

2015 READERS POLL RESULTS

# MODERN DRUMMER

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NERVE'S

# JOJO MAYER SHAKES THINGS UP

LED ZEPPELIN'S PHYSICAL GRAFFITI

10 DRUMMER AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

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# Steve Gadd, Zoomed In

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## PERFECTION IS OVERRATED

I don't know anybody who's perfect. You go out there and do your best. And if you don't nail it, then you go out the next day and you try to get it right. That's really all you can do.

## NO SHOWING OFF

Instead of driving the music with this need to show off, I've learned to let the music dictate what I need to do. You have to really listen in order to do that.

## SEEK INSPIRATION

Originally you're inspired by hearing someone else doing something, and then taking it home and trying to learn how to do it. When I was growing up I would get records of Philly Joe, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and guys like that, and slow the records down and work out what they were playing, and then work on it and put my own feel to it. That's how we all learn.

## BUT BE ORIGINAL

You can't be a copy of somebody else, no matter how hard you try. It's impossible. I've seen people try to copy licks and get them exact, and I can tell they're not playing in a way that's natural or comfortable. That's not what music is all about. You have to develop your own bag of tricks. The worst thing in the world you can do is let your enthusiasm for somebody else's work stifle your own creativity.

## GET IN THE GROOVE

I've seen so many drummers who have chops and technique that would make your jaw drop to the floor. People are doing some really incredible things. To me, though, I find it just as inspiring on a whole different level when I see somebody who can play a groove and get inside it and make me tap my toes. If you can get people tapping their toes, that's it – you're playing music.



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## On the Cover 48 Jojo Mayer

by Adam Budofsky

"As I exposed myself to programmed music, I became more aware of the contrasts between electronic media and real-time playing. I understood that this is something that we should cultivate." And cultivate he did, with startling results. A new live recording with Nerve shows just how far Mayer has come, while his second educational DVD continues his quest to help the rest of us improve our own game.

Cover and contents photos by Rahav Segev



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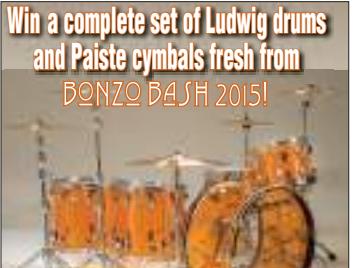
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# No Beats Prohibited

Now and then in the mid-to-late '90s, I'd check out Jojo Mayer's Prohibited Beatz electronica dance parties at downtown New York City clubs like Izzy Bar on First Avenue. As drum 'n' bass was emerging as a legitimate musical style, I was skeptical. First of all, I felt threatened when a close friend bought a guitar synth unit and began dividing his time between the fairly traditional two-guitars-bass-and-drums group we had going and a new electronica trio that he led. He and I were influenced by the Beatles and Stones, the Dead and Phish, Coltrane and Miles, even Balinese and Indian music—why would my man *ever* want to play stuff that sounded like cranking gears set to the whooshing drone of the Death Star powering down?

Plus, I was a drummer, and everything I loved about my instrument was tied to its humanity, its breathing flow. The notion of programming a beat so fast that it sounded utterly mechanical—let alone actually playing that way at the kit—was beyond me. I'd been hit by the Elvin Jones tidal wave just a few years before, and I was still brushing myself off and trying to make sense of the ocean I'd found myself swimming in. Although I immediately liked the starting, stopping, and reshuffling of the beat components in drum 'n' bass, I remember thinking, *This would sound much better slow.*

And then I was talked into seeing Jojo live. The gateway drug. It would be disingenuous for me to say that afterward I snapped up the Aphex Twin catalog and started following the Chemical Brothers on tour, but I finally understood the visceral power of electronic music and its effect on a dancing audience. The trance element made sense immediately, for one thing. Of course, it helped that I was watching a truly singular drummer beating the crap out of a large number of small drums and cymbals. The air was *moving* in those rooms.

Mayer was, and remains, a strong figure, an evangelist for a fresh way of playing—a fresh way of thinking. Prohibited Beatz events crackled with the excitement of the new. This guy was a magician (literally, I later realized) who could sit down and turn himself into a machine.

A testament to Jojo's cutting-edge artistry is the fact that he doesn't play that way anymore. He's still a futurist. But drum 'n' bass is no longer the future, so Mayer has moved on, and loosened up. At the Manhattan release party for his new DVD, *Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer, Part II*, he played with more groove, more swing, more airiness than in those old days at Izzy Bar. Although he was still the same guy as always, with many of the same tools, he allowed things like his jazz influence to seep into his playing a bit. His band, Nerve, no doubt remains a purveyor of electronica; it's just that Jojo has found so many things over the years to add to the conversation. In his quest for ideas, he's discovered lots of gems, and he's brought them back to share with all of us, regardless of the type of music we play and the type of music we enjoy.



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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.

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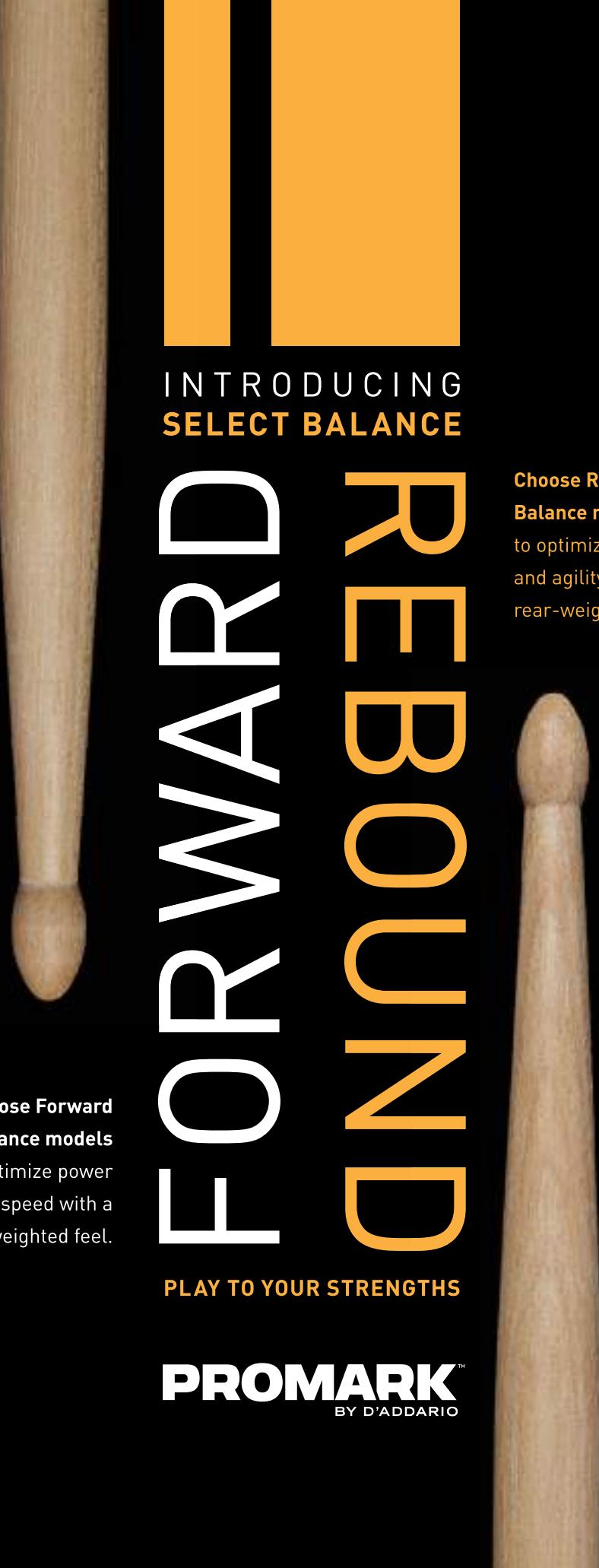
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## READERS' PLATFORM

### Gregg Bissonette

Thanks for your December cover story on Gregg Bissonette. Here's my personal experience with Gregg in 1991 and how it inspired me when I wanted to stop playing drums.

It started with a dream. I was in the forest with Gregg Bissonette. We were playing, jamming on a fallen tree trunk. It was one of those vivid dreams that stick with you all your life. A few weeks after the dream, it was announced that Just Drums in Toronto, owned by Dave Hamilton, was organizing a Canadian drum contest hosted by Gregg. I had a really good feeling about it, so I sent a solo I was playing in my college big band. I won the contest in my category, and at the end, after Gregg's clinic, I got the unbelievable chance to perform with him.

He was so reassuring, as a friend would be, with that charismatic smile of his. He said, "Okay, we'll play sixteen bars of rock, we'll do solos, then we'll play the 2:3 clave and move to songo," etc. It went beautifully—no tension for ten minutes that went so quick!

After my solo, two words were said to me by Gregg: "Very inspiring." At the time I was discouraged and exhausted, and I didn't understand how he could have been inspired by my playing, so I didn't give much attention to those words. I was tired of drumming (eight to ten hours a day at the college, mostly alone all the time, no serious contacts to start making a living), and I was at the point of leaving music.

Long story short, I went and did the contest, then stopped playing/practicing to study in another area. But I started learning hand percussion, which is now a big part of my musical life. Constant evolution, as Gregg says. I can say now that those two kind words brought me back on the music tracks and kept me open to all the great life and music experiences I wouldn't have considered going for, including studying and playing in a duo with the great Clayton Cameron—me on the Indian tabla!

Thank you, Gregg, for your inspiration, your great vibe, and your contagious constant evolution. Continue your quality work, *MD*. So inspiring!

Bertil Schulrabe



### Back on Board

I was thrilled to see Mark Guiliana on the November 2014 cover, so I picked up the issue. Thrilled again to see Gregg Bissonette. Bought that one too. Then Dave Weckl. Got it. And then Greg Morrow in the following edition, plus three from King Crimson!

Well, no more fooling around—I've re-upped my subscription. Thanks for being so great a magazine in all your departments, and for being a glue to the drumming community.

John Dickey

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## Elvin Jones–Style Triplet Fills

John Xepoleas demonstrates ways to create high-energy Elvin Jones-type triplet fills based on common rhythmic phrases, bringing to life the examples in this month's Jazz Drummer's Workshop column.

