistry. We were all just like high school kids, laughing. It hit us all, like, this is why we do this. This is why we practice all these hours to develop a facility, to be able to get into a situation where you're all speaking the same language and it's a beautiful relationship that happens incredibly fast—spontaneously.



After every set we were telling each other that we had to do something. I grabbed the bull by the horns and forced the issue. I called Gary Meek and asked him to join us in writing and playing the music, and we booked a show at Catalina's in L.A. during NAMM week so some people could come by. We booked studio time and made the record. We rehearsed for two days, played gigs for two days, and recorded for two days. All the stars aligned.

MD: What's your approach to swinging and acoustic music now, compared to the '80s/'90s Chick Corea Akoustic Band era? Though it was a more athletic group sound,

you were swinging your butt off on that stuff too.

Dave: Thank you. But especially on the live Akoustic Band record [1991's *Alive*], it was my first experience with in-ear headphones, and it was just so much fun to play—and boy, was I playing.

MD: Yes, you were! It's the sound of youth.

Dave: Well, it was borderline overplaying, in my opinion, and if I had it to do over again I certainly wouldn't do it with that drumset. I don't know where my mind was then, but it certainly wasn't in an acoustic band setting, even though I was using a 20" bass drum. I was using coated heads,

Dave Weckl

but they were tuned fairly low. And I'm not approaching it like that with this new band. I'm using an 18" bass drum with a Remo Coated Ambassador batter head, wide open, with only slight external muffling on it. But I don't tune it as high as an authentic jazz tuning would be. It's kind of low and funky, à la Keith Carlock's sound.

I've always kind of dug that sound when I use an 18", but I'm not known for it. It's very airy and cool sounding. And I'm only using one 12" rack tom, a 14" floor, a 16" on my left, and a timbale behind the 14" on the right. And the two rides are Sabian

Legacy—a 22" and a 20". So it's more bebop looking and sounding than my fusion kit. I never liked tuning my toms high, but these are higher. And the record is pretty open and natural sounding, not a whole lot of reverb. I'm very happy with it.

MD: Your duet with Chris Coleman on *Convergence's* "Higher Ground" is a sort of nod to when you played double drums with Steve Gadd on *Master Plan*. Did you guys work out parts in advance?

Dave: I had the concepts worked out for the approach, and then Chris and I went over things, throwing some ideas around. I

thought it worked out very well. Chris is a phenomenal player, and we had a chemistry that I got to experience at the Drum Fantasy Camp, so he was the obvious choice. He is so strong.

MD: That's also the sound of youth I was referring to.

Dave: I learned from Chick Corea a long time ago, when he would always surround himself with young players. It keeps you young and inspired, pushing the envelope of your own abilities and your own voice and what you want to say. Not that that was the intention of our duet. For me, it's not about a competition anyway, and it shouldn't be for anyone else. Hopefully no one is looking at it that way. It's inevitable, in any kind of trading situation, that it will be looked at as a competition, but that wasn't the spirit behind what we were doing.

MD: How do you keep yourself challenged to progress beyond such an already high level?

Dave: I don't look at it as a challenge. My biggest incentive is to stay physically fit and able to do what I want to do at the kit. Besides that, it's to experience every moment with the people I play with and whatever I'm doing.

MD: How do you stay physically fit and avoid those drummer pitfalls and ailments?

Dave: A lot of it has to do with how you approach playing the instrument. It's one of the reasons why today I don't have an interest in playing really loud, physical-input-type music anymore—not that I ever really did that with the fusion stuff. But I think we all have that dream of being a rock 'n' roll player, and we play a little more physical than is necessary. It can cause injury. You know, beating the hell out of your left hand for forty-six years with traditional grip is going to take a toll on the thumb eventually. Thousands and thousands of hours. And most of us who have done that are experiencing trouble with our thumbs. Thumbs and shoulders—it's just repetitive stress on the body.

First of all, nutrition is key. I cut out red meat and chicken about two years ago. I try to keep my weight down, because everything is harder with extra weight. In terms of exercise, I work out the tendons and small muscles with light weight on cable machines—no free weights at all. I'm also getting into some of the things that Virgil Donati is doing with nutrients. Magnesium is especially good for us drummers to take.

You have to have an awareness of what you're doing physically at the drumset—and away from the set, like sitting in chairs

The advertisement features a central image of Tony Royster Jr., a drummer, wearing a black beanie, sunglasses, and a dark jacket, holding a large black snare drum. The drum has the Ahead Armor Cases logo on it. The background is a dark, textured wall with red horizontal lines. Text elements include the Ahead Armor Cases logo in the top left, the headline "THE NEXT LEVEL IN PROTECTION" in large, bold, red and white letters, and a testimonial from Tony Royster Jr. with his signature and name. At the bottom, the website "AHEADARMORCASES.COM" and distributor information "DISTRIBUTED BY BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION | 818.727.1127" are displayed.



DAVE WECKL

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Dave Weckl

at computers—and take care of your neck. At the drums, the physical aspect is about the ergonomics of not reaching. With just a little bit of reaching in an unnatural way, you're jacking up your shoulders and putting your neck in a position that causes stress on things, clamping down on nerves. The neck is the central nervous system, basically, for the arms and the hands. Sometimes people with hand issues automatically think it's tendinitis, but it's possibly being caused by pinched nerves in the neck. And tendinitis is just from overuse and abuse. Just hitting way too hard and gripping way too tight and not letting the energy of the stick work for you.

MD: Does this all stem from Freddie Gruber's concepts that have stayed with you?

Dave: Yes. It's the whole natural energy aspect concerning the laws of physics and energy flow. If you're gripping the stick tightly, especially from the front of the hand, pounding down into the drum, stopping that energy with a tight grip after the stroke, then having to pick up and do it all over again, that's a lot of work. At this stage I'm not interested in working that hard.

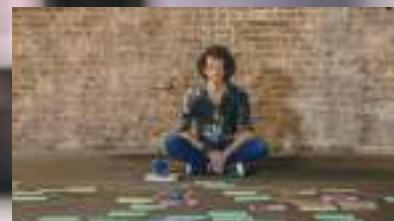
One of the things Freddie taught me was



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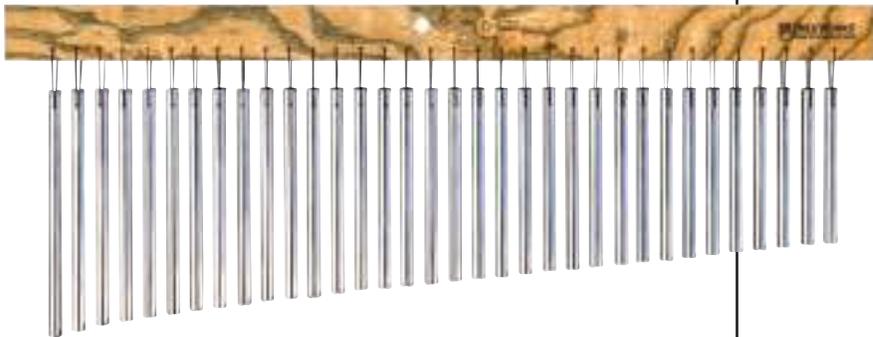
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Dave Weckl

to really understand how the continuum of energy can happen—if you get out of the way and let it. This means you have to have a looser grip on the stick and you have to balance it more from the center of the hand. It's nothing new; it goes back to Gladstone. Of course if you play lighter you need more control, from the front of the hand as well. But there's a difference between control and grip focus, and for me, coming strictly from the Freddie camp, it's about the focus of control or the leverage point from the middle finger and thumb, and more actual control coming from the back of the hand to the front.

I'm certainly not the only one who plays this way. When you look at Steve Gadd, the front of his hand is pretty loose on the stick. Vinnie [Colaiuta] is the same way a lot of the time. For me, it's the way that I have to play. Otherwise I'd be in pain and things would not go well. In fact, I'm in better playing condition with my body than I was fifteen years ago, when I was having lots of problems that had to be corrected with therapy.

MD: Are you using an in-ear system for the Acoustic Band?

Dave: I actually am. It is an acoustic band, but by no means are we tiptoeing around and playing lightly. There are those moments, but it's still a pretty bashing acoustic group and the drums are wide open, so it can get loud. I don't want to subject my ears to that, so I'm very conscious of preserving my hearing as well as my body.

The other issue is clearly hearing everyone. I'm there to converse and make music with everybody, and I want to hear what they're doing. And I don't want to throw it in a monitor and then have that add to the ear fatigue.

I have a formula for making the in-ears work. I'll do a song during the soundcheck without in-ears, which allows me to get the stage level and understand what the appropriate pressure is, physically, on

the kit to be in the mix. This goes back to the Chick Corea Akoustic Band live record. I made the mistake of putting the in-ears in and started playing, thinking, *Ah, this is great!*, without any consideration to what the actual stage balance was, or the actual touch that I should have been playing with.

So now, even in a louder fusion thing, I'll still make sure my touch and the balance is working acoustically, and then I'll get a little drums in my monitors for the heft of the drumkit on stage. If it's a louder group, I'll have a subwoofer and speakers on stage too, so that I can compete with the guitars and basses. Even in the acoustic band, I may have a speaker on stage in the back to help out with the low end.

MD: And you're avoiding those seat thumpers to help with low end?

Dave: I'm not looking for sensation—I'm looking for sonic appeal. I don't put anyone else in my QSC monitors, just drums. And I have a volume knob just like everyone else. I'll turn up my speakers to give the drums the heft from a fidelity sense, so it matches the other instruments on stage. You just can't expect an acoustic drumset to compete with amplifiers. Then, after the non-in-ear check, I'll stick the ears in and duplicate that mix, which is always drum heavy.

That's another mistake some drummers make. They turn everything else up too loud, which makes them play too loud. I want to have the same presence as when I play acoustically, which is I'm the loudest thing I hear, so when I plug in the ears, it's just 70 percent less volume. But I'm trying to duplicate the same mix so that I have the same touch.

MD: Your live sound has always been impressive, as is the sound on your records.

Dave: Your sound is your presentation. This is what we do. We can always respond to amazing playing, but *sound* is important too. Ever since Steve Gadd appeared with the real in-your-face, clear sounds that he was able to produce, it set the whole drum world on its ear. I was attracted to that, so it became experimental for me, tuning-wise and drum-wise. But I was interested in the technical aspect of reproducing the sound, both live and in the studio. So what was always a hobby has now become a sideline career as far as recording and mixing drums and bands in my home studio, the Garage.

MD: Times have changed. "First-call guy" doesn't mean the same thing that it did in 1987.

Dave: It's a very changed and continually changing landscape, for sure. Personal studios started to happen with a fervor in the mid to late '90s, and I have to say, I was one of the early ones who couldn't wait for the technology to get there. A long time ago I had this vision of doing drum tracks for people at home. Now, with boutique mic preamps and faster file transfers, it's possible. You can't duplicate the really good rooms and gear, though—the Neve consoles and the old C12 microphones that are \$10,000 to \$15,000 apiece. Not everybody can own those.

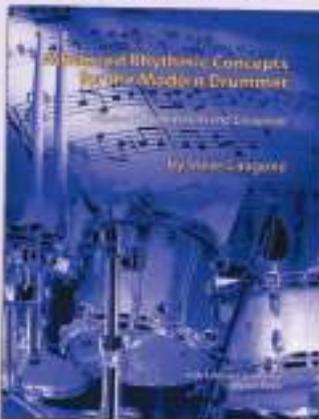
Most of the recording I do these days is in my own room, and I think the quality is very good. I've always tried to teach students to think about this as a business, not just the drumming business per se. You have to think not only about being a drummer but about doing anything that you possibly can. Learn to play other instruments. Learn to write music. Learn what it is to make sound. Learn to *do* sound. Learn how to engineer. I learned half of what I know by watching great engineers and getting on the Internet and studying and reading books and then experimenting.