Aldo Mauro

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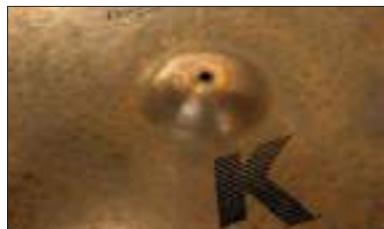
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### Strictly Technique

Shed the pataflafla with Bill Bachman.

### Electronic Insights

Four-mic recording with John Emrich.

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# NEWS

## Sabian Announces New Roles for Artist Relations Team

Sabian has appointed Chris Stankee as global artist relations director and Christian Koch as international artist relations manager. Stankee, a Berklee grad with twenty years of music industry experience in retail, teaching, and performing, is responsible for all aspects of the company's artist program worldwide, including recruitment, development, and service. He also plays a key role in product development and in Sabian's social media. Koch, a winner of the Vic Firth Award and an advisor to the drumming legends Dave Weckl and Jojo Mayer, among others, is responsible for recruitment, servicing, and developing the Sabian international roster. He also has a hand in product development and is a regular content contributor to social media and global marketing activities.

In other Sabian news, sales and distribution of the company's cymbals and accessories in Canada are now handled exclusively by a brand-new inside sales team based in Meductic, New Brunswick. In addition, Sabian's director of education, Nick



Chris Stankee



Christian Koch

Petrella, has been awarded the Percussive Arts Society's President's Industry Award, which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in their field and in support of the society. Petrella is the first Sabian recipient of the award since company founder Robert Zildjian was recognized in 1996.

## Drum Workshop Purchases Percussion Companies

Drum Workshop and Fender Musical Instruments have finalized an asset sale agreement to purchase owned and licensed percussion brands from Fender's KMC subsidiary, including Latin Percussion, Toca Percussion, Gretsch Drums, Gibraltar Hardware, and KAT Percussion. Ovation Guitars and exclusive U.S. distribution rights for Sabian Cymbals are also included in the transaction. DW's manufacturing operations will remain in California, while Gretsch drum production will continue in South Carolina and LP's offices will stay in New Jersey.



## Popular Branson Drummer Chuck Landry Passes

Chuck Landry, who performed with Mel Tillis's Statesiders group starting in 1998, died in a house fire this past January 8. He was forty-six. Landry began his drumming career at age fifteen with his father's band in south Louisiana and began working at the Grand Ole Opry in 1985. He performed with Doug Kershaw, Mel McDaniel, Hank Thompson, Ray Price, and others, and was highly regarded as one of the top drummers in the Branson, Missouri, music scene. According to the Statesiders' musical director, Dennis Pratt, Landry's contagious smile, love of life, and positive attitude contributed to his great drumming style. **Barney Naioti**





On  
Tour

**Ray Luzier** is out with Korn.

#### Also on the Road

**John Dolmayan** with System of a Down /// **Tony Leone** with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood /// **Robi Gonzalez** with A Place to Bury Strangers /// **Dusty Watson** with the Sonics

Alex Solan

## Out Now



**Toto XIV** (Keith Carlock) /// **Aaron Goldberg** *The Now* (Eric Harland) /// **Swervedriver** *I Wasn't Born to Lose You* (Mikey Jones) /// **Cassandra Wilson** *Coming Forth by Day* (Thomas Wydler) /// **Rez Abbasi Acoustic Quartet** *Intents and Purposes* (Eric McPherson) /// **Richie Goods & Nuclear Fusion** *Three Rivers* (Billy Kilson, Lil' John Roberts) /// **The Minus 5** *Dungeon Golds* (John Moen, Linda Pitmon, Ezra Holbrook) /// **Donny McCaslin** *Fast Future* (Mark Guiliana) /// **Lightning Bolt** *Fantasy Empire* (Brian Chippendale) /// **Dewa Budjana** *Hasta Karma* (Antonio Sanchez) /// **Al Watsky** *The Djangle Box Project* (David Licht) /// **Eugene Marlow's Heritage Ensemble** *Mosaica* (Bobby Sanabria, Matthew Gonzalez) /// **Ben Goldberg** *Orphic Machine* (Ches Smith) /// **Aristocrats** *Culture Clash Live!* (Marco Minnemann) /// **Swung** Vols. 1 & 2 (Pierre van der Linden) /// **Brian Wilson** *No Pier Pressure* (Jim Keltner, Kenny Aronoff)

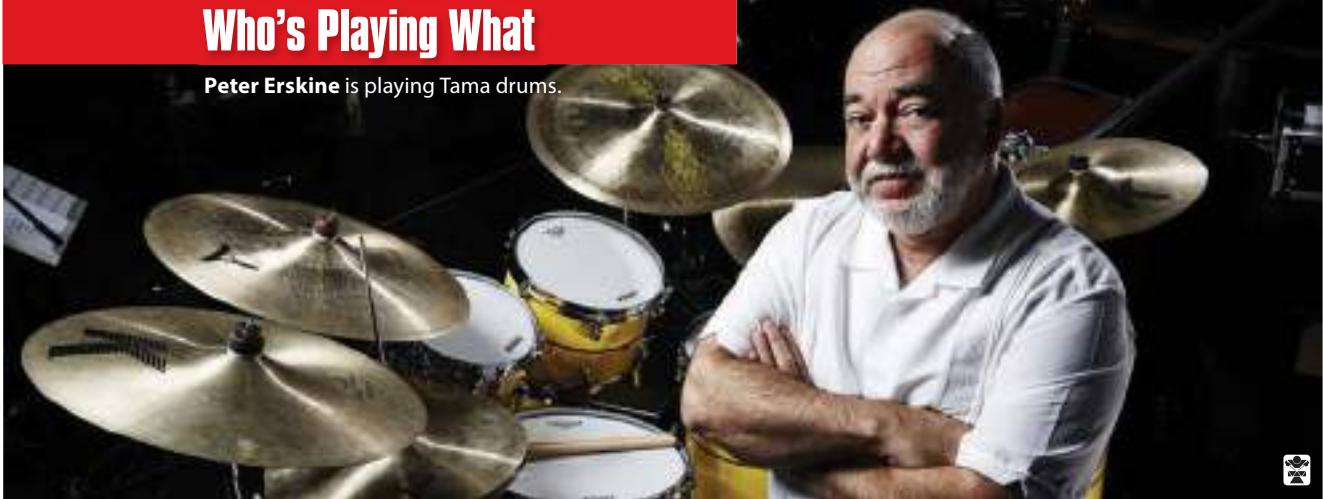
### Jeff the Brotherhood *Wasted on the Dream*

"We wanted to make a really fun rock album that could reach a lot of different people," Brothhood drummer Jamin Orrall says, "something similar in feel to a lot of the rock records that came out in the '90s, back when bands like Smashing Pumpkins and Nirvana were playing big arena shows." The band, which previously featured only Jamin and his singer/guitarist brother, Jake, is now rounded out by bassist Jack Lawrence (Dead Weather, Raconteurs). The album also features guest contributions from Bethany Cosentino of Best Coast and Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull.



## Who's Playing What

**Peter Erskine** is playing Tama drums.



## Technology Corner

# Single-Mic Recording Advice

I've been having a lot of fun experimenting with recording my drums with one mic using the techniques you covered in the "Drum Miking 101" article in the January 2015 issue. But I've run into an issue regarding balance between the drums and cymbals. My room isn't very deep, so I can't place the mic more than 5' or 6' in front of the kit. I'm getting a lot of harsh high end from the cymbals in the mix, no matter how lightly I play them. I've tried lowering the mic from 4' off the ground to 2' and lower, which has helped some, but the cymbals are still very prominent. Any advice you have would be greatly appreciated.

**Sam**

"Great question," says "Drum Miking 101" author John Emrich. "Let's start by explaining why it sounds like it does. High frequencies are more efficient than mids and lows, and in a small room you have a lot of reflections to deal with. The key in this case is mic placement and room treatment. I bet the ceiling above your drumset is about 8' high and there's nothing in your room to treat the reflections of the sound from the drumset. I did an article on homemade room treatments in the December 2013 issue, so please refer to that for some tips to make your room sound better."

"In terms of mic placement, here's an idea to try that shouldn't cost much at all. In fact, you may already have everything you need. To begin, put the microphone about 5' in front of the kit. Keep the mic at approximately the same height as the top of the bass drum. Now we're going to build a tent around the mic using two microphone stands with boom arms or two boom cymbal stands, plus a very large packing blanket. Drape the blanket over the two stands, which should be set a little higher than the microphone and about 2' apart to start."

"The tent is going to stay open on the side that faces the drumset. You should also put a small blanket on the floor inside



the tent. The idea is to channel sound waves into the microphone and diffuse them inside the tent. This should help to keep a lot of high-end reflections out of the sound. Start with the microphone facing the drums, but be sure to experiment with turning it clockwise away from the drumset."

"If you end up needing more cymbals in your mix with the tent, move the mic and the boom arms up a bit. Lower the tent and mic if you want more low frequencies."

## Ask a Pro

### Rudimental Expert John Wooton on Seven-Stroke Roll Phrasing

I've been enjoying your online video lessons that cover classic rudimental solos. One thing that I find particularly interesting is the elongated interpretation of the seven- and fifteen-stroke rolls used in these pieces. Can you explain how the rolls should be phrased?

**Mike**

The lilt you are referring to in the seven-stroke roll (played in half a count) and the fifteen-stroke roll (played in one and a half counts) is common practice for these solos. It's common when playing on rope-tension drums for the tempo to have some flexibility. Masters of this style say that they "march to their hands." In other

words, they let what they're playing determine the tempo. Modern drum corps players think the opposite. They play to their feet—they make sure they're marching in time, and the rhythms they play match their feet. The same differences can be found in drumset playing, where in a situation in which the tempo might be flexible, a band could naturally speed up or slow down, as opposed to gigs where you have to keep the time steady with a click track.

Another reason why those rolls have a lilt to them is that a calfskin head, which is what these pieces were written for, doesn't have very high tension, and it takes a lot of work to play the rolls. So, naturally,

performers have a tendency to slow down at spots where so many notes are crammed into such little space. To me, this interpretation gives the music some soul; when I hear someone play one of these solos in a quantized manner, it sounds robotic and boring.



**John Wooton** teaches percussion at the University of Southern Mississippi. He's the author of *The Drummer's Rudimental Reference Book* and *Dr. Throwdown's Rudimental Remedies* and has many instructional videos featured on Vic Firth's website and YouTube channel.



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# GMS Special Edition Series Drumset

Custom-shop quality at production-level prices? Sold!

**B**ack in 1987, when Long Islanders Rob Mazzella and Tony Gallino joined forces to create the GMS Drum Co., there weren't many companies offering custom drumsets that didn't need some type of "doctoring" (bearing-edge work, hardware upgrades, etc.) in order to perform at a professional level. The first thing the duo created was the Grand Master series lug, which features a long brass tube connecting the top and bottom lugs to alleviate stress on the shell. These lugs are still offered on Grand Master series drums, but in 1997 GMS created the Special Edition lug, for the Special Edition line, which provides the same stress-free benefits without the brass tube.

In 2004, GMS teamed up with a small factory in Taiwan to produce the CL series, which was a more affordable drumset built to Mazzella and Gallino's exact specifications. After a bit of rebranding in 2014, the company decided to drop the CL line and focused on developing a professional series, built in Taiwan, that would be of comparable quality to the drums GMS is building in New York but at nearly half the price. To differentiate the U.S.- and Asian-made lines, the drums crafted stateside are now known as USA Custom Shop Special Edition, while the ones coming out of Taiwan are simply Special Edition.

## What's the Difference?

The differences between the U.S.- and Asian-made Special Edition series are in the options and hardware. USA SE kits are available in thirty-nine standard finishes, including four wraps and various shades of different lacquer types (sparkle, satin, and high gloss), plus unlimited custom choices. SE kits are offered only in seven lacquers. SE Custom drums are available in any size you want, while SE drums come in four shell packs: Kit 1 (five-piece), Kit 2 (four-piece), Kit 3 (six-piece), and the City Jazz four-piece bebop setup. With regard to shell makeup, SE Custom models are 8-ply maple and have graduated 45-degree bearing edges that get thicker as the diameter of the drum increases. SE shells are 7-ply with the same 45-degree bearing edge on all drums. The shell thicknesses between the two series are identical, however, because the maple veneers used for SE drums are slightly thicker than those in SE Custom models.

The other big difference between the two SE lines is the hardware. SE Custom snares come with the company's hand-tooled brass Grand Master throw-off, while SE drums feature a more generic chrome version made in Taiwan. SE Custom lugs are machined in the United States and feature a swiveling tension-rod insert to ensure perfect alignment, while the lugs on SE drums are solid-cast (but they do swivel). The cast lugs on the Special Edition series have the same proprietary design to alleviate shell tension as the machined ones included on SE Customs. Both series come with top-quality Evans drumheads (G1 Coated snare batter, G2 Coated tom batters, and EQ4 Clear kick batter), suspension rack tom mounts, and 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops. We were delivered a Kit 2 SE shell pack for review, featuring an 8x12 rack tom, 16x16 floor tom, 18x22 bass drum, and 5.5x14 snare, in arctic white finish.

## High, Medium, or Low

We tested the SE kit at three tunings—high, medium, and low—and it sounded completely comfortable at each. The tight tension, which had the rack tom set to C, the floor tom at F, and the snare at A, produced a strong, cutting attack, but the sustain rang free for a pure, full tone. The snare had a satisfying Steve Jordan-like bark, and the bass drum had a clean "point" and a focused yet beefy low end. For a fusion/contemporary R&B situation that requires clarity and tone, the tightly tuned SE kit sounded as good as any.

For the medium tuning, we took the rack tom



down to A, the floor tom to D, and the snare to F#. This gave us a great all-purpose sound that would excel live or in the studio. The toms again had a big, open, and pure tone with solid attack, the kick was a bit punchier, and the snare sounded warmer and more resonant while maintaining great articulation and sensitivity. I happened to have the kit in my studio when I needed to track drums on a modern country tune with a dense mix featuring multiple guitars, drum loops, and percussion, and the medium-tuned SE kit was the perfect choice. Its ultra-clear, punchy, and open tones sat in the track in all the right places and required very little EQ or muffling.

At the bottom of its tuning range (rack tom at F#, floor tom at B, and snare at D#), the SE kit continued to perform effortlessly. The

rack tom had a big and dramatic tone, the floor tom became very punchy while maintaining a clear pitch, and the snare produced a strong "smack" with a very satisfying pitch dip, almost like what you get from a detuned aluminum-shell drum. Microphones really loved the SE kit tuned low. Heck, microphones loved the SE series, period.

I wasn't aware that SE drums are now being made in Taiwan until after we concluded our testing. I *have* played a lot of GMS USA drums over the years, so I had certain expectations of these going in (effortless tuning, versatile tones, huge tom sounds). Aside from the cast lugs and throw-off, you'd be hard-pressed to notice the difference. And sonically the SE series was downright flawless. The list price for the Kit 2 Special Edition configuration is \$2,850.

**Michael Dawson**



# Zildjian 21" K Custom Organic and 20" K Constantinople Renaissance Rides

Crash/ride versatility is the name of the game with these new, dark offerings.



Zildjian recently teamed up with two of its artists, drummer/educator Pat Petrillo and jazz great Adam Nussbaum, to create specialized signature rides designed to offer varying degrees of "crashability" and pinpoint articulation. Let's take a look at each.

## 21" K Custom Organic

This 21" cymbal was designed in conjunction with Pat Petrillo and is placed in the K Custom category, which Zildjian defines as the "modern jazz voice." The Organic ride features a heavily hammered, wire-brushed top, to give it a raw look and sound, and the bottom has a brilliant finish that's said to open up the tone. The bell is big and tall, making for an easy target. This ride is medium-thin, weighing between 2,267 and 2,494 grams, to allow for a more expressive crash response.

The Organic ride had a dry and fairly metallic tone. It was low-pitched but ultra-articulate, and it didn't wash out under heavy, fast playing. The crash was breathy and quick; it died down to a controllable level within the span of a mid-tempo quarter note. This quickness makes the Organic ride good for more interactive situations, where you want to be able to drop in accents and get right back to an intricate ride pattern without the wash bleeding over, but it wouldn't be the best choice for all-out crash-riding.

During a rock/fusion bar gig, where the dynamics often jumped from whisper quiet to roaring loud, the Organic did a nice job of keeping my ride patterns crisp and clear while still maintaining a darker, jazz-type tone. It also worked well in the studio when I was tracking a country-pop song that needed the ride patterns to poke through the mix while blending within the midrange frequencies of the acoustic and electric guitars.

The bell of the Organic ride was a beast, emitting much more sound than I'm used to hearing from typical jazz-style cymbals. You'll have no trouble being heard hitting it with the shank of the stick. To my ears, the 21" Organic ride can be best described as a more expressive and dynamic version of the classic 20" K Custom, which was the definitive ride sound of fusion greats Dave Weckl and Vinnie Colaiuta in the 1990s.

## 20" K Constantinople Renaissance

A few years back, Zildjian teamed up with jazz drummer Adam Nussbaum to create the 22" Constantinople Renaissance ride, which is a medium-thin model that features three rows of sparse but deep over-hammering and four clusters of deeper hammer marks like those used on the company's symphonic cymbals. Both techniques help to age the sound and add a bit of trashiness and wobble. Rather than simply shrinking the specs of the original Renaissance to create a 20" version, Zildjian and Nussbaum set out to develop something more complementary.

The 20" Renaissance is a thin cymbal (1,786 to 1,871 grams) and has a smaller/flatter bell that's been over-hammered to give it a more contained and integrated sound. The thinner weight allows for easier crashes and more expressive push accents. The cymbal sounded and felt broken in, which made it a joy to play. I especially loved the bell, which sounded dark, complex, and almost fragile—as if it was on the verge of shattering into a million pieces. The bow tone was warm and buttery, producing a wide wash and clear stick point. (I kept imagining Art Taylor's papery but articulate ride on John Coltrane's classic album *Giant Steps* as I was testing the 20" Renaissance.) Full crashes were deep and breathy, and the cymbal responded as well to mallet swells as any symphonic model I've played.

When compared directly with the 22" Renaissance ride, the 20" version is thinner, trashier, and washier, and it has an overall more vintage-like vibe. The 22" has a clearer bell sound and cleaner sustain. I preferred the 22" as a main jazz ride voice, since it offers a bit more clarity and control, while the 20" excelled as a versatile secondary ride/crash or as a primary ride in low-volume situations.

Michael Dawson



Check out a video of these rides at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

# Castle Tapered Snares

## Conical stave-shell drums for lively, diverse tones.

**M**assachusetts-based craftsman David Cheney has developed a unique conical snare drum shell with function as its focus. The shell is created using solid wood staves and features a 14" batter side that tapers down to a 13" resonant end.

Stave shells are thought to increase the wood's natural resonance because they require less glue and allow the wood grain to run in the same direction. Cheney believes the conical shape channels the energy more efficiently to create a livelier sound. Thus, the design is thought to combine the most appealing attributes of 13" and 14" snare drums. The smaller resonant end is supposed to offer the desirable crack and pop of a 13" snare, while the 14" batter provides a wider tuning range and a better overall feel.

To further enhance the shell's sonic properties, the interior receives several coatings of natural tung oil, while the exteriors get enough coats of lacquer to protect the shell without choking its resonance.

### Solid Maple

First up is an 8x14x13 solid maple drum with a velvet-blue stain finish from Castle's Powder Keg series. The drum has eight tube lugs and is outfitted with a Dunnett strainer, an Evans Level 360 G1 Coated batter, and a clear 300 series resonant head. The resonant head was set at a medium tension (78 on a DrumDial), and we ran the batter through the tuning spectrum.

With the batter head at a medium tension (84), the drum had a wonderfully fat tone with a present crack that hovered over a robust decay. The overtones and decay were pleasant. Keeping the snare tension loose gave a swaggering flex to the response without any annoying buzz. Tightening the snares dried up the overtones just enough to increase clarity for more defined articulation. Tightening each tension rod about a half turn (up to 90 on the DrumDial) gave us a sound that still had lush depth, but the top-end bite and crack were enhanced. If you really want a firecracker response, take the batter up another quarter turn (92). There, the 8" depth allowed the drum to maintain some girth underneath an incredibly powerful, dry crack.