It's not enough these days to be a categorized instrumentalist: "Hey, I'm a jazz drummer," or "I'm a rock drummer." Maybe it's old-school thinking, but in my opinion you need the ability to understand the history of the instrument, music, where it all came from, understanding all the great players of the past who laid the authentic groundwork of styles, and having the ability to at least

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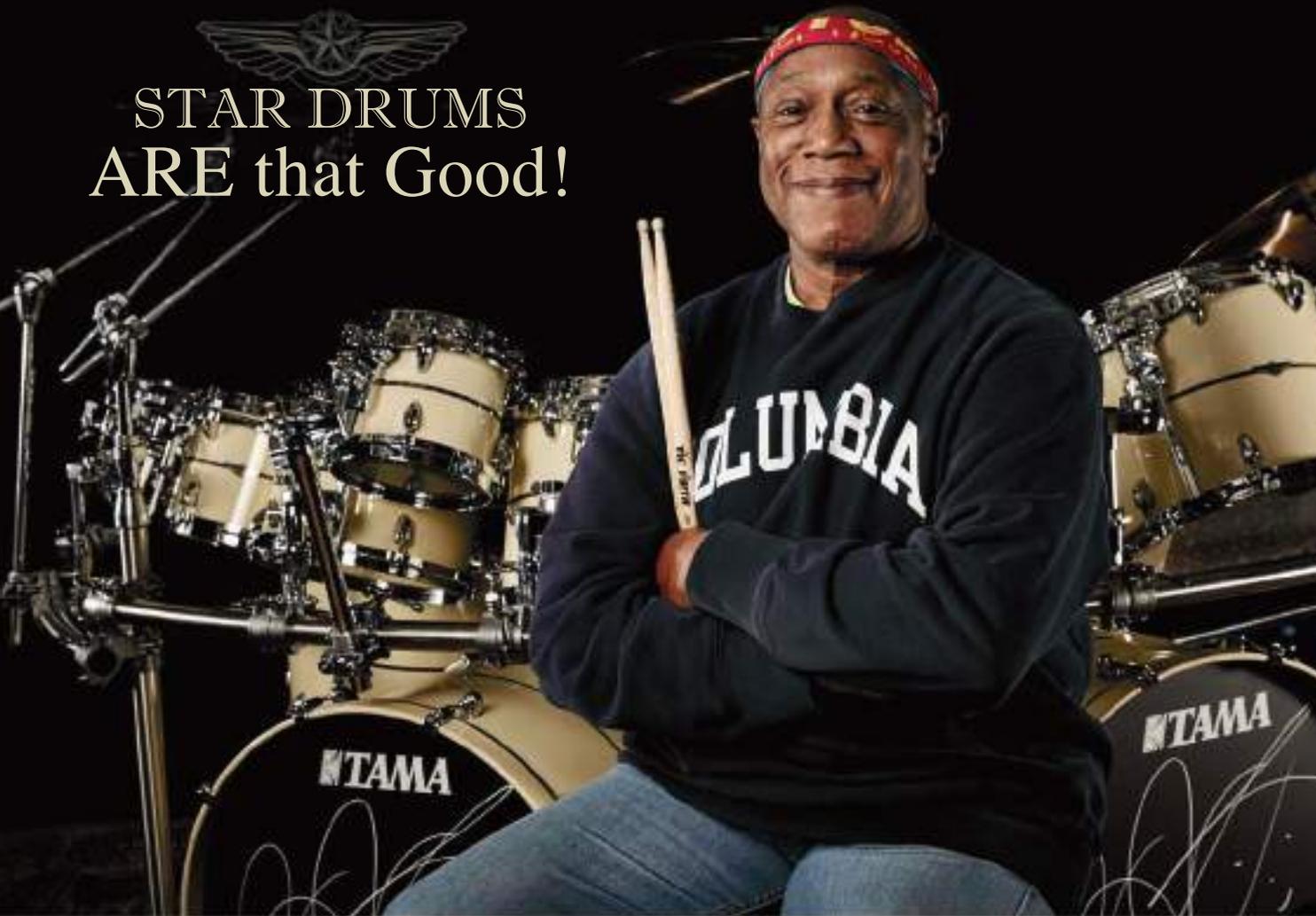
Bob Gallotti, international recording artist and member of the Fringe

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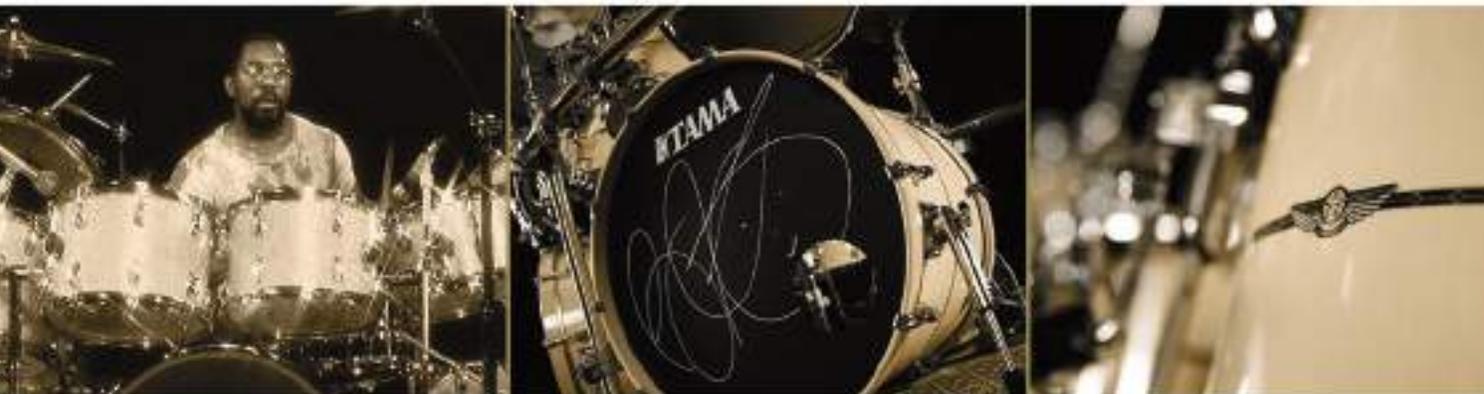


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Dave Weckl

know what those styles are and how to play them, and to understand what the sound of the drums is supposed to be in those situations. To give a tip of the hat to the history of it. The more you can do, the more chance you have to do more things. Be responsible. Show up on time. Don't be an ass. [laughs]

MD: That one's important!

Dave: We all have our moments of not wanting to deal with the social aspect of the business. It doesn't mean you have to kiss everybody's ass, but it also doesn't mean you have to be a jerk. Doing what we do

takes a lot of personal investment time-wise, and it takes a little bit of an effort sometimes to understand what to do in social circles. Think about what you say, and treat people how you want to be treated.

Nowadays it's very easy to respond on the Internet in writing, email, and texts. Be careful. That causes problems. Take a breath before you send that pissed-off email. Take a day and go back and read it the next morning. Because once you send something, it's out there forever.

MD: You've mentioned your renewed focus on sideman work. We all win because we get

to hear you more. But is it to pay the bills, or another reason?

Dave: Thanks. I enjoy playing other people's music. One of the reasons I stopped leading my own band back in 2007 is that I enjoy the diversity and fitting into situations that make me think and play differently. And, of course, we all have to survive. That's part of it—paying the bills, as you said. I'm getting back into the leader thing a little bit now with the Acoustic Band, but it's not going to be full-time.

MD: What's the Drum Fantasy Camp experience like for you? Are you finding that students want to rub shoulders with their heroes, or are they looking for serious tips and practical things to help them improve?

Dave: For the past year or two I've also been doing my own one-day drum intensives while on my Yamaha thirtieth-anniversary clinic tour. To answer your question, it's a little bit of both. There is the weekend warrior who comes out and then says, "Yeah, I took a lesson and hung out with this guy," and then there are young players who really want to do what we're doing as a career. I recognize that same gleam in their eye that I had when I was seventeen, eighteen. It's inspiring to see such passion and desire to play the instrument.



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Ryan Van Poederooyen

No one's ever going to accuse Devin Townsend of being a slacker, and you can be damn sure the metal icon's collaborators work their fingers to the bone just trying to keep up. That goes double for DT's go-to drummer, whose latest forays with the metal multi-threat could be his most challenging yet.

When *Modern Drummer* hooked up with Ryan Van Poederooyen, he'd just arrived in Los Angeles to lay down tracks for the latest chapter in Devin Townsend's infamous Ziltoid the Omniscient tale, *Z²*. RVP—as the drummer is known—occupied the drum throne with the Devin Townsend Band between 2002 and 2007; since 2009 he's done the same in the Devin Townsend Project. Van Poederooyen is also an official member of the metal act Terror Syndrome, which he created in 2006 as a solo project but grew to full-band status, and the progressive rock group Ten Ways. The prolific Townsend has kept the drummer so busy lately, though, that both of those bands are effectively on hold. "Once Ryan gets something," Townsend tells *MD*, "he's got it. I can really rely on that level of consistency."

After our interview, Van Poederooyen proceeded to record his drum tracks for *Z²* in just two days. That's impressive on the face of it, but did we mention that it's a double album—or, more precisely, two separate but related albums? And that both were recorded to tape, which further narrows the margin for error? "Ryan deserves to be recognized not only for his drumming but for his ability to adapt to very challenging situations," Townsend says. "And not only does he nail it—he comes out of it with a positive frame of mind." We begin our discussion with RVP by asking him about the writing and rehearsal process for Townsend's latest call to arms.

Story by Chuck Parker • Photos by Alex Solca





Ryan: Devin comes in with all the song ideas. He's the songwriter and we're the band, although he will always listen to suggestions, which has resulted in a couple of songwriting credits for us band members. For drum parts, he'll come in with some great ideas that I'll use or feed off of. He has a great mind for drumming, and we work really well together in that respect. At other times I've written brand-new parts that we'll use instead. In the end, I always play for the song and put my touch on whatever idea is used.

As far as the process goes, once we get my parts figured out, the band gets in the room and we start jamming out all the ideas together. Sometimes things change, depending on where the vibe takes it.

RECORDINGS

Devin Townsend Band Accelerated Evolution, Synchestra /// **Devin Townsend Project** Addicted, Deconstruction, By a Thread: Live in London 2011 (CD and DVD), Epicloud, The Retinal Circus (CD and DVD) /// **Terror Syndrome** Terror Syndrome /// **Ten Ways** The Solution

These latest records were totally different. We had six weeks to learn both albums. Devin put a lot of trust in us learning the songs on our own time and putting our spin on parts that merged with his style of writing. In this case, playing with Dev for the past twelve years and knowing his writing style paid off for the band. I'm very proud of both records.

MD: What are your thoughts on current digital recording technology?

Ryan: It's changed so much. I've recorded to tape in the past, and I've recorded many albums the digital way. I appreciate what you can do with digital technology and how much faster and perfected recording has become as a result. I also have a great appreciation for the old-school method of recording to two-inch tape. We recorded the drum tracks on this double album through a CLASP system, which puts them into Pro Tools in real time via two-inch tape. I guess you could say we combined old technology with new. It's all about adaptation and making it work for you.

The drum sounds we achieved by recording this way are absolutely massive.