In the lower ranges, the drum was equally impressive.



At medium-low (80), it had a fat indie-rock sound, with the overtones hanging more in the midrange frequencies. Going very low (74 to 76) killed the overtones almost completely, as though we were adding external muffling, but the head was not wrinkled and offered a nice "thwack."

### Solid Bubinga

The second model is from the Keystone series and features a 6x14x13 solid bubinga stave shell with a clear finish. The drum has eight tube lugs and is outfitted with an RCK strainer, an Evans Level 360 G1 Coated batter, and a clear 300 series resonant head. We cranked the resonant head a bit higher for this drum (83) and again took the batter through its range.

Starting at a medium tension (85), the bubinga's naturally darker tonality and intense focus resulted in a breathy, open tone with a firm top-end crack and a full-bodied decay. Cranking the batter up to 90 resulted in a stellar, arid crack with slightly lingering high-end frequencies.

On the lower spectrum, tensioned at 80, the Keystone had an open sound with ample presence, due to the slightly drier tonality of the bubinga. As with the Powder Keg, lower tunings resulted in minimal overtones, and although the batter head felt quite slack, it

still produced a usable fat, deep sound. The Keystone had more appeal and life in the higher range—88 on the DrumDial was where my ear liked it most. That tuning also produced a great feel, stellar response, and just the right blend of crack and fullness.

### Summing Up

Both Castle snares have some mojo going on, especially the 8" Powder Keg. They boast impressive tuning ranges and offer full tones. The bearing edges and snare beds are well done, and the overall aesthetics are easy on the eyes. The drums recorded quite well, and their conical shape does seem to beef up the presence when compared with other 13" and 14" snares in my arsenal.

**David Ciauro**



Watch a video of these drums at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

# Cymgard Cymbal Accessories

A dual-purpose product that provides ultimate edge protection and significant sound reduction.

The drum industry has plenty of cymbal accessories, including mutes, bags, and fancy felts. So what's next? Cymgard thinks it has the answer, and the company sent us three cymbal mutes/edge protectors to check out: the Standard, the Lite, and the Hi-Hat Standard.

## Versatility

The more we learned about Cymgards, the more we could see them being used by a wide range of drummers, from those practicing in the basement to players touring the world. Cymgard states that its products offer four distinct advantages: "Dependable, heavy edge armoring, sound dampening, shipping/transportation protection, and stack padding." After spending a few days with the products, we had no doubt that the company has accomplished all of those goals.

Cymgards are made of an elastic rubber that fits around the perimeter of a cymbal. Over time, the Cymgard is supposed to mold to the profile, taper, and thickness of the cymbal, which ensures consistent placement and makes it easier to add or remove the guard.

The wrap-around design allows you to stack cymbals in a horizontal or vertical position without having metal-on-metal contact, even with cymbals that have different diameters. The Cymgard Standard series offers the thickest and most durable edge protection, while the Lite line is slightly thinner. Both options provide an incredible amount of sound dampening for practicing with minimal volume. (The cymbal's sustain is canceled out, leaving behind just the sound of the sticks clicking on the metal.) The Hi-Hat Standard fits a matched pair of hi-hats and has the same thickness and durability as the Standard.



## Verdict

As we watched Cymgard founder Rod Johnston demonstrate dropping vintage cymbals equipped with Standard and Lite models from six feet in the air directly onto a concrete floor, without so much as a dent, it was obvious that there's some incredible value in these simple, low-cost products. (Prices range from \$9.95 for a 6" Lite to \$26.95 for a 24" Standard.) That durability, combined with exceptional sound dampening, safe stacking capabilities, and great shipping/transportation protection, makes Cymgard an easy decision for anyone looking for all of these benefits. Check out our video demo of the Cymgard exclusively at moderndrummer.com.

Miguel Monroy



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# GoPro HERO3+ Black Edition Music Bundle

A near-perfect solution for capturing quality drum videos from any vantage point.

We drummers have tried everything we can think of to record ourselves, whether in individual practice, in band rehearsal, or on the gig. For me, it started with a cassette recorder that captured only audio, and the sound was never that good. I eventually began looking for something better. I tried a lot of devices, recording to many different types of media, always looking for the best quality and features available for a decent price. For me, for now at least, the subject of this review is the culmination of that search. If you watch videos on the Internet, you've seen this little camera in action, mounted to everything and subjected to all manner of abuse. Now drummers have mounting options too!

The GoPro HERO3+ Black Edition Music Bundle comes with everything you need to start recording high-quality audio and video with a minimum of effort. The kit includes the GoPro HERO 3+ Black Edition camera, a mounting frame, and six mounts: two instrument mounts that use a sticky adhesive that leaves no marks once removed, one mic stand mount, a tabletop mount that's part of the camera's packaging, a flexible gooseneck for positioning the camera in tight spaces, and a heavy-duty clamp with a soft, non-marring grip that allows you to attach the camera to anything from .25" to 2" in diameter, like stands and drum hoops. You can put this camera just about anywhere on or around your drumkit with the mounting gear provided.

What stands out to me about GoPro is its large and still growing selection of mounting options. You're limited only by your creativity. Here's an example. While the clamp that comes with this bundle will accommodate most hardware, I found that it was too large for some of my stands with small-diameter tubing. GoPro sent me a handlebar mount, and the problem was solved immediately. I was also able to record a gig from my perspective, using a chest mount that's fittingly named Chesty. I didn't have the guts to go on stage with a camera attached to my head, but GoPro has a number of cranial mounting options available as well, if you're interested.

The light, rugged, waterproof GoPro camera has a good wide-angle, low-distortion lens, and it packs a lot of features into a diminutive frame. I experienced excellent performance in low-lighting conditions, which is a real plus, considering the dark stages on which we tend to play.

Recording at 1080p (1920x1080 at 60fps), I got about ninety minutes of footage on the included 32GB MicroSD card (video resolution goes up to 4096x2160). The 12MP camera also takes crisp still shots and can be used as a super-wide-angle point-and-shoot.



(There's no viewfinder, but an LCD touchscreen is available.) The camera has a burst rate of thirty frames per second.

Time Lapse Mode enables shots at intervals from one every half second to one each minute. You can also select continuous auto-shooting at three, five, or ten frames per second for as long as the shutter release button is pressed.

One nice feature is Auto Low Light Mode, which automatically adjusts the camera sensor's sensitivity to darker conditions. SuperView puts the camera in a super-wide-angle mode, giving the user what the company calls "the world's most immersive wide-angle perspective."

These features, as well as exposure compensation and low-light sensitivity adjustments, are selected by navigating the menu with two buttons. The camera also comes equipped with built-in Wi-Fi, enabling you to control it remotely from a smartphone with the free GoPro app. (A Wi-Fi remote is available as well.)

With all the features turned on, the GoPro is a bit of a power vampire, so you'll want to keep it turned off when it's not in use. This is especially true of the Wi-Fi setting. Also, future models would benefit from audio-input level adjustment. The mic clipped a bit while the camera was on the chest mount.

The Micro USB and HDMI inputs allow for charging, external power, attachment of a 3.5 mm microphone, and connection to such devices as computers and smart TVs. To edit what you shoot and turn it into a smaller file for the Internet, there's GoPro Studio—a free program available on the company website. It comes with a sleek, straightforward layout with enough features to create quality video content. I was able to move files from the camera to my MacBook and then edit and export the finished product to the Internet in very little time.

The street price for the GoPro HERO3+ Black Edition Music Bundle is \$399.99. Given that price and all of the features, you have little excuse not to promote yourself and your playing with quality sound and video. Check out my videos at moderndrummer.com.

**Nick Amoroso**





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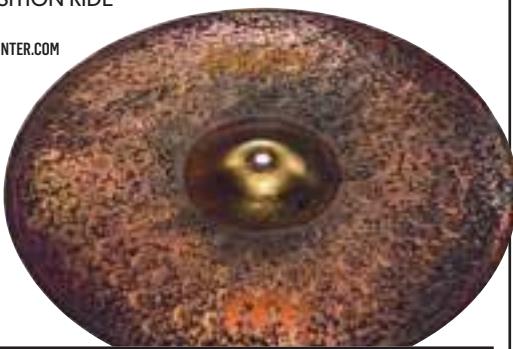
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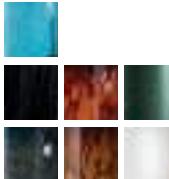
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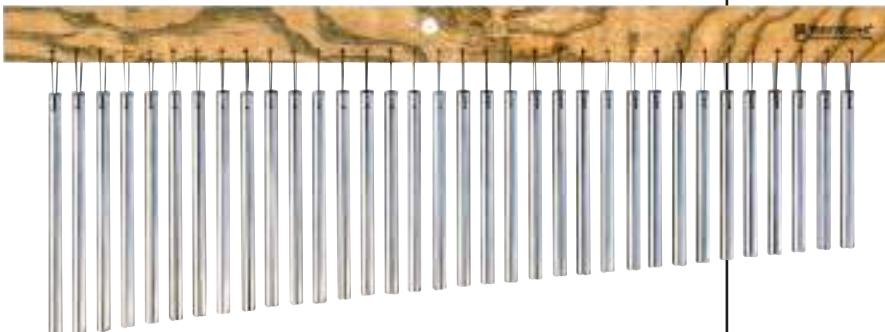