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- D.** 9x12 tom
- E.** 16x16 floor tom
- F.** 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals:

- 1.** 14" HHX hi-hats (Power top and Fusion bottom)
- 2.** 11" AAX X-Plosion splash
- 3.** 19" Paragon China

- 4.** 10" HH Mid Max Stax
- 5.** 7" HH Radia chime (mounted on top of Max Stax)
- 6.** 18" HHX X-Plosion crash
- 7.** 12" HHX Evolution splash
- 8.** 9" HH Radia chime
- 9.** 12" HHX splash
- 10.** 20" HHX X-Plosion crash
- 11.** 21" HH Power Bell ride (custom)
- 12.** 21" Holy China
- 13.** 18" HHX Stage crash

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Accessories: DrumDial tuner, Audio-Technica mics, Alesis electronics (live)



“Ryan has been a huge asset to me. He’s got a great attitude, and he’s in good physical shape—which is important when you tour for six months.” —Devin Townsend

With the incredible engineering skills of my brother, Jay, these two records are the best I’ve ever heard my drums sound, hands down. We’re going for all-natural sounds, no samples.

MD: Is it challenging to handle the wide stylistic shifts in Devin’s catalog?

Ryan: It’s been difficult at times, but I believe that you can never stop learning, so I take challenges head on. Learning stuff

from [2009’s] *Ki* was challenging because it’s a different vibe from what I’m used to. Duris Maxwell, the drummer on that album, is phenomenal. Same goes for the talented Dirk Verbeuren [Soilwork] and the songs he recorded on the *Deconstruction* record [2011]. Each drummer has his own thing, and trying to emulate someone else can be challenging.

Devin wants you to learn the song the

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way that it was recorded. Adding your touch to beats and fills here and there, yeah, he's fine with that, but the gist of it is, "Go in there and try to re-create what was recorded." I totally respect that. To be honest, I want to pay respect to the guys that recorded it. I had to play the Strapping Young Lad songs "Love?" and "Detox" for the *Retinal Circus* concert Blu-ray we did in 2012. I'm the only drummer to play those songs other than the legendary Gene Hoglan. It was important to me, and to Devin, to do them justice and pay respect to Gene and SYL as best as I could.

MD: How did you get the gig with Devin?

Ryan: In Vancouver I played as much as I could to get my name out there. I did session work, played in a few different bands, and learned different styles of music to become as well rounded as I could. Devin wanted to separate his solo band from Strapping Young Lad, so he asked people he knew about drummers they would recommend for the gig. My name would keep popping up. He even asked Gene at one point, and Gene gave me a thumbs-up, which is an honor coming from him. Gene had seen me play around Vancouver with my old band God Awakens Petrified, and he liked my playing. From there, Dev asked me to try out for the now defunct Devin Townsend Band.

The funny thing is, I'd just gotten into his solo album *Ocean Machine* a month prior to his calling me. That's one of my favorites of all his records. I wasn't a fan of Strapping

Young Lad at that point, though. I didn't get the music at the time. I got it eventually! But I loved his solo material, so getting a call to try out was surreal. We set up an audition, and I remember jamming for only ten or fifteen minutes before he said, "You're the guy!" He has this thing about snare drums

and drummers' connection to them. He dug my groove and my connection to the snare and the rest of the drumkit.

MD: What was your band experience prior to joining Devin?

Ryan: Before joining Devin, the band I was in that had the most popularity was God

Keeping It Real

Devin Townsend and Jay Van Poederooyen on recording drums

Besides being a talented multi-instrumentalist, Ryan Van Poederooyen's brother, Jay, is also a skilled engineer whose credits include modern rock recordings by Nickelback, Airbourne, and Hedley, along with Devin Townsend's new releases. For Jay, though, it all goes back to the garage. "My whole career started with the drums, watching my brother," he says. "My dad had turned our garage into a recording studio and rehearsal room, and I would tinker with all the gear, some that I still use today."

Jay feels that drummers who have an interest in recording should take a balanced approach to digital technology. "It's a double-edged sword," he explains. "It's fast, clean, and convenient, and you can back it up. The problem is that you have to have discipline. People go too far—they over-edit." That's why, Jay says, it was decided that the two new Townsend albums would be recorded to tape, with tracks transferred to digital only when everyone was happy with a take.

"I keep everything really raw," Jay says. "I never use compressors when I track, which I find helps maintain the punch. I want to make sure that center is punchy, so I set up a mono drumset-miking system and then add stereo mics. My primary focus is making sure the middle—kick and snare—phases perfectly."

Townsend himself has actively embraced digital technology, but in the end he adopts a similar attitude to Van Poederooyen's when it comes to capturing a good drumming performance. "The Toontrack scenario is interesting," says Townsend, who recently worked closely with the company, which is renowned for creating the Drumkit From Hell sample library. "Their stuff has become a big part of my world. In fact, a bunch of the features in the new EZdrummer, like the song creator, were my idea. But ultimately it comes down to interaction with drummers, that human relationship you have with a musician. You're never going to get that from a computer."

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Awakens Petrified. That was experimental metal. In Vancouver we had a great following and did really well. I also played in a pop/rock band called June with my brother, who played bass. The drumming almost had a Dave Matthews vibe to it.

I also did independent and label session work for producers such as Brian Howes, Chad Kroeger, Rhys Fulber, and others. With Terror Syndrome I brought in several guests, including Devin, Alex Skolnick [Testament], Trevor Dunn [Mr. Bungle], Christofer Malmström [Darkane], Byron Stroud [Strapping Young Lad, Fear Factory], and bassist Michael Manring [Michael Hedges, Montreux]. I joined Ten Ways in 2008. That's a prog-rock band formed by DTP guitarist Dave Young and his bass-playing brother, Mike, who'd been in the Devin Townsend Band. Both groups are still active, but due to the hectic year-round schedule of DTP, there's no time to further either band at the moment.

MD: What were your formative years in drumming like?

Ryan: My father is a pianist, and when I was growing up he played in a rock band. I was always blown away by the drums. I'd get up and start banging around on the kit when they finished soundcheck, and my father

took notice and saw that I had some rhythm going on.

I learned technique and all the important basics of drumming through lessons, which I took for a year or so around age ten. In high school I joined band class and stage band and took a few more lessons, and at sixteen I joined a rock cover band. I played bars on weekends and had to sit in the hotel room between sets because I was underage. The experience of consistently playing live was priceless for me at that age.

MD: Who was your first drumming influence?

Ryan: Neil Peart. Rush was a huge inspiration for me growing up, and Neil was my imaginary drum teacher in a sense, because I would learn Rush songs all day. That cover band turned me on to prog music. From there my appreciation of drummers grew over the years. Guys like Tim Alexander [Primus], Stewart Copeland [the Police], Vinnie Paul [Pantera], Tomas Haake [Meshuggah], and, most recently, Gavin Harrison [Porcupine Tree, King Crimson] have made lasting impressions on me.

MD: Do you ever write out your parts or read charts?

Ryan: I can read and write drum music, but Devin has never come to me with

parts written out in notation. It's always demos, learning by ear. For example, this new Ziltoid album has lots of challenging songs throughout. It's technical music—time-signature changes, complicated rhythms and fills, and lengthy songs. A lot of memory was required, more than usual. As a result, I had lots of charts this time around.

I rarely write out notation, though. Instead, I've come up with more time-efficient ways to remember my parts. For example, one song goes from five to three to eight and back to five with an accent on 3, and so on. So that's how I would chart it out. Or I'd write "China part" for a section of a song. In my head I know exactly what that means, because the beat is based around the China cymbal. Again, it's about adapting and working through the intangibles of music.

I'm always trying to learn and be as creative and as versatile as possible with drumming, charting, and anything I do. I prepare myself in many different ways and don't focus on any one thing. That's how I live my life as well. Learn and enjoy every day, set goals, take action, believe you can do it, be positive, and be grateful for the present—and excited for the future.



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Sebastien

Not many of us can claim that our grooves have started a riot. But this drummer's duo with bassist Jesse Keeler, *Death From Above 1979*, has been the live soundtrack for more than one party that's gotten out of hand. After nearly a decade of dormancy, the wildness has returned.

Death From Above 1979 made a bold statement with its 2004 debut full-length, *You're a Woman, I'm a Machine*. Drummer Sebastien Grainger and bassist Jesse Keeler created a unique sound together that was bigger than most would ever expect from a bass-and-drums duo, equal parts noisy punk and fist-pumping dance-rock, but beyond easy categorization.

An "inhumane" amount of touring earned them a rabid fan base but also caused enough exhaustion and interpersonal strain that the duo called it quits in 2006. In the downtime Grainger was able to stretch out on solo outings like 2008's *Sebastien Grainger & the Mountains* and 2013's *Yours to Discover*, on which he played most of the instruments. But in 2010 he reached out to Keeler about playing music again, which led to some well-received reunion dates. DFA 1979's return to the stage came at an undersize venue during South by Southwest in 2011 and was greeted by a small-scale riot—a testament either to how much the duo was missed by their fans or to the feelings that their music has the potential to incite. This past fall saw the release of *The Physical World*, the band's first album in almost a decade and its first release on a major label.

Grainger's introduction to the drums was similar to that of many future rhythmists who were brought up in the late '70s. "We had a Muppets kit in the basement," Sebastien says, "so probably my first influence was Animal, who was based on Keith Moon. My father was a big Who fan, so it all made sense."

Grainger's development was supported by friends who had also caught the music bug. "The last few years of high school I went to an art school and played percussion," the drummer recalls. "I hadn't had any musical training, but I passed the auditions just based on feel. Once I started studying, I realized how far behind I was. I really cut my teeth playing with people. I had a core group of friends when I was a kid, and we kind of taught each other based on whatever was happening on the radio or [what was in] our older

Story by Stephen Bidwell • Photos by Alex Solca

Graininger



siblings' record collections. I had a friend who had a sister who was much older than us, and she had all the classic rock records, Led Zeppelin and that kind of stuff. So that influence crept in too.

"Early on my biggest influences were Mitch Mitchell and Ringo Starr," Grainger continues. "But my guitar playing happened at the same time—the Beatles were huge for me—and I thought my folks would never buy me a drumkit. I finally got my first one at twelve years old, so I'd already sort of delved into the songwriting aspect of music by then. Drumming for me grew out of that kind of adventure. I was never really a drummer's drummer; I used it as a vehicle for songwriting and playing in bands."

Coming of age in the '80s and '90s in the Toronto area made an impact as well. "U2 was very big to me, and obviously Nirvana," Grainger says. "As a teen I found some more obscure stuff, like William Goldsmith of

"The duo format can feel stifling. But creatively, I need those boundaries—and it's so much more fun for me."

Sunny Day Real Estate, and at fourteen or fifteen I started going to local shows. The most important part of my formative playing years was going to punk and hardcore shows and seeing people play up close. Standing right beside a drummer was a huge thing. Before I'd experienced it, I was kind of a snob and had this distorted perception that punk was this unsophisticated music. But there was this math-rock band from Toronto called Holding Pattern, and their drummer, Evan Clarke, was such a monstrous drummer, and he was kind of a gateway. Checking him out, I really started to see the skill level involved."

As the lead vocalist in DFA, Grainger finds drumming while singing a fairly natural act—though on songs that are heavy on

the 16th notes, the cardio aspect can be a problem. "I sort of have to plot out where I'm going to breathe," he says, adding that the original concept of DFA wasn't a duo. In fact, Grainger wasn't even supposed to be the drummer.

"When we first started," he explains, "Jesse had written a few songs, and the idea was for both of us to play guitar. He'd made these bed tracks of bass and drums and really simple riffs, and he started playing them in his car while we were driving around. Those basic tracks inspired us to just play [those parts], and we never did end up playing guitar."

As proven by *Physical World* songs like "Right On, Frankenstein!" DFA can fill up lots of space with nothing but drums, bass, and vocals. But the band has no rules when it comes to the studio; the album-closing title track, for instance, includes loops, vocal harmonizers, and keyboards. "If we're in a studio [and there's] a piano or a Mellotron there, they'll make it on the track," Grainger



Tools of the Trade

Grainger plays a set of clear Ludwig Vistalites, including a 9x13 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 16x24 bass drum, as well as a 6.5x14 Truth snare. His cymbals include a 24" Paiste Giant Beat and 15" Vintage A Zildjian hi-hats. He uses Promark sticks, a Rhythm Tech Hat Trick tambourine mounted on his hi-hat, an LP cowbell, and a Roland SPD-SX sampling pad.



says. "We don't want to be so militant that we wouldn't entertain those things. But I don't want it to be two guys on the record cover and five on stage. It's a tempting thing to do for certain two-piece bands, because the format can feel stifling. But creatively, I need those boundaries—and it's so much more fun for me."

DFA won't be incorporating backing tracks or an offstage keyboardist anytime soon, but some electronics and loops have found their way into Grainger's live rig. "I've used the Roland SPD-SX since the reunion, initially just for sampling in between songs," Sebastien says. "I had a band, shortly before Death From Above got back together, in which I was playing kick and snare and covering bass and certain synth parts on the SPD-SX, while the other guy was playing keyboards and guitars. I would sometimes play along to loops, so I started incorporating that into Death From Above.

We aren't going to start playing to a click or anything, but there are a few instances on the record where there are parts we were never able to play live, and I'll play them on the SPD-SX."

Grainger has recently found other benefits to embracing electronics. "I just bought a Roland V-Drums kit as a means for practicing and writing," he explains. "I grew up in a semidetached house, so practice time was pretty scarce. And now I live in a place that can't accommodate a drumkit. I'd found that I could go months without playing drums, but I forgot that it was both a passion and a hobby when I was younger." Grainger figures he's played more in the past several months than he has in his entire adult life. "I'll dedicate hours to playing," he says, "and I'm not imposing noise on anybody. It's almost like meditation for me now, and it's been an amazing time of rediscovery."



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Bryan Carter

by Ken Micallef

Paul La Rosa



He's been tearing it up in New York and well beyond with some bona fide legends of jazz. But he knows as much as anyone that the learning never stops.

It can be frustrating for gigging musicians to hear of the latest young gun to take the music scene by storm, someone who has seemingly enjoyed all the breaks and stepped into all the right situations. But no one ever became a success by luck alone. Twenty-three-year-old drummer Bryan Carter plays with a maturity beyond his age, but he hasn't gotten there without years of study, dedication, and persistence—even if he did take to the drums like a fish to water before the age of three.

A product of the renowned Juilliard School of Music, where he studied with the master jazz drummers Carl Allen and Kenny Washington and won two prestigious scholarships, Carter has worked with the cream of the jazz elite, including Clark Terry, McCoy Tyner, Wynton Marsalis, Branford Marsalis, Kenny Barron, and Cyrus Chestnut. When not traveling the globe with esteemed jazz vocalist Kurt Elling—who hired him for a full-time spot practically days after his graduation from Juilliard—Carter works all over New York City, from high-profile gigs and

club dates to private parties.

One recent event was particularly memorable. "I did a jazz cruise last January," Carter recalls, "and Kenny Washington, Jeff Hamilton, and Lewis Nash were all there with their bands. All the masters of the instrument, there on one boat. In between performances they talked about where they felt the music should go and how young drummers like me should get there. It was a great learning experience."

From the darting, Lee Morgan-style "Phil's So Good" to the Latin-ized "Linda's Call" to the backbeat gospel groove of "I See You" to the swift "Rat Race"—where Philly Joe Jones-worthy snare drum flurries morph into Tony Williams-like cymbal splashes—Carter's 2011 debut recording, *Enchantment*, demonstrates the skill set that has won the drummer acclaim from so many musicians double and triple his age. *Modern Drummer* recently sat down with Bryan to find out more about the roots of his prodigious talents.

MD: What did you play when you were three years old?

Bryan: I played the drums even earlier, when I was two, on the congas. At church I would watch the drummer and try to play a beat. At seven they let me really play the drums, first in youth choir, then during parts of the service, then, finally, during the whole service.

MD: You studied with Ed Thigpen and Louie Bellson when you were eleven.

Bryan: Yes, my dad was the director of the local high school band, and he often brought in guest artists. Any time a drummer would visit, I would beg my dad to let me skip school so I could see them. When Ed Thigpen came, my dad got me all the Oscar Peterson records. [Thigpen was a mainstay in the pianist's trio.] I would drum to the CDs. He gave me my first brush lesson and a pair of brushes.

MD: What did you practice at such a young age?

Bryan: My dad was hard on all the musicians, but I was his son, so I got it three times worse. I would practice for hours. I formed a relationship with Louie Bellson, who didn't live that far away from us in Illinois. I worked out of one of his books that had all these transcriptions. And I played along with Tony Williams on the Miles Davis records—though my favorite was playing along to Art Blakey. I loved "Night in Tunisia." I wanted to be Art Blakey. His press roll could cut a phone book in half! I also loved Philly Joe Jones and Max Roach. I had DVDs of Dizzy Gillespie's Dream Band at Lincoln Center, with Max. He played a tribute to Jo Jones, who was in the audience that night.

MD: What did you perform for your Juilliard recital?

Bryan: Half of my recital was a double quartet: a jazz quartet and a

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Carter plays a Sakae Trilogy black oyster pearl set that includes a 5.5x14 Trilogy Vintage snare, an 8x12 tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a 14x18 bass drum. His Zildjian cymbals include 14" K Constantinople hi-hats, a 20" K Constantinople Medium Thin Low ride with rivets, a 22" K Constantinople Renaissance ride with rivets, an 11" K Custom Hybrid splash stacked on a 16" K EFX, and an 11" K Custom Hybrid splash inverted and stacked on an 18" K Constantinople crash. He uses Remo Coated Ambassador heads and Vic Firth AJ3 sticks, Heritage brushes, and T1 timpani mallets. His hardware includes Sakae or Gibraltar flat-base stands and Vic Firth VicKick bass drum beaters (felt and fleece models). His in-ear monitors are the 1964 Ears V6-Stage model.



Paul La Raita



Paul La Raita

string quartet playing my material as well as my arrangement of "Moon River," modeled on the Art Blakey approach. It went from beautiful to boisterous.

MD: How is playing a pro gig with Kurt Elling different from what you imagined?

Bryan: Kurt has taught me consistency. He is a hundred percent every night. Even if he's sick one night, you can't tell. As the drummer it's my job to make him sound good, though at times I feel like it's him making *us* sound good. That's the mark of a great bandleader, and I try to take that to heart with my own bands.

MD: When have you practiced the most?

Bryan: During my time at Juilliard. Carl Allen had me working out of Jake Hanna's book *Syncopation for All*. Carl really changed what I thought was possible on the instrument. Then I went to Kenny Washington's boot camp! Kenny had me study out of Charles Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos for the Advanced Drummer*. He and I talked about the brushes and about the ride cymbal—how we attack the ride cymbal—and the sound we get out of the drums. Kenny has so much knowledge and pays so much attention to detail.

MD: What are you focusing on now?

Bryan: On expanding my understanding of sound and creating my own sounds. Trying to understand the sonic qualities of the kit and how I can expand what I already know. Also, being a young musician,

"I started recording all my gigs. I put the recorder at the back of the room to see how my sound carries. I listen for how things evolve."

I have never been so busy. It's a huge challenge to come home to packs of music that I have to learn and charts waiting for me in Dropbox. I have a day to learn the music; I hop on a plane to the gig, return, and do it again. Just learning how to prioritize my time to learn music and make it sound natural.

MD: How are you working on sonic qualities?

Bryan: It's a mixture of understanding the history of the kit, learning vocabulary from a book, and then letting it go. Letting it come out naturally in its own way to create my own sound. I just started recording all my gigs. I put the recorder at the back of the room to see how my sound carries. I listen for how things evolve, particularly when I'm playing the same material every night. I'm working

on making sure my drumming sounds as fresh at the end of the tour as it did at the beginning.

MD: What is your advice to young drummers?

Bryan: Study as much as you can, listen as much as you can, and soak up as much knowledge as you can. There's YouTube, iTunes, Spotify—the music is easy to find. It's a benefit in that you can hear new music at any time. But it's a detriment in that you can be overwhelmed. My generation has no attention span. So you have to overcome that and learn from everything. I have to force myself to focus on two albums at a time, to really soak it all in, learn from those albums, and try to be a diligent student of the music.



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Radio Beats

7 Real-World Applications of Essential, Time-Honored Grooves

by Rich Redmond

MUSIC KEY	
open	○
H.H.	○
S.D.	●
B.D.	●

In this month's article we'll take a look at some popular grooves on country radio right now. All of them are variations of what I call "money beats," fundamental drumset rhythms that have been used on countless popular songs.

This four-on-the-floor feel is the basis of many pop, dance, country, and modern rock songs. Check out Taylor Swift's hit "Red" for an example.

1

The heavy groove of dubstep has seeped into country-pop music, which you can hear in the same Taylor Swift song, when it transitions to a half-time feel with a triplet bass drum figure.

2

Now check out this time-honored money beat, which can be heard on two songs that I played drums on: Eric Church's "Drink in My Hand" and Thompson Square's "Everything I Shouldn't Be Thinking About."

3

This powerful rock pattern drives the mid-tempo programmed feel of Florida Georgia Line's hit "Cruise."

4

This hip groove found a heartland application on Blake Shelton's humorous "Boys 'Round Here" and Jason Aldean's "Night Train," the latter of which I had the good fortune of recording.

5

We call this the "push groove" in Nashville. The kick drum accents beat 1 and the "&" of beat 2. With roots in clave, New Orleans second line, and the Charleston beat, this rhythm pilots Hunter Hayes' hit "Wanted."

6

The train beat, with a swing feel, drives Darius Rucker's version of the rootsy song "Wagon Wheel."

7

Listening to terrestrial radio is a great way to discover the commonalities among all grooves and how they cross genre lines. Mastering the most-used patterns, and coming up with your own variations, is a great way to keep your drumming fresh and marketable. If you want to be a player in contemporary music, you have to know what's happening *now*. Enjoy the journey. It's a marathon, not a sprint. Cheers!

Rich Redmond drums for country star Jason Aldean, is an award-winning clinician, and is an active session drummer in Nashville and Los Angeles. His recent book/DVD, *FUNdamentals of Drumming for Kids* (coauthored with Michael Aubrecht), is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

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2

1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L
rL R L 1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R

Here's the exercise with cheeses.

3

1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L
rL R L 1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R

Here's the exercise with flam fives.

1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L
rL R L 1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R rL rL R L 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R

1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L
rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R rL rL rL R L 1R 1R 1R 1R L R

Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.



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As we work into our 23rd year since the launch of the Vater branded drumstick line, it gives me reason to reminisce about our journey so far and the early days of making drumsticks for my family business alongside my Dad, my brother Ron and our dedicated workers.

I think back to the times that we worked endless hours to innovate and develop the perfect manufacturing process. I remember making the decision in 1991, after many years of manufacturing for other major drumstick companies, to launch our own brand of drumsticks. Moving our operations from a barn in Weymouth, Massachusetts to our current factory, and all of the trials and tribulations that come along with doing business.