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# Drum Miking 101

## Part 4: Four Microphones

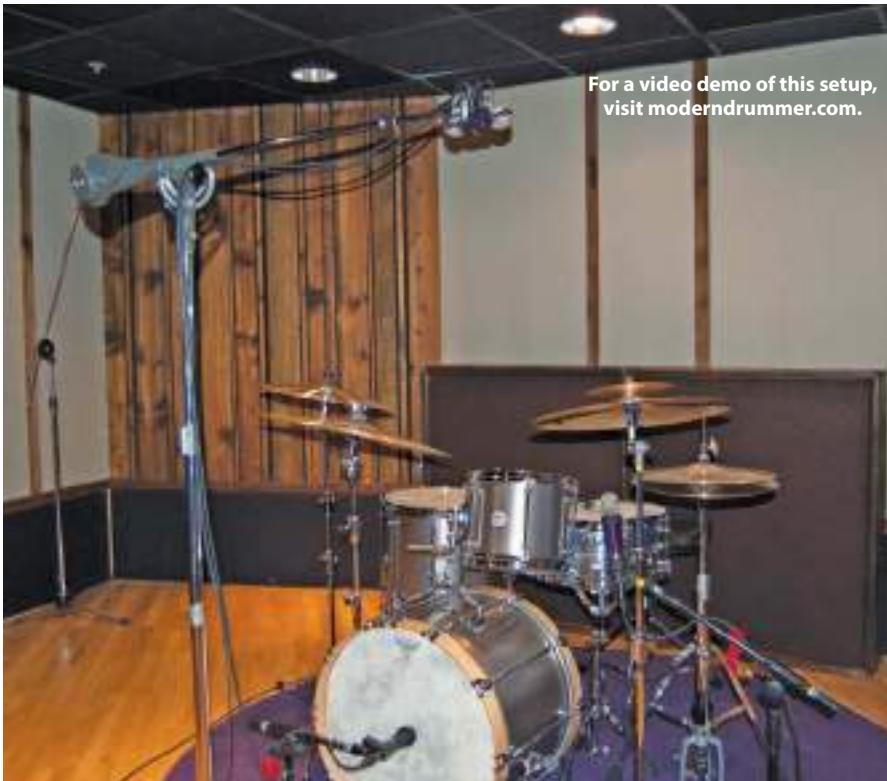
by John Emrich

**A**t this point in the series, you should have a good idea of how microphone placement affects the sound of your drums. A closer distance between the mics and the drums will give you a bit more definition and clarity. But be careful that you don't get too close with the main overhead microphones, because you'll start missing instruments. For this article we will put up four microphones. We're demonstrating just one option to get you going. The idea of adding mics should be to get a bit more detail in the sound.

In this example I'm using a Violet Flamingo Stereo overhead microphone, a Milab BDM-01 on the front of the bass drum, and a Violet Flamingo Junior on the snare, with just enough of the snare-mic signal to add a bit of clarity. This is very useful when recording brush playing in a jazz style. The audio in the accompanying video, which is posted to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com), has no additional processing; it's just microphones, via preamps, directly to Pro Tools.

The bottom line in recording drums is the placement and type of microphones that you choose. Here, the Violet stereo model is the main source of the sound, because it's the closest to your ears in terms of placement. That means it will provide the most honest representation of your playing. Remember that what we're looking for is a natural sound. If something is jumping out in the mix, it may be that you need to evaluate what you're doing or maybe even change out a piece of the drumset, depending on how it's sounding in the room.

The bass drum mic is used to add a bit of definition and help enhance the lower frequencies. When monitoring the



For a video demo of this setup, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

overheads with the bass drum mic added, listen for a full-frequency response. If there's too much low frequency, or if the bass drum is punching through a little too much, reduce the level on that microphone. If you hear a bit of weirdness in the sound, you might have a phase issue. We'll cover more on phasing in a future article, but for now if you're not hearing a natural representation of the drumset, try raising or lowering the overheads or moving the bass drum mic to the batter side or to a different spot on the front head.

There are many opinions on how to mike the snare. A lot of people place the mic really close to the top head, just inside the rim. That's great if you want a detailed recording of that one spot of the head, but backing off the mic a bit will give you a better representation of the drum. This will also allow you to capture more of the snares themselves. Sometimes placing the mic really close to the head results in a sound that's more like that of a shallow timbale. A lot of engineers remedy this by adding a mic on the bottom side of the snare. For our four-channel setup, we have only one mic

to work with to get a natural representation of the snare.

The music you play and your personal taste will dictate what you need to achieve. Don't be afraid to move the mic around a bit. For example, I really like to record snares from the side, with the microphone placed 3" from the shell. In this example I moved the mic more toward the top rim, because I'm using brushes and I needed a bit more detail for the brush sweeps.

The other mic positions we talked about last month can also work. For example, you might want to try the Glyn Johns (top/side) setup with the additional snare mic. You may also want to try backing the overheads out to the front of the kit a bit. This can add some room resonance to the sound. In the end, you need to trust your ears. There's no right or wrong way to use your four microphones. Once you find a sound that you're happy with, press the record button and play your drums.

In the next article we'll jump into a fully miked kit.

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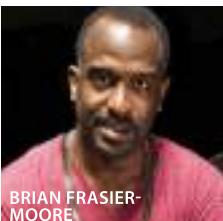
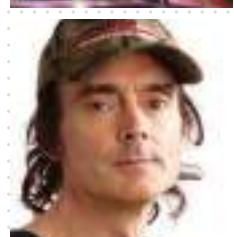
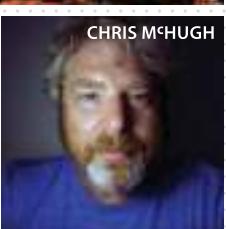
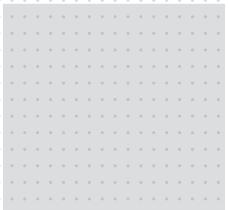
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# GEARING UP

ON STAGE  
AND UP CLOSE

## Bob Mould's Jon Wurster

Interview by David Ciauro  
Photos by Patrick Ernst

**Drums:** C&C 7-ply maple Gladstone shells  
A. 6.5x14 Ludwig Black Beauty snare  
B. 9x13 tom  
C. 16x16 floor tom  
D. 16x24 bass drum

**Symbol:** Paiste

1. 15" Twenty series hi-hats
2. 18" Signature Power crash
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**Hardware:** Pearl S-190 snare stands (one for rack tom), DW double-braced cymbal stands, DW 5000 series hi-hat stand and bass drum pedal (with round beater)

**Heads:** Remo Coated Emperor X snare batter and Clear Ambassador bottom, Coated Emperor tom batters and Coated Ambassador bottoms, and Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 2B wood tip

**Miscellaneous:** sandbag on legs of snare stand

used it on Bob's *Silver Age* album, but on *Beauty & Ruin* I used a mid-'90s 6.5x14 Brady. The Brady sounded better in the room where we recorded and was my main snare from around 1995 until 2001."

Regarding his choice of Paiste cymbals, Wurster explains, "They cut through a wall of guitars quite nicely yet maintain both musicality and shimmer. The crashes last about five or six months before breaking, but the hi-hats and the ride have hung in there for three years and counting."

And the sandbag? "I hit very hard when I play with Bob Mould, and even though the snare stands I use are heavy-duty, they tend to move around. The sandbag keeps the stand in place."

"**B**ecause I do so many fly-in dates, I rarely get to use my personal kits," Wurster says. "This Chicago-based kit is the one I like to use when possible. It's what I prefer when I play with Superchunk and Bob Mould. I use a 14x24 with the Mountain Goats. The deeper depth [of this drum] gives the kick a nice extra oomph. I used the kit on the latest Bob Mould LP, *Beauty & Ruin*, and also for the tour.

"I ordered this snare drum sight unseen from a store back in 2001, and it has served me well. It's been my main snare on just about every record and tour I've done since. The Black Beauty is wonderfully versatile; it ends itself to subtle brushwork as well as super-loud caveman playing. With Bob and Superchunk I need a snare that will cut through the massive guitar onslaught, and this does the job really well. I



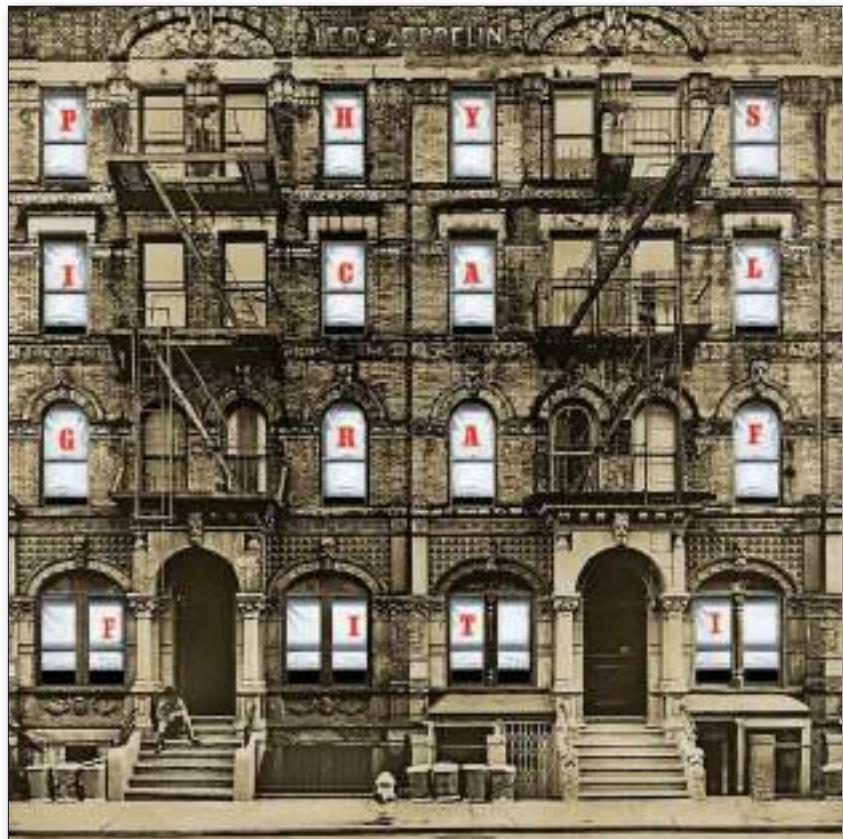


# Led Zeppelin *Physical Graffiti*

A high-flying double album featuring some of John Bonham's most exciting drumming hits shelves again, with cleaned-up sound and a bunch of bonus workshop tracks.

Pound for pound, *Physical Graffiti* is Led Zeppelin's fattest album. For such a hefty band, that's saying a lot. Comprising outtakes from the quartet's three previous records plus lots of brand-new music, the nearly-ninety-minute masterwork proudly displays all the Zeppelin hallmarks while adding new dimensions and cementing the group's ability to craft hair-raising multipart rock epics in the tradition of "Stairway to Heaven" and "The Rain Song." This past winter, as part of Zeppelin's remastered-catalog rollout, *Physical Graffiti* was reissued forty years to the day after its initial unleashing. As with all of the current reissues, a deluxe edition features music freshly unearthed by guitarist/producer Jimmy Page, in this case early versions of some songs, plus a few alternate mixes.