Today, we continue to improve the manufacturing process, while we maintain the great level of quality, care and detail that my grandfather, Jack Adams, established when he began hand-turning drumsticks in the mid-1950's. Vater's roots go back to that time when Jack was manufacturing sticks for his own customers at Jack's Drum Shop in Boston, Massachusetts, as well as for some of his close friends, who are now considered legendary... Buddy Rich, Philly Joe Jones and Elvin Jones, to name a few.

Along the way, we have always strived to meet the demands of the drumming community. In fact, many of Vater's products are a direct result of consumer input and demand. That being said, our efforts now exceed just making drumsticks as we offer dozens of accessory products along with more than 250 stick, mallet, brush and specialty stick models.

I have always enjoyed talking to drummers of all ages and hearing their personal stories, ideas, comments and views on all things percussive. This extreme sense of camaraderie that we all share together as drummers is uniquely special, rewarding and influential, and is something that we all should be proud of.

Finally, speaking on behalf of the entire Vater Family: Whether you recently thought about trying Vater sticks for the first time or have been using them for years, whether you're a sales rep for one of our distributors or stock our sticks in your store, whether you just played your first gig or have a platinum selling album, I'd like to thank ALL OF YOU for your support and interest in what we do here at Vater.

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Sincerely,
Alan J. Vater



Bebop Pioneer Stan Levey

Style and Analysis

by Steve Fidyk

MUSIC KEY	
C.C.	✱ R.C.
T.T.	✱
S.D.	✱
F.T.	✱
B.D.	✱
H.H.	✱
w/foot	

The great bebop trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie affectionately referred to Stan Levey as the “original original.” The two met in Philadelphia in the early 1940s, a time when many jazz musicians called this city home, including Gillespie, John Coltrane, Philly Joe Jones, Benny Golson, and the Heath brothers.

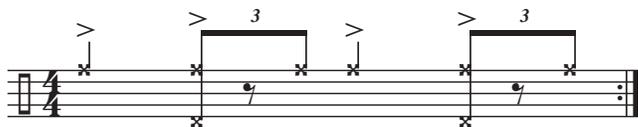
Levey (1926–2005) was born in Philadelphia and began playing drums at seven years old. He was a sturdy man and a former boxer. (His dad was a fight manager.) He also studied piano and arranging in high school, and at age sixteen was invited by Gillespie to join his working group at the Downbeat Club in Philadelphia. Shortly after the engagement ended, Gillespie moved to New York and encouraged Levey to do the same. The trumpeter recommended Levey to bassist Oscar Pettiford, and in no time Stan was working on 52nd Street with jazz legends such as Barney Bigard, Erroll Garner, Thelonious Monk, and Charlie Parker.

Like Max Roach, Levey was an essential figure in the progression and development of bebop. Unlike the swing music of the 1930s and '40s, bebop was designed for listeners instead of dancers. The tempos were often extremely fast, the harmonic progressions were more sophisticated, and the rhythmic feel was more “broken up” and less predictable. Listening to Levey on recordings, you hear a drummer who played for the musicians he accompanied. His approach to timekeeping was straight-ahead and uncluttered. His strengths were his articulate sound, his purposeful ideas, and the unique pulse that he provided in small and large ensemble settings.

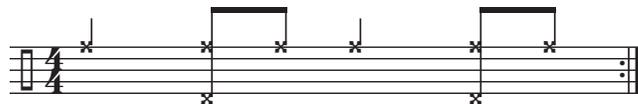
Swing Source

Levey's ride cymbal phrasing is reminiscent of Shelly Manne's. Levey's phrasing accents the quarter note for propulsion, and his interpretation of the beat itself has a wide spread with excellent articulation. Interestingly, both Manne and Levey worked with Stan Kenton's band (the former in the late '40s and the latter in the early '50s). Their wide cymbal beat might be an outgrowth of this shared musical experience, since the Kenton band had fifteen horns, was extremely loud, and required strength to help shepherd the horn players' time feel.

For a sample of Levey's ride cymbal phrasing, check out *Kenton Showcase: The Music of Bill Russo and Bill Holman*. Another excellent example can be heard on the live recording *Basin Street East Proudly Presents Miss Peggy Lee*, from 1961, which Levey cited as one of his all-time favorites.



Levey's up-tempo cymbal beat, which he was called upon to play on many occasions with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, was dynamically balanced and executed with a light touch.



Purposeful Selections

Two of my favorite recordings of Levey's are *The Arrival of Victor Feldman*, with bassist Scott LaFaro, and *For Musicians Only*, which features Gillespie, Stan Getz, and Sonny Stitt. On these recordings, Stan's drums are tensioned high and crisp, and his cymbals have a clean, articulate sound with an equal balance of high and low overtones. The drummer was right-handed, but he played left-handed, meaning he led with his left hand on the ride cymbal and used his right foot on the hi-hat.

For Musicians Only is a compilation of standards featuring tempos ranging from 260 to 350 bpm. Below are bass drum comping examples that Levey plays during the instrumental solos to help goose the time and break the physical tension.



On *The Arrival of Victor Feldman*, we get a true sense of how Levey colors an arrangement using the many sounds of the drumset. Case in point, during the A sections of the melody for “Serpent’s Tooth,” Levey plays time on the hi-hat and then transitions to the ride cymbal for the eight-measure bridge. He accompanies the bass solo on “Chasing Shadows” and the vibes solo on “Bebop” by playing the hi-hat stand on beats 2 and 4. On Chopin’s “Waltz” (transcription below), Stan carries the groove and the arrangement with brushes.

Classic Bebop Vocabulary

Levey’s solo work is closely related to patterns played by Max Roach, Roy Haynes, and Philly Joe Jones. Below are two examples from *The Arrival of Victor Feldman* that contain textbook bebop vocabulary.

♩ = 232 “Serpent’s Tooth”

(2:51)

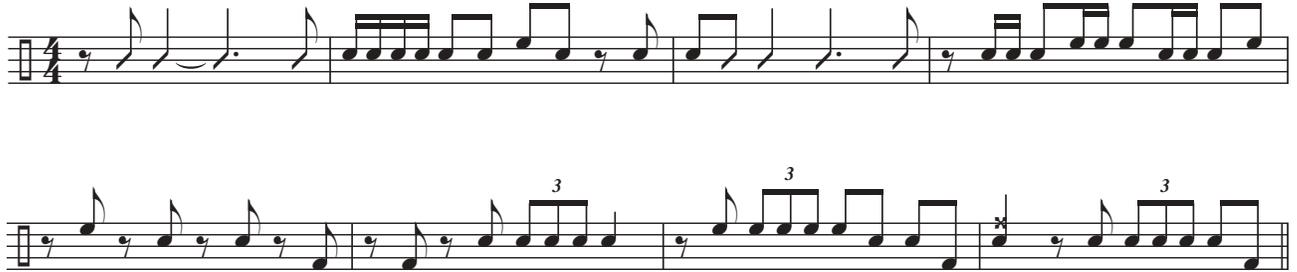
A

(2:59)

B

♩ = 168 "S'posin"

Ens. figures:



After touring with vocalists Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee, Levey became a mainstay in the Los Angeles recording studios and could be heard on more than 300 motion-picture soundtracks and 3,000 television shows, including weekly episodes of *Batman*, *The Munsters*, *Mission: Impossible*, and *Route 66*.

Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.



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The Commandments of the Half-Time Shuffle

Part 3: 10 Classic Tracks by Zoro



Welcome to the final installment of my three-part series on the half-time shuffle. I thought it would be fitting to end with some transcriptions of a handful of popular recordings. Immerse yourself in the music so that the grooves envelop you. This is the most crucial step to mastering any style.

Make sure you study not only the nuances and subtleties of each groove but also the fills and the way the drummers play the ensemble figures with the band. This is the key to playing the half-time shuffle authentically for each era of music represented. Let the songs motivate you to add new dimensions to your playing.

Most important, have fun! If you're not enjoying yourself when you're making music, then the people playing with you or listening to you won't enjoy themselves either. Like anything else in life, you'll always have more fun doing something that you do well, which is the reason to practice diligently. Once the hard work is done, you can enjoy the fruits of your labor and play with passion, purpose, and power.

I hope the information I've shared with you in this series educated, enlightened, and inspired you in some way. Perhaps it will give you a deeper love and appreciation for this great groove and act as a catalyst for further exploration. Happy shuffling!

Song: "Please Return Your Love to Me"

Artist: The Temptations

Album: *Live at the Copa* (1968)

Drums: "Stormin'" Norman Roberts

$\text{♩} = 85$

Verse groove

1A

Chorus/Outro groove

1B

Song: "Knucklehead"

Artist: Grover Washington Jr.

Album: *Feels So Good* (1975)

Drums: Jimmy Madison

$\text{♩} = 86$

Main groove

2A

Improv groove

2B

Song: "Down to Your Soul"

Artist: Tom Scott

Album: *Blow It Out* (1977)

Drums: Steve Gadd

$\text{♩} = 80$

3

Song: "Mama"
Artist: Toto
Album: *Hydra* (1979)
Drums: Jeff Porcaro

♩ = 78

4

Song: "Any Foolish Thing"
Artist: Michael McDonald
Album: *No Lookin' Back* (1985)
Drums: Jeff Porcaro

♩ = 69

5

Song: "Pamela"
Artist: Toto
Album: *The Seventh One* (1988)
Drums: Jeff Porcaro

♩ = 97

6

Song: "For Your Love"
Artist: Stevie Wonder
Album: *Conversation Peace* (1995)
Drums: programmed

♩ = 67

7

8

Song: "Jingle Bells"
Artist: James Taylor
Album: *At Christmas* (2006)
Drums: Vinnie Colaiuta

♩ = 60

8

Song: "Grapevine Fires"
Artist: Death Cab for Cutie
Album: *Narrow Stairs* (2008)
Drums: Jason McGerr

♩ = 62

9

Song: "Pretty Wings"
Artist: Maxwell
Album: *BLACKsummers'night* (2009)
Drums: Chris Dave

♩ = 57

10

Zoro is an award-winning drummer, author, educator, and motivational speaker. He has toured and recorded with Leroy Klevitz, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, Bobby Brown, New Edition, and others, and he teaches at Belmont University in Nashville. For more information, visit zorothedrummer.com. The contents of this article were adapted from *The Commandments of the Half-Time Shuffle* by the permission of Alfred Publishing. © 2013. All rights reserved.



Samba Songo

Hybrid Grooves Blending Classic Brazilian and Afro-Cuban Patterns

by Peter Magadini

MUSIC KEY

open	○	R.C.	Cowbell
H.H.	⊗		
F.T.	⊙		
S.D.	⊕		
F.T.	⊖		
B.D.	⊗		
H.H.	⊙		
w/foot	⊕		Ghost Note

The Afro-Cuban songo rhythm was created in the 1970s by the Cuban band Los Van Van and its drummer/percussionist José Luis Quintana, aka Changuito. After many years of studying and playing Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms myself, and participating in a festival in the city of Recife in northern Brazil (where samba had its beginnings), I realized one night, while experimenting with a samba pattern, that I had the makings of a hybrid groove, which I call samba songo.

We're going to take a look at two versions of the samba songo. Notice that the second groove has the ride cymbal playing quarter notes on the downbeats, just like it would in the basic Afro-Cuban songo. The first samba songo pattern, however, has quarter notes playing on the upbeats, which are the 8th notes that land between each beat. (On a personal note, I would like to acknowledge the influence of one of my former teachers, the Brazilian drummer Maguinho Alcantara.)

To begin, here's an example of the most common Afro-Cuban songo pattern.

1

The hi-hat foot can play on beats 2 and 4, beats 1 and 3, or all four. You can also play a 2-3 clave pattern for an additional layer of complexity.