The scope of the 1975 double album urges John Bonham toward some of his most dramatic drumming in the studio, to the point that each single foot chick on the hi-hat during the empty spaces in "Ten Years Gone" adds a nail-biting sense of tension. In other places, of course, Bonzo hits you over the head. The highly demanding bass drum work in sections of "The Wanton Song," "Night Flight," and especially the eleven-minute "In My Time of Dying" shows a firm-footed powerhouse who knows how to pace himself, while "Kashmir" is legendary in its stripped-down directness. Today, in an



era where unembellished, good-feeling rock timekeeping is more highly prized than it seemed to be in Bonham's day, we can point to the drumming on "Kashmir"

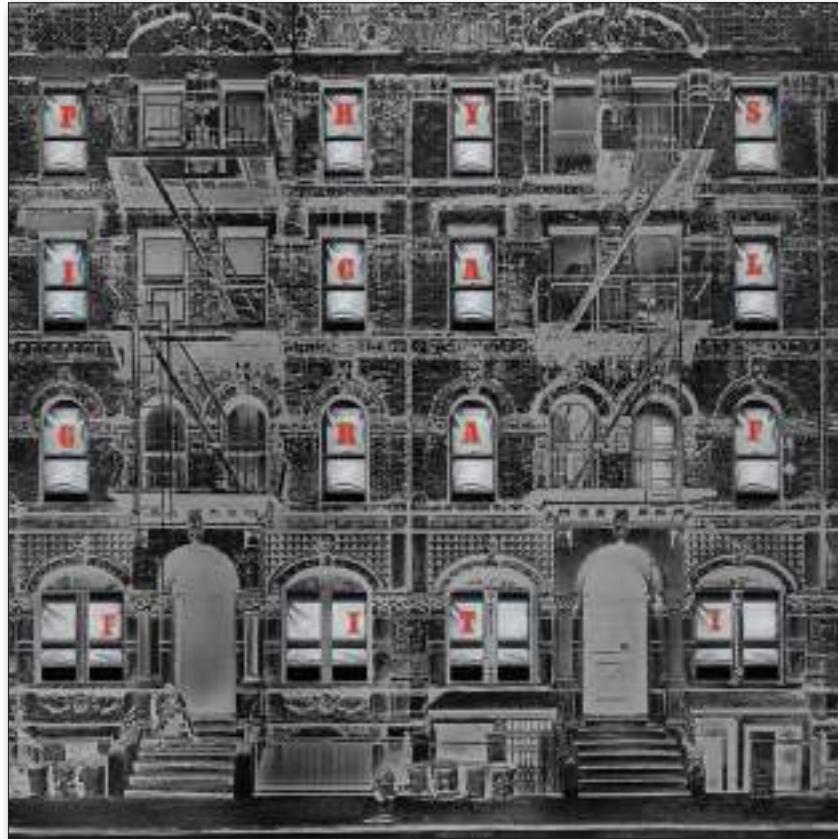
as one of the earliest and most influential examples of this approach.

It can be a bit tricky to discuss the funkiness of the drumming on *Physical Graffiti*, because Bonham, along with soul-mate bassist John Paul Jones, was pretty much *always* funky, but here he certainly sits in the pocket as much as, if not more than, ever. Sandwiched between the marathon tracks "In My Time of Dying" and "Kashmir" are the groovy numbers "Houses of the Holy" and "Trampled Under Foot." The former is a simple riff-based song with a bouncy quarter-note vibe and the steady reinforcing clonk of a cowbell in parts, and Bonham mimics Page's funky rhythm-guitar fills with quick bass/snare figures that seem to come right out of the James Brown handbook (1:15). "Trampled,"

## Hot Stuff

**A tip of the hats.** John Bonham's meticulously well-crafted parts include very specific hi-hat openings, always in the most effective spots. The two "barks" that conclude each verse of "Custard Pie" (as at 0:36), with the second one leading perfectly into a crash, are tasty as pie. Quicker, sloshier hi-hat openings add pizzazz to the outro of the hard-grooving "Trampled Under Foot." And on "Sick Again" Bonham takes a violent slash at the hats within a ride-bell pattern in the middle of the verses...exactly *where*? It's one of those brilliant details that no other drummer would've thought of.

**Tickling licks.** Bonham plays more than his share of enormous fills on the album—on "In My Time of Dying," "In the Light"...take your pick. But his tiny embellishments are among his hottest, announcing themselves boldly within more static parts to make drummers whoop with delight. We're talking about the slinky bass drum fill in the B section of "Kashmir" (2:51) and the cutting, suspended-animation snare lick in the final verse of "The Wanton Song" (3:33). Bonzo squeezes the most life out of every note.



centering on Jones's *wocka-wocka* Clavinet line, has a straightforward main drum part—one that makes you wanna dance. Bonzo has fun with his embellishments, blasting off imaginative fills that occasionally break the barline (1:00).

Another couplet near the album's end, "Boogie With Stu" and "Black Country Woman," while hardly a major entry in the Zeppelin canon, adds to the unpredictable fun of the set. "Stu" is Ian Stewart, a long-time Rolling Stones associate who leads his tossed-off namesake jam on piano, with Page on mandolin and Bonham playing a clapping, slapping pattern far from the tone of a conventional drumset. Bonham enters the acoustic "Black Country Woman" by kicking quarter notes, and then his fat metal snare slams its way in, often echoing

his beefy bass drum double strokes.

Over all, *Physical Graffiti* is bursting with beautiful drumming that rises to meet the band's peerless songwriting. Bonham had a sense of intuition that allowed him to craft perfect parts that are sturdy and clean yet creative and daring. "Ten Years Gone" is a deep and powerful song by any standard; Bonham, with his streamlined groove, well-placed ghost notes, and riff-reinforcing tom pounding, gives it even more depth, but in a measured way. The electroacoustic "Down by the Seaside" is unlike any other Zeppelin track. Along with Jones's electric piano, Page's delicate licks, and Robert Plant's longing vocal, Bonham plays a shuffle with doubles on the snare, almost like a slowed-down and scrubbed-up Ringo beat—and then he kicks into a hard-hitting

### **Physical Graffiti (1975)**

Custard Pie • The Rover • In My Time of Dying  
• Houses of the Holy • Trampled Under Foot  
• Kashmir • In the Light • Bron-Yr-Aur • Down  
by the Seaside • Ten Years Gone • Night Flight  
• The Wanton Song • Boogie With Stu • Black  
Country Woman • Sick Again

**2015 bonus tracks:** Brandy & Coke • Sick Again (early version) • In My Time of Dying (rough mix) • Houses of the Holy (rough mix with overdubs) • Everybody Makes It Through • Boogie With Stu (Sunset Sound mix) • Driving Through Kashmir (rough orchestra mix)

**Robert Plant:** vocals, harmonica

**Jimmy Page:** guitar, mandolin

**John Paul Jones:** bass, keyboards, guitar

**John Bonham:** drums

Produced by Jimmy Page

straight pattern, firing off his signature snare/tom/bass ruffs (2:51) before locking right back into the shuffle feel.

In his press rounds for the *Zeppelin* reissue series, Jimmy Page has downplayed the sonic remastering of the music, focusing on the previously unheard bonus tracks. But it's no small thing to hear improved digital versions of the proper albums from a group that's always sounded best on vinyl. The extras are geared toward hardcore fans hungry for any sorts of alternate tracks, no matter how slight the differences. Here, "Brandy & Coke" is an early mix of "Trampled Under Foot," and "Everybody Makes It Through" an early "In the Light." The latter has significantly different keyboards and vocals—and, given the final version we all know, it shows the need for more work. Neither reveals much in terms of Bonham's drumming. The brief "Sick Again" does have a different drum track, with snare licks that Bonham eventually changed to a more syncopated version incorporating the bass drum. In the end, of course, it's the official *Physical Graffiti* that counts most, helping to prove many people's claim that John Bonham is the greatest rock drummer of all time.

**Michael Parillo**



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- RUSS MILLER

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- TOMMY ALDRIDGE

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# Tyshawn Sorey

The top-call jazzers output is a never-ending tribute to making the most of whatever materials are at hand. His latest solo collection continues the trend.

Performing at the New York City club the Stone with pianist Dave Burrell and bassist Henry Grimes, Tyshawn Sorey is showing just how inventive he's willing to get to propel the trio's furious avant-jazz. With his drums positioned in front of the club's bathroom, Sorey grabs the door with his left hand and begins pushing it back and forth, using the resultant squeak as yet one more weapon in his surprising arsenal.

"We think of an alloy as a mixture of materials," says Sorey, whose latest album, *Alloy*—his fourth as a leader—uses elements like dynamics, through-composition, and improvisation in unique ways. "I thought of this whole composite sound world for the album, and the materials we put together were so strong it creates this energy that is stronger than the music itself. It's the integration of all these seemingly disparate materials that don't belong together but when mixed together as a whole have a very strong bond."

Sorey often uses strings and near silence to make his point on his solo albums; on *Alloy*, rubato piano and controlled drumming create feelings of languor, bliss, chaos, and stasis. In "Template," a Jabo Starks-meets-Autechre groove buzzes against floating piano

and bass. "I changed a lot on that piece," Sorey says. "I changed textures using a mallet in one hand and muting the snare drum with paper. On the louder parts I'm playing with a [nylon-tip] stick and a wallet on the snare drum."

Playing Pork Pie drums, Istanbul Agop 30th Anniversary cymbals (including 16" hi-hats), and Vic Firth sticks, Sorey makes the most of his tools—including that squeaking door at the Stone. "I know the Stone well," he says, "so I'm thinking about what sounds are possible and what sounds are not. And how can I achieve those sounds? If you have the material, anything is possible."