2

Now let's drop in a samba surdo pattern on the bass drum while implying the songo phrasing with the hands. Start out very slowly (86 bpm), and work your way up to an up-tempo samba pace of 118 bpm.

3

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

4

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



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Solid Soloing

Part 2: Changing Note Rates

by James Murphy

MUSIC KEY

In this miniseries we're utilizing my "glue" method to gain freedom and flow while soloing. In the first installment we discussed how to connect two ideas without hesitation, using a specific sticking as a transition. In this article we're going to explore ways to apply different note rates to our glue stickings to get more mileage from each.

As discussed in the first part, we'll start with two different set ideas, which are patterns that can stand alone as fills and that have clearly defined start and end points. Then we'll determine our glue sticking, which is a predetermined pattern that can be looped repetitively, using different orchestrations and dynamics, to bridge the two set ideas. Next, we'll apply a new note rate to the glue sticking. Finally, we can utilize a structured practice routine to develop the muscle memory required to seamlessly transition between the set ideas and the glue sticking.

Set Idea #1

Set your metronome to 60 bpm (slower if needed). Play a 16th-note single-stroke roll on the snare. It's important to develop the note rate using a simple sticking, which strengthens your connection to the rate. Keep quarter notes with your foot on the hi-hat.

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

Apply a set-idea sticking pattern to the 16th notes. The foot continues to keep quarter notes on the hi-hat. (70 bpm)

R L R F F L R F

Apply some dynamics and a voicing to the set idea (still phrased as 16th notes). The foot continues to keep quarter notes on the hi-hat. The voicing pattern should incorporate different parts of the drumset (snare, floor tom, etc). To develop muscle memory, it's important to maintain consistency with the chosen dynamic and voicing for the set pattern throughout the exercise.

R L R F F L R F

Condense the set idea from a looped pattern to a two-beat fill. Keep quarter notes with your foot on the hi-hat. This step is important for developing a clear distinction between your glue stickings and set ideas. Set ideas resolve (crash on 1), while glue stickings do not. (90 bpm)

R L R F F L R F

Set Idea #2

Play a 16th-note-triplet single-stroke roll on the snare. Keep quarter notes with your foot on the hi-hat. (60 bpm)

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

Apply a sticking pattern to the 16th-note triplets. Continue to play quarter notes with your foot on the hi-hat. (70 bpm)

R L R L F F R L R F F L

Apply dynamics and a voicing to the set idea. The foot continues to keep quarter notes on the hi-hat. Remember to keep the dynamic and voicing patterns consistent to develop muscle memory.

R L R L F F R L R F F L

Condense the set idea to a two-beat fill. Keep quarter notes with your foot on the hi-hat. (90 bpm)

R L R L F F R L R F F L

Glue Sticking

Play a 16th-note single-stroke roll on the snare. Keep quarter notes with your foot on the hi-hat. (60 bpm)

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

Apply a glue sticking to the 16th notes that incorporates the kick and snare. The foot continues to play quarter notes on the hi-hat. (70 bpm)

2

R L L F R L L F

Apply some dynamics and a voicing to the glue sticking. For now, keep the pattern consistent throughout the exercise to develop muscle memory. There are multiple options for this step, so be sure to develop them separately.

3

R L L F R L L F

Let's apply the glue sticking to the new note rate: 16th-note triplets. Here's one voicing.

4

R L L F R L L F R L L F R L L F R L L F

Practice Routine

Now it's time to put it all together. The following practice routine is designed to help you create a seamless transition between set ideas using multiple note rates with the glue sticking.

Set your metronome to 100 bpm (slower if needed). Play one bar of set idea #1 as 16th notes, and then transition into one bar of the glue sticking as 16th notes. Then play one bar of the glue sticking as 16th-note triplets, followed by set idea #2 as 16th-note triplets. After that, play one bar of the glue sticking as 16th-note triplets and then one bar of the glue sticking as 16th notes.

Loop the sequence to develop muscle memory, and increase the tempo each time to challenge yourself. Keep the dynamics and voicings consistent with what you did in the earlier steps.

Set Idea #1:	Glue Sticking: 16th notes	Glue Sticking: 16th-note triplets
R L R F F L R F	R L L F R L L F	R L L F R L L F R L L F
Set Idea #2:	Glue Sticking: 16th-note triplets	Glue Sticking: 16th notes
R L R L F F R L R F F L	R L L F R L L F R L L F	R L L F R L L F

The more glue stickings and set ideas you have ingrained in your muscle memory, the greater your ability to mix, match, and connect ideas spontaneously and seamlessly while soloing. Have fun!

James Murphy is an assistant professor at the Berklee College of Music and a drumset player for the Blue Man Group in Boston. He also gives online drum lessons at peaceanddrums.com.



Where's the Art?

Thoughts on the Current State of Affairs

by Russ Miller



I thought I would throw myself right into the fire for the New Year with a heated topic. I've experienced a lot of discussion regarding the artistry in music and drumming in recent years. I think every generation goes through a "What is happening with music?" phase. But in the past decade or so, we've seen an almost unprecedented decline in artistry in popular music.

I'm defining artistry as the effective use of the four key elements of music: rhythm, harmony, melody, and, often, lyrics. We've been hearing music that's lacking in several of these components. Some of the most popular songs today are literally void of harmony, with minimal to no chord changes. Also, the lyrics are questionable, leaning toward the remedial and profane. Rhythmically—our main concern—we hear mostly machines looping four-on-the-floor house/disco-style beats with little syncopation. I've gone to see

"Art is a step from what is obvious and well known toward what is arcane and concealed."

—Khalil Gibran

friends, who are great drummers, on tour, where they're barely audible in the front-of-house mix, overshadowed by backing tracks playing the core drum parts. The live drummer is there merely to add to the spectacle of the show.

The entertainment aspect of the business is nothing new, but it seems to have taken over the music scene. We can't fix the entire industry, but we are responsible for our contribution: the drumming and rhythmic foundation. I can remember only one other time where machines all but devastated the role of the drummer, and that was the mid-1980s. Back then, machines were brand new, and anything that's new will often get overused and misused.

Drummers responded to the machines by creating sample-like tones on the kit (like Terry Bozzio's stacked cymbals) and by utilizing electronic drums (the original Simmons kits). Players worked on their timekeeping to compete with the now perfectly quantized parts played by the machines. Drummers were forced to step it up in terms of playing.

This brings me to my main point for this column: It seems that the drumming world has rebelled from the challenges in the current music scene. I hear more music being performed with machines than ever, such as in the current burst of EDM (electronic dance music), yet I see fewer drummers using electronic gear. Also, it seems that more and more drummers are concerned with honing skills that have very little, if nothing at all, to do with the current developments in music. It's as if drummers have decided, "Whatever. I'm just going to practice cool drum stuff and have fun playing, because there's so little opportunity to play music nowadays."

So, our dilemma: Do we rise up and compete with what's

current and expected in the music business? Or do we widen this divide between popular drumming and what's required in popular music? Many drummers seem to be more concerned with playing a cool solo on YouTube than getting a gig and doing records, sessions, and tours. I'm sure music hasn't leaned in this current direction because of a lack of artistic contributions by drummers. It's most likely due to technology enabling people with a lack of musical depth to be involved in the scene. But the outcome is still less opportunity for drummers. Do we take off in another direction?

I recently had a phone conversation with the great jazz drummer (and originator of this column) Roy Burns. He said, "Drummers spend 95 percent of their time working on things they use 5 percent of the time." This couldn't be truer than it is right now. I see drummers every day who can play amazing chops around the toms, blaze double bass licks, and spin their sticks like magicians. Yet these players can't play a solid, nice-feeling beat. Or they can't play with brushes, play quietly, be effective in several genres, compose a musical solo, or swing. These are the fundamental skills of our job, but it seems that many of us have begun to lose sight of what we're trying to do.

I've never met a drummer who, when asked why he or she started playing drums, answered, "Because I would love to get a lot of hits on YouTube." They all say they want to play in a band, do records and tours, and so on. Yet these same players don't spend even 20 percent of their time working on learning grooves, playing with a click track, building effective dynamics, developing a strong pulse, getting their electronic tones together, or dealing with the other key ingredients to achieving a successful musical career.

I love all of the "drummy" stuff, but if you look back at the lineage of our instrument, you'll see a much different approach. Papa Jo Jones was an excellent showman! Watch some clips. He had great crossovers (he used a second floor tom to the left of the hi-hat), and he did a lot of stick flips and twirls. But he was also one of the pioneers of swing, a top brush player, and a star with the biggest musical acts of the day. He was a flat-out amazing musician. Buddy Rich was a great showman as well, yet he's arguably one of the best musicians and surely the top drummer in history. Later on, Keith Moon was a visual spectacle, but he was also a fantastic rock drummer. He played great parts with the Who and was one of the originators of busy yet musical drumming. The '80s had players like Tommy Aldridge, who's a wonderful soloist and stick-twirl master. He also has a deep pocket and played on some of the biggest rock recordings, with artists like Ozzy Osbourne and Whitesnake.

I could go on and on about amazing musicians who were also great drummers. We need to make sure that we bake our cake before we put the icing on top. So the real questions for today's "karaoke band" situation are: Did the artist show up with all this stuff programmed and tell the drummer, "Just play under the tracks"? Or did the drummer play too much, so the artist resorted to using loops to stabilize the rhythmic foundation of the songs? This may have happened during the production of the record. Artists might say, "Let's just program it," because they either don't

have the musical depth to understand why they'd want to use a great drummer on the track or they don't think live drums can provide the tones they want.

It's our job to educate the world that the drummer can do these things. Maybe it's about having a great-sounding and effective electronics rig that can compete with what those guys are programming. Of course, it's definitely about showing people that a good live drummer's groove is far superior to that of the machines.

This puts a spotlight on the fundamentals of the drummer's role. Do you have the right sounds for the music? Are you up to date in terms of gear? Are you a dominating presence when it comes to playing in the pocket, so that the artist wouldn't think about programming the drums on the record? I'm as guilty as anybody of missing the mark at different times in my life. I love drums, and they are my life's work. And I love seeing amazing facility on the instrument—it's inspiring. But we need to make sure that we're covering the core requirements of what drums need to do in music. If we don't, we don't work. And we have nobody to blame but ourselves.

Find out what you're missing. Don't be the guy who can play double kick flurries at 300 bpm but can't play a solid shuffle beat. If you're in a very distinctive band situation that demands only a

certain thing, fine—provide that at its highest level. If not, you need to be a well-rounded musician with the tools to play a lot of things with a lot of different people.

There's a quote by the poet/philosopher Khalil Gibran that makes it clear. To paraphrase, "Art begins where the obvious stops." Everybody can see that playing drums really fast or flashy is cool. When you turn drumming into a sporting event, it's easier to compare players. But very little of that leads to doing what most of us want to do, which is to play great music.

The artistry of our craft lies in what's not so obvious. When moments happen that feature the drums because that's demanded by the music, it's much more effective. Look at the classic drum parts that have affected you through the years. I'm willing to bet that the ones that really mean the most to you came from hearing them as a part of some awesome music that you love.

To sum up, don't count on the obvious things to draw attention to yourself. The art begins where the obvious ends.

Russ Miller has played on recordings with combined sales of more than 26 million copies. His versatility has led him to work with a wide range of artists, including Ray Charles, Tina Turner, Nelly Furtado, and Andrea Bocelli. For more info, visit russmiller.com.