"Back in 1998 I was rehearsing for a trombone gig with Max Roach in Newark," multi-instrumentalist Sorey recalls, continuing his train of thought. "Max did the entire rehearsal with only a floor tom and a pair of brushes. It was fascinating. That forced me to begin playing only a ride cymbal to get my time together, and I became interested in the acoustic properties of the cymbal. That led to thinking about the drums as beyond an instrument you just hit. It's a rhythm-and-sound instrument. You start listening for overtones and you gain an understanding of what the drum shell does. I learned a lot of from the experience playing with Max." **Ken Micallef**

John Rogers

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Zach Danziger

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# Tony Palermo

The members of Papa Roach had planned to focus on heaviness for their latest album. But it soon became clear that there was going to be more to the story of *F.E.A.R.*

Papa Roach's eighth studio album, *F.E.A.R. (Face Everything and Rise)*, is unique in the group's discography in that the songs were largely the result of studio jams, not prewritten arrangements. "It's important for me to be able to handle anything that's thrown at me," says Tony Palermo, who replaced the band's original drummer, Dave Buckner, in 2007. "I have to be able to play every kind of vibe. We've never been afraid to try anything. If it doesn't work, we move on."

Make no mistake, Papa Roach definitely brings the rock on *F.E.A.R.*, which was produced by the father/son team of Kevin and Kane Churko. But just as compelling are the copious electronic breakdowns, where Palermo's discipline and style in particular are allowed to shine. "I really enjoy playing like that," the drummer



Chris Konigsmayr

says. "Going from super-dynamic parts to those heavy choruses really says a lot. On some of those breakdowns I'll come in with a simple hi-hat pickup, which is a great example of less is more."

It's a concept Palermo has become more comfortable with of late. "At one time I had to climb over my drums to go to bed," Tony says with a chuckle. "I went through having splash cymbals and all that stuff. But I've gotten to a place where I love the stripped-down intensity of it all. The main thing for me now is raw emotion. I feel like you either bring it or you don't. It's as simple as that."

**Steven Douglas Losey**

# Nikki Glaspie

Just when you think that this groove merchant, who's worked with Beyoncé and Dumpstaphunk, couldn't possibly be any funkier, she takes her beats to the Nth Power.

"My music is totally across the board," says Nikki Glaspie, whom *Modern Drummer* readers last heard from in February 2007, when she appeared on the cover with her Beyoncé drum-section partner, Kim Thompson. "That's cool, because whatever I bring to this group, they take it to the next level. It's a

baby, and then it grows to a huge giant. We all have many influences, and it's apparent in the music. We've got metal in there, we've got rock, we've got funk, we've got jazz, we've got gospel. We've got blues, fusion, reggae—it's all there."

The Nth Power, which also features Nigel Hall on keyboards and vocals, Nick Cassarino on guitar and vocals, Nate Edgar on bass, and Weenie Braimah on percussion, was forged from a pickup band Glaspie helped assemble for Jazz Fest 2012 in New Orleans. "At soundcheck we all looked at each other, like, 'Whoa, this is a band,'" the drummer recalls. "We jelled immediately. We just had a vibe. After the gig we started recording and writing, because we knew it was something special."

The Nth Power toured throughout much of 2014, released an EP, and recorded an album that should be out around the time you're reading this. According to Glaspie, though, the group's shows and recordings are more than an opportunity to groove. "For us it's deeper than music," she says. "We have a responsibility to let people know that they are loved. We gotta love ourselves and love each other."

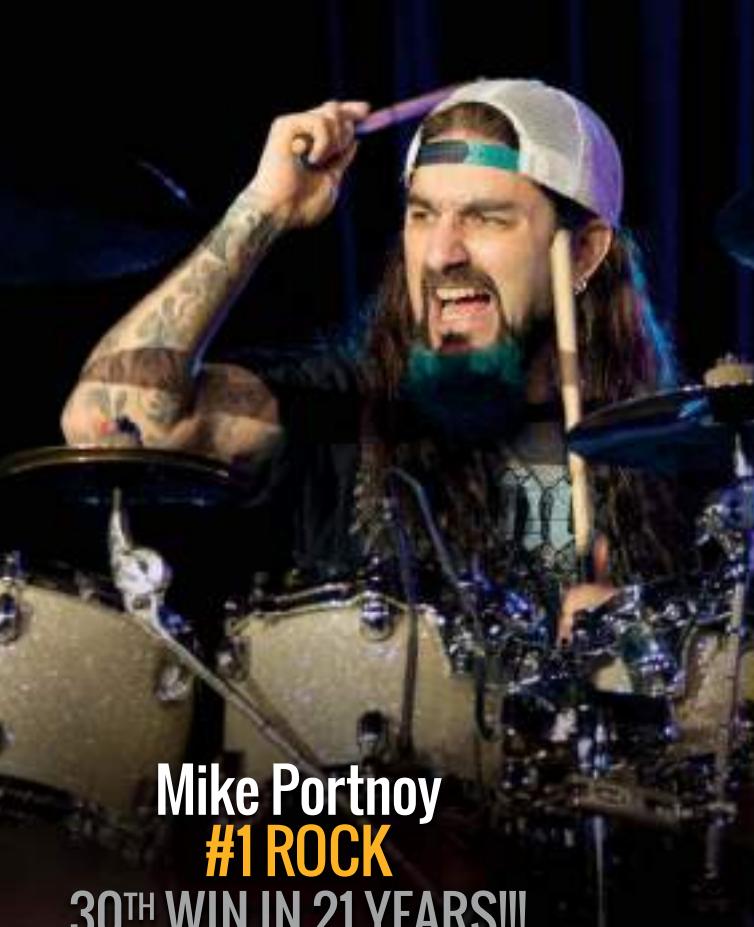
Glaspie credits Wally's Cafe in Boston, aka the "musician's training ground," for her funk skills. But the subtlety and nuance of her playing has its roots further back, in her upbringing in North Carolina. "Lucky for me, I grew up in the church," Nikki says. "My mom was a keyboard player and singer, and both of my aunts sing. And obviously I learned so much just listening to Beyoncé every night—she can fully go wherever she wants to go—and the guys in Dumpstaphunk are monster singers."

"Our music in the Nth Power is also vocal music, so you have to be supportive," continues Glaspie, who as often as not uses her fills in the service of peppering the band's rich grooves. "You have to pick and choose so that [your fills] are effective. Obviously people are always interested in playing chops and whatnot. But honestly, pocket—that gets you the gig every time. You have to play music, you know what I mean? You have to be a member of the band." **Robin Tolleson**



Focus by Follies





# CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR ARTISTS WHO WON AND PLACED IN THIS YEAR'S MODERN DRUMMER READERS POLL!

**Mike Portnoy**  
**#1 ROCK**  
**30<sup>TH</sup> WIN IN 21 YEARS!!!**



**Alex Rudinger**  
Conquering Dystopia  
**#1 UP & COMING**



**Brann Dailor**  
Mastodon  
**#4 METAL & #5 RECORDED  
PERFORMANCE, VIDEO**  
Live at Brixton (Mastodon)



**Peter Erskine**  
**#2 EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT**  
Jazz Essentials Volume 1 (App)  
& **#3 CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR**



**Matt Garstka**  
Animals As Leaders  
**#2 PROG**



**Alex Lopez**  
Suicide Silence  
**#5 METAL**



**Simon Phillips**  
Protocol / Hiromi Trio Project  
**#3 RECORDED PERFORMANCE, VIDEO**  
Live in Poland: 35th Anniversary Tour (Toto)



**Blake Richardson**  
Between The Buried And Me  
**#3 METAL**



**Anup Sastry**  
Intervals  
**#3 PROG**



**TAMA**

TAMA WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO  
VOTED IN THE 2015 MODERN DRUMMER READERS POLL.

# Introducing...the 2015 MODERN DRUMMER® Readers Poll Winners

## HALL OF FAME Ian Paice

"By the time I turned professional at seventeen," Deep Purple drummer Ian Paice said in his October 2014 cover story, "I was doing six or seven shows a week, fifty-two weeks a year. You get to the top of your game very quickly. If you're not out there on stage, you can't grow the same way." This year, *MD* readers chose to honor Paicey for the fifty years he's spent giving his all, on stage and on record.

### Past Hall of Fame Winners

2014: Carmine Appice	2008: Ginger Baker	2002: Steve Smith	1996: Vinnie Colaiuta	1990: Bill Bruford	1984: Steve Gadd
2013: Bernard Purdie	2007: Jack DeJohnette	2001: Dennis Chambers	1995: Elvin Jones	1989: Carl Palmer	1983: Neil Peart
2012: Phil Collins	2006: Charlie Watts	2000: Dave Weckl	1994: Larrie Londin	1988: Joe Morello	1982: Keith Moon
2011: Jim Chapin	2005: Stewart Copeland	1999: Roy Haynes	1993: Jeff Porcaro	1987: Billy Cobham	1981: John Bonham
2010: Hal Blaine	2004: Mike Portnoy	1998: Ringo Starr	1992: Max Roach	1986: Tony Williams	1980: Buddy Rich
2009: Mitch Mitchell	2003: Simon Phillips	1997: Terry Bozzio	1991: Art Blakey	1985: Louie Bellson	1979: Gene Krupa

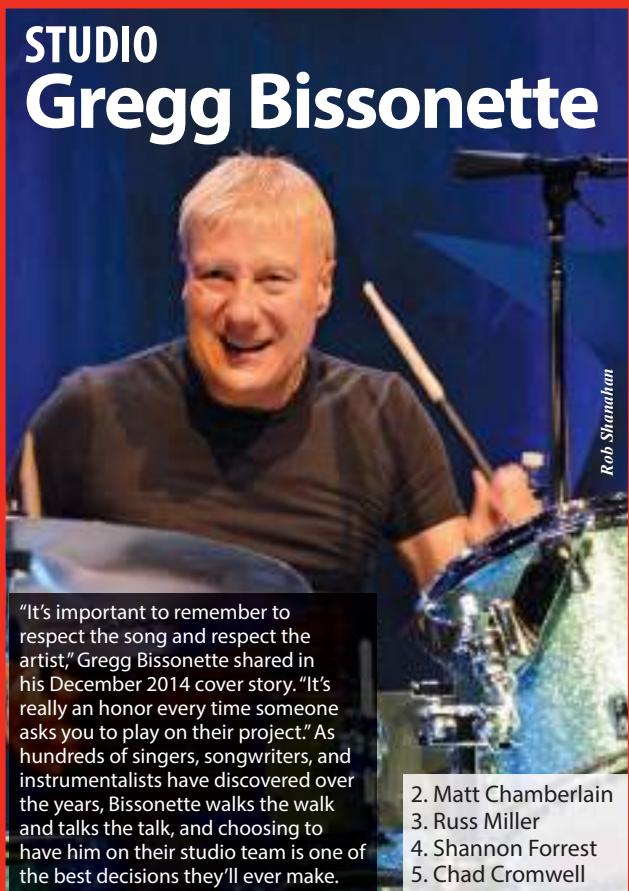
## MVP Ray Luzier



"They'd asked me to learn five tunes," Ray Luzier told *MD* in November 2013, recounting his audition for Korn. "But I learned thirty so I could be ready for whatever they threw at me. My best advice for any musician: Be overly prepared." It's that kind of dedication to his craft that has enabled Luzier to absolutely *slay* every time he sits behind his drums, whether it's with David Lee Roth, the supergroup KXM featuring d'Ug Pinnick and George Lynch, or any number of other acts.