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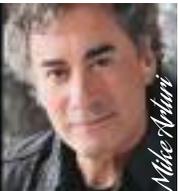
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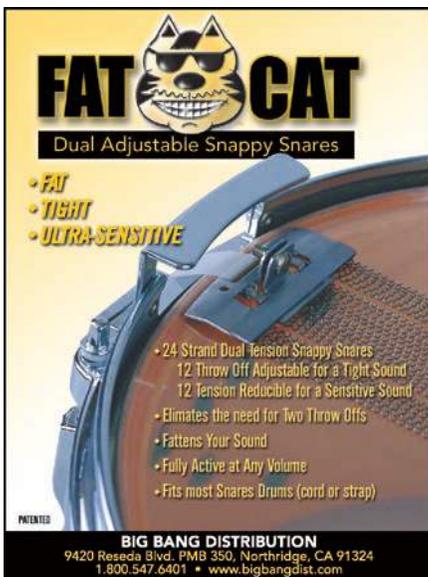
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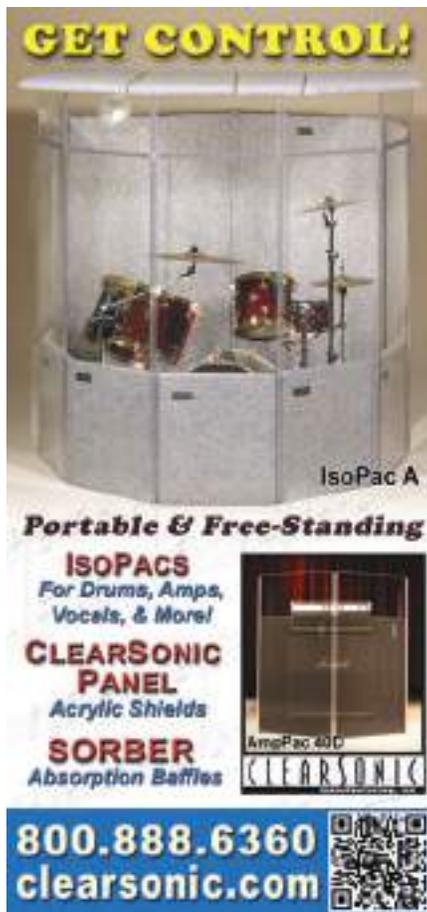


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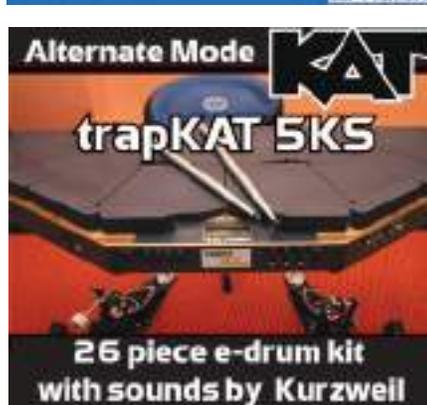
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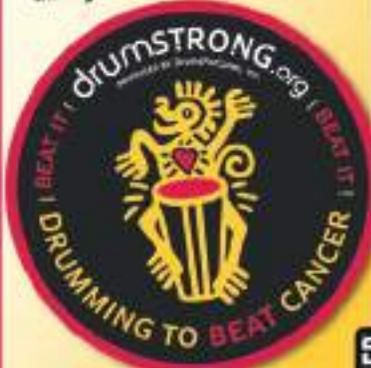
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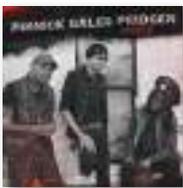
CRITIQUE



Steve Khan *Subtext*

Close listening is rewarded on this chill-jazz affair, where a master of sparks speaks quietly but still carries a big stick.

Latin-jazz flavors abound on this new offering from guitarist Steve Khan, who's wise enough to employ the services of a real-deal cast including bassist Rubén Rodríguez and percussionists **Marc Quiñones** and **Bobby Allende**. But it's the presence of longtime collaborator **Dennis Chambers**, fresh off an extended stint as Santana's drummer, that nudges the music beyond subdued smooth-guitar territory. Chambers treads carefully throughout the album, keeping his famous megachops in check, but still adds vital elements. On "Baraka Sasa" he lays down a tight backbeat foundation, syncing his kick and snare just enough that the music lilts. Chambers approaches "Never Let Me Go" with silky brushes, and applies a perfectly placed open hi-hat downbeat accent on "Bird Food." The crystal-clear recording brings all these subtleties into high relief. And those who are eternally hungry for some solo sparks from Dennis will be satiated—somewhat—by "Bait and Switch," where the master breaks up the time on an outro vamp that fades all too soon. (Tone Center) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Pinnick Gales Pridgen *PGP 2*

Following closely on the heels of its impressive 2013 debut, the supergroup returns with more monolithic riffs and melodic fervor.

PGP's sophomore disc is no letdown. Bassist dUg Pinnick has been bringing the heavy for years with King's X, and he and guitarist Eric Gales form a natural tandem on a variety of bluesy hard-rock tunes that could sound trite in lesser hands. It's the assured playing of **Thomas Pridgen**, though, that kicks things into a higher gear. On "Psychofunkadelic Blues," the drummer rides his crash with ferocity before unloading all manner of 32nd-note-triplet barrages and some kick-and-snare fill combinations that blow your head back. Check out the offbeat bass drum pattern on the 6/4 intro of "Build It Back Up" and the Mars Volta–like flurry of notes over the final guitar solo in "The Past Is the Past." Pridgen's youthful power and old-school veteran punch make *PGP 2* a solid listen. (Magna Carta) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Earthless Meets Heavy Blanket

In a Dutch Haze

Sometimes you just have to keep a heavy groove going...and going...and going....

Fans of punk and hardcore from the '90s onward might recall **Mario Rubalcaba's** drumming in Klikatát Ikatowi, Rocket From

the Crypt, the Black Heart Procession, Hot Snakes, and Off!, but his current heavy-psych project Earthless has been a freeing outlet since its 2001 formation. During the 2012 Roadburn Festival in the Netherlands, Rubalcaba and Earthless bassist Mike Eginton teamed up with Dinosaur Jr. offshoot Heavy Blanket for a one-shot live set, and the resulting single track is called "Paradise in a Purple Sky." This is a fifty-eight-minute hard-psych journey, and aside from the four-minute introduction featuring guitar wizards J. Mascis and Graham Clise slowly wading into a doomy riff, the music does not relent for four album sides. The six-string brilliance of Mascis is well documented in perennial greatest-guitarist lists, and he absolutely rips it on this set, but Rubalcaba plays a worthy foil, with the confidence of Dave Grohl on *Songs for the Deaf* and the swing of a young Bill Ward. The foursome conjures influences like Hawkwind, Flower Travellin' Band, and all of your favorite up-tempo guitar breaks from the early Black Sabbath catalog, but extended heavily in every sense of the word. (Outer Battery/Roadburn) **Stephen Bidwell**

The Melvins *Hold It In*

These guys are aces at bringing the heat, but they also throw a wicked curveball.

Pairing some of the Melvins' lighter, breezier songs with some of their absolute heaviest, *Hold It In* opens with a dark, riff-based bone crusher, then quickly switches to a sunny rocker with a sparkling melody. You can just hear the kicks that frontman Buzz Osborne and drummer **Dale Crover** got with Butthole Surfers guitarist Paul Leary and bassist JD Pinkus as they worked up the mischievously eclectic material for their latest lineup. Leary writes and sings three songs, giving Crover different vibes to work with; along the way Dale seems to revel in his love of old pop ("You Can Make Me Wait"), early-glam-rock tom shuffles ("Eyes on You"), and Carl Perkins–type jangle ("I Get Along"). When he brings it down *hard* on "Onions Make the Milk Taste Bad," Crover toys with the beat placement, with thick but round drum sounds. More presto-change-o Melvins magic that might endure as some of their best. (Ipecac) **Michael Parillo**



Boss the Tweed *Reclamation*

Atlanta rock vets convene on a world-class retro-tinged collection.

Elements of old-school funk, pop, and rock collide in a beautiful amalgam on the six-song *Reclamation*, with the soulful fatback grooves of drummer/engineer/producer **Sean O'Rourke** leading the charge. The opening track, "My Million Tears," which showcases O'Rourke's slinky half-time shuffle, is one of several funky, guitar-driven tracks here that are reminiscent of classic Little Feat material. Meanwhile, straight-up funk tunes like "Can I Take You to the Movies" and "Cocoon" showcase the band's ability to channel Earth, Wind and Fire, and O'Rourke perfectly nails the pocket on both. "Life Is Coming Down on My Head," reminiscent in more than one way of Eagles guitarist Joe Walsh's solo work, finds the drummer finessing a classic mid-tempo pop-rock groove. And the swampy closer, "The Hard Way," gives hints of O'Rourke's session savvy, as Sean delivers a positively unwavering powerhouse backbeat. Across the board, Boss the Tweed captures the mood of late-'70s/early-'80s pop-rock so authentically, you might wish every new record sounded like this. (cdbaby.com)

Mike Haid



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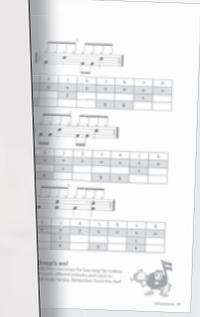
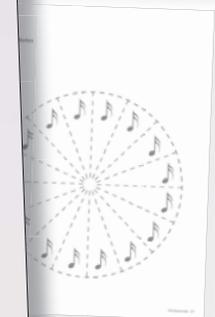
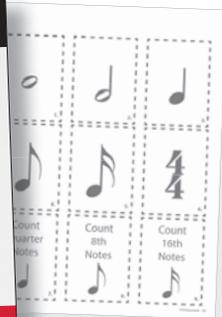
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Xerxes *Collision Blonde*

The Internet would have you believe that if there's a post-hardcore band in Louisville, Kentucky, Ben Sears probably plays drums in it.

In addition to the groups Black God, Whips/Chains, Mountain Asleep, and Prideswallower, among others, you can hear **Ben Sears** percussing mightily on Xerxes' second full-length, *Collision Blonde*. Xerxes stands out from other like-minded groups with guitar tones that harken back to the late-'80s American hardcore of Black Flag or Dag Nasty and the dark grooves of British post-punk groups like Bauhaus or Joy Division. Sears is a rock throughout—precise and economical in his choice of fills. And his dry drum sounds, mixed within the sinister mood conjured by the guitars and intentionally discomforting vocals, serve Xerxes' sound ideally. The moody

monologue and 7/4 groove of "(but here we are)," which could be heard as an homage to Louisville post-rock godfathers Slint, provide a prime opportunity for Sears to command and control. By the time we reach the churning closer, "Nosedive," the whole band, and perhaps the listener as well, reaches some level of catharsis. (No Sleep) **Stephen Bidwell**



Funky Souls

Sweet soul music never grows old, when the groovers at the back get it.

Two recent releases make the case.

Mike Mattison is the voice of Southern soulsters Scrapomatic and the Tedeschi Trucks Band, and TTB drummer **Tyler**

Greenwell provides perfect accompaniment on the singer's solo debut, *You Can't Fight Love*. That means sometimes the drums aren't



heard as much as felt, and sometimes there's a tom where a snare might be expected. To Greenwell, a purposeful open hi-hat smack is a fill, and there's similar conviction in his light touch on brushes. It's the classic formula of Motown and Stax, and Greenwell has climbed the jam-band ranks by sticking with that recipe while adding infectious energy. (Landslide)

Drummer **Chip Vayenas** of the Austin-based Mingo Fishtrap has also learned his lessons from soul and funk greats like Bernard Purdie and David Garibaldi. This

tower of Texas power never rushes on the band's fourth release, *On Time*, laying into a double-time rimclick on "End of the World," setting up the horn-laced turnarounds on "Sugadoo," sitting precisely in the pocket on the joyous "Mason Jar," and leaning way back in it during the piano solo on "Silver Lining." Without calling undue attention to himself, Vayenas *shapes* the music. (Blue Corn) **Robin Tolleason**



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The Gladstone Technique

by Morris "Arnie" Lang

Remember those old kung fu movies where a master of deep wisdom rigorously instructs a young disciple on a seemingly simple task? The tutelage, of course, opens worlds. With this DVD you may find your own grandmaster in Morris "Arnie" Lang, the renowned educator and esteemed forty-year percussionist for the New York Philharmonic. A former student of the late, legendary Billy Gladstone, Lang is an authority on the oft-misunderstood Gladstone technique. If you're searching for videos of blazing kit solos, look elsewhere; this is a decidedly more low-key affair. Lang delivers extensive discourses on physical and mental concepts, including "the three parts of the stroke," and often demonstrates with simple repeated quarter notes on a pad or even with solitary strokes. The ultimate goal is improved control and, more important, physical efficiency. Patience, patience, young masters to be. (\$14.99, Hudson Music) **Jeff Potter**



Melodic Motion Studies for Drumset

by Jeff Salisbury

Melodic Motion Studies will open the ears and minds of a lot of drummers. It's very scientific—in an easy-to-understand linear format—and practical for those looking for new fill ideas and ways to add spice and dynamics to grooves. The stickings offer different sonic options, but by exploring ranges of motion—lateral, circular, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and X-shaped—drummers will find that their visual cognition is also greatly enhanced. Salisbury's chapter on paradiddle inversions on multiple sound sources, which he calls "outsourcing of the paradiddle," is a gas. Familiar stickings are given new life on the different surfaces. The accompanying audio is available online, and Salisbury offers two well-played examples of each exercise, one slow and one with the throttle on, at concert level. The recording allows you to hear the different tones clearly. (\$16.99, Hal Leonard) **Robin Tolleson**



Big Band Drumming Fill-osophy

by Steve Fidyk and Dave Black

This method book/CD delves deeply into the hows and whys of big band drumming fills, making it an effective tool to help students interpret and execute setup figures that frame solo entrances and changing compositional sections. The book is conveniently divided into two parts: one introducing primer fill examples for swing, funk, and Latin styles, and the other providing fills in context, extracted from big band arrangements. There's emphasis on "target points" (beat 1, the "&" of 4, etc.), so students don't only feel that they're practicing fills for flashiness but rather see where they're going within a piece. Articulation, clarity, dynamics, and shout-chorus solos are also covered, and the accompanying MP3 CD has well-recorded and looped examples of solo drums, full-band tracks, and band-minus-drums selections. A fairly well-developed concept of swing and technical facility are recommended before you dive in. (\$21.99, Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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2014 DCI World Championship Results

“Sweet sixteen” for the Blue Devils



Capping an undefeated season, the Blue Devils, from Concord, California, won their sixteenth title on August 9 as the Drum Corps International World Championships returned to Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis for the sixth consecutive year. In addition to winning more titles than any other corps, the Blue Devils broke the record high score by half a point (earning a 99.65). The group’s program, “Felliniesque,” celebrated the Italian director Federico Fellini, with music from movies such as his *La Strada* and from Broadway’s *Nine*, a musical based on his film *8½*.

“We did a lot of Italian music, which is very different for us,” says Scott Johnson, director of percussion for the Blue Devils, who has been involved with all sixteen championships, including three as a marching member (1976, 1977, and 1979) before joining the staff. “We always try to think outside the box to put together a show that’s entertaining and challenging for the performers. Sometimes the judges like it, sometimes they don’t. This year I think we picked some music that was a little bit more accessible than in the past.

“During our warm-up,” Johnson continues, “we try to get everyone prepared mentally as well as physically. We have exercises to warm up the drumming muscles as well as the visual ones. Then it’s all about fine-tuning the brain so they’re



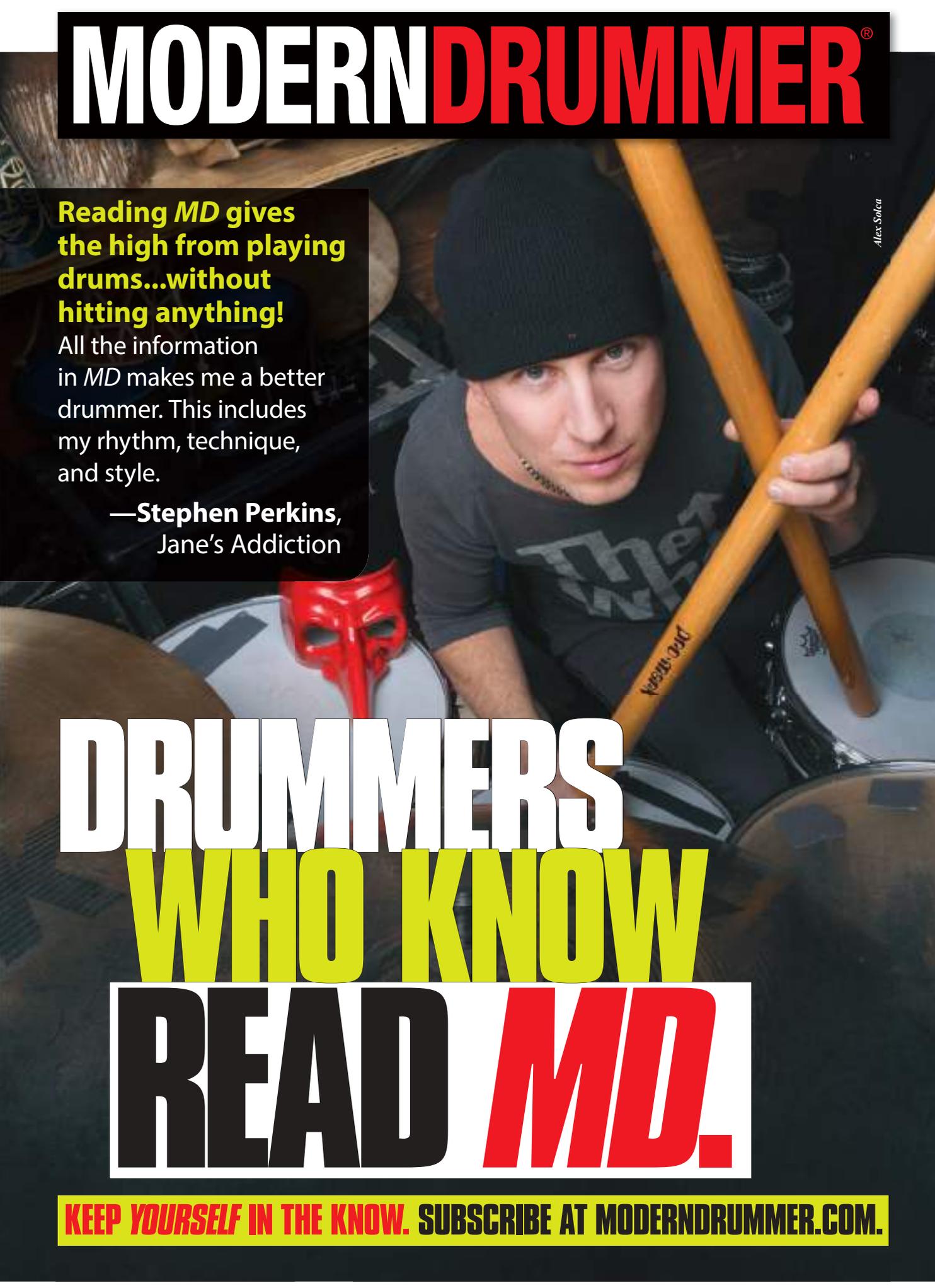
ready for the performance.”

Any tips for drummers dreaming of being a Blue Devil? “We’re metronome fanatics!” Johnson says with a laugh. “We do every exercise and every piece of music by the ‘met.’ Master an exercise at a certain tempo, then crank it up a little bit and master it again.”

One of the Devils’ percussion features was the snare line climbing on a platform and showing off their chops. “They got to play a lot of cool beats and tricks, ending with a stick flip under the leg,” Johnson explains, “which everybody caught. It was a good night.”

Fourth-place Santa Clara Vanguard, from Santa Clara, California,

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Rookie Dillan Bailard, the twenty-year-old drumset player in the Blue Devils' front ensemble, won the title of Best Individual Multi-Percussion. His original solo, "La Quinta Shuffle," named after his California hometown, featured a remix of a *Hunger Games* melody on crotales in addition to an outstanding performance on the kit.

Santa Clara Vanguard



For the second year, a DrumLine Battle was held in the streets of downtown Indy during championship week. Portland's Oregon Crusaders won the World Class division and the overall "Battle of Georgia Street" championship.

Paul Rennick (center) warms up the Santa Clara Vanguard snare line in the parking lot at a drum corps show in Denton, Texas, last July, as part of DCI's annual tour that brings contests to thirty-seven states across the country during the summer months.

captured its eleventh "high drum" trophy, the group's first with percussion arranger, composer, and caption manager Paul Rennick, who won Fred Sanford Best Percussion Performance awards with the Phantom Regiment in 2006, 2008, and 2010. "I'm also the music coordinator," Rennick says, "so I tried to have a good balance of percussion exposure throughout the show. We let loose a little and played more aggressively."

SCV's program was based on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. "I listened to a lot of Middle Eastern music," Rennick explains, "and noticed that much of it is at different tempos than what we commonly need for drum corps. So I figured out an odd-metered scheme that captured the ethnic style but also had the tempo we could still march to. Plus it incorporated an entire palette of world percussion underneath. We used that part of the show as a vehicle to expose different areas and different strengths."

Rennick compares the popular parking-lot warm-ups before

the show to baking a cake. "The timing is really important—you don't want to overcook things," he says. "There can be 200 people with digital cameras, so it's a high-profile situation. It's easy for the players to get their adrenaline pumped up for that, but you don't want to emotionally spend everything in the lot. I'm very conscious to keep that under control."

Rennick prefers short, fundamental warm-ups. "Before the shows," he explains, "we use fifteen to twenty exercises in the parking lot, progressing from more rebounded to more controlled, easier to more difficult. We have them concentrate intensely for short periods of time. That helps us be prepared." Rennick also emphasizes the importance of tuning the drums before each performance, citing the most practical of reasons. "I believe that good-sounding instruments are easier to play on," he says.

Text and photos by Lauren Vogel Weiss



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Holiday Cheer



“It’s been three years since my family and I moved to the U.S., all the way from the Philippines,” says Narciso Linsangan Jr., who now lives in Williamston, North Carolina. “I had been playing drums with a local band and managing a recording studio at the same time. I left my kit and all my gear back home.

“After a while,” Linsangan continues, “I was able to get a good deal on this beautiful Tama Superstar on eBay. In 2012, for our second Christmas in North Carolina, missing the festive way of decorating things around the house, we decided to set up a Christmas tree made up of my newly acquired, slightly used

drumkit. It turned out to be a wonderful family affair where my wife, Rose, and my five-year-old son, Aren, had a blast putting decorations like garlands, bows, and lights around our drum tree. We loved the idea of taking down the drums and assembling them into another bit of Christmas home décor in 2013, standing tall in the corner of our living room as a snow(drum)man.

“It’s becoming a family tradition that keeps us together,” Linsangan adds. “Surely each year these drums will transform into yet another holiday ornament in our house that the whole family will enjoy.”

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitothmonth@moderndrummer.com. Show “Kit of the Month” in the subject line.



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