2. Keith Carlock
3. Mike Johnston
4. Mark Guiliana
5. Rich Redmond

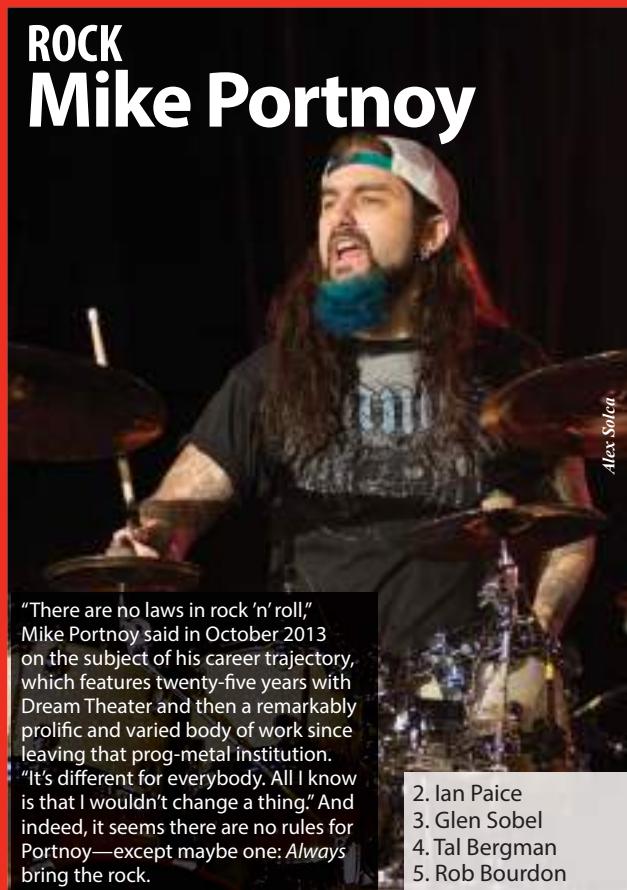
## STUDIO Gregg Bissonette



"It's important to remember to respect the song and respect the artist," Gregg Bissonette shared in his December 2014 cover story. "It's really an honor every time someone asks you to play on their project." As hundreds of singers, songwriters, and instrumentalists have discovered over the years, Bissonette walks the walk and talks the talk, and choosing to have him on their studio team is one of the best decisions they'll ever make.

2. Matt Chamberlain
3. Russ Miller
4. Shannon Forrest
5. Chad Cromwell

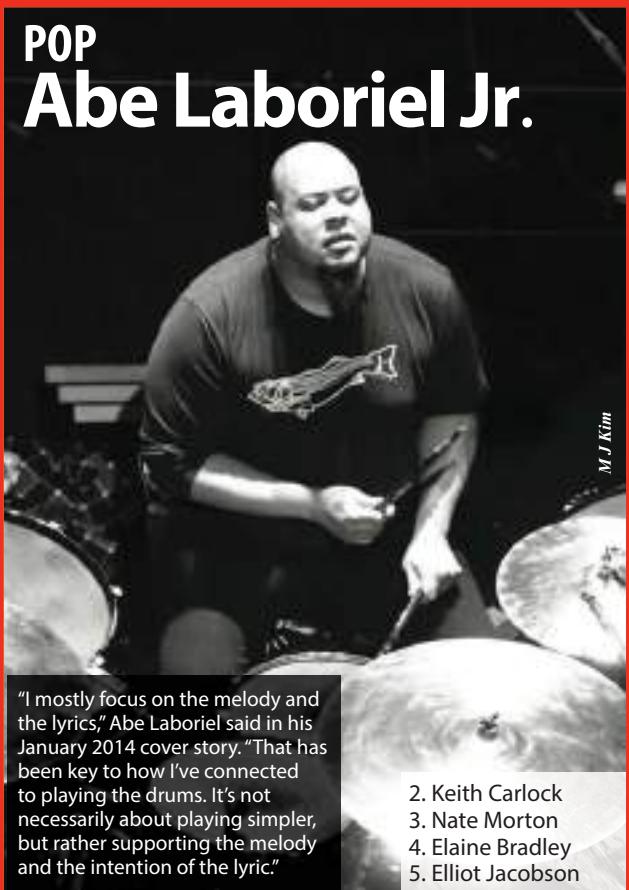
## ROCK Mike Portnoy



"There are no laws in rock 'n' roll," Mike Portnoy said in October 2013 on the subject of his career trajectory, which features twenty-five years with Dream Theater and then a remarkably prolific and varied body of work since leaving that prog-metal institution. "It's different for everybody. All I know is that I wouldn't change a thing." And indeed, it seems there are no rules for Portnoy—except maybe one: *Always bring the rock.*

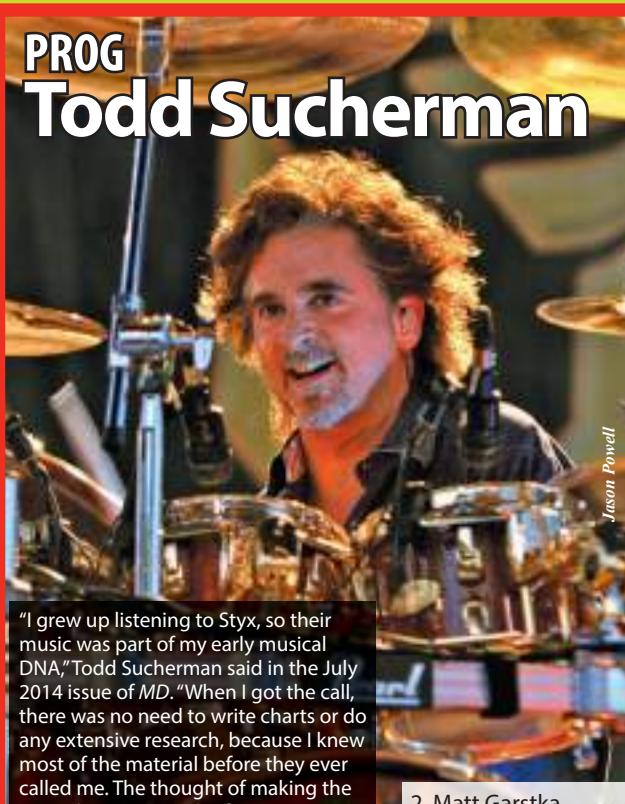
2. Ian Paice
3. Glen Sobel
4. Tal Bergman
5. Rob Bourdon

## POP Abe Laboriel Jr.



"I mostly focus on the melody and the lyrics," Abe Laboriel said in his January 2014 cover story. "That has been key to how I've connected to playing the drums. It's not necessarily about playing simpler, but rather supporting the melody and the intention of the lyric."

2. Keith Carlock
3. Nate Morton
4. Elaine Bradley
5. Elliot Jacobson

**PROG****Todd Sucherman**

Jason Powell

"I grew up listening to Styx, so their music was part of my early musical DNA," Todd Sucherman said in the July 2014 issue of *MD*. "When I got the call, there was no need to write charts or do any extensive research, because I knew most of the material before they ever called me. The thought of making the music happen was the first priority." It's a recipe for prog godliness: Know the music inside out, approach it with love, and attack it with ferocity.

2. Matt Garstka
3. Anup Sastry
4. Travis Orbin
5. Ryan Brown

**METAL****Vinnie Paul**

Brian Jones

"If I can't play something with lots of power," Hellyeah's Vinnie Paul told *MD* in September 2014, "I won't do it! I've always prided myself on realizing that the most important thing for the drums is to be the backbone of the band." That's metal gospel right there.

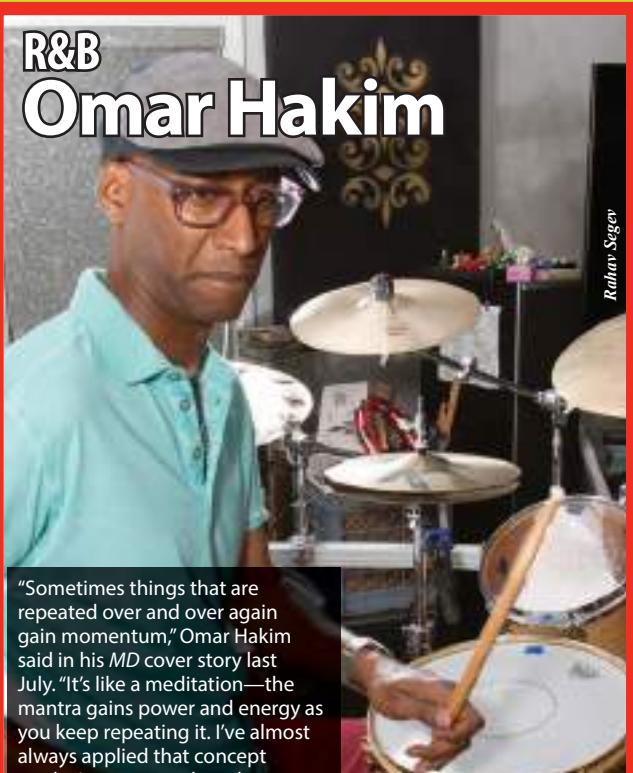
2. Ray Luzier
3. Blake Richardson
4. Brann Dailor
5. Alex Lopez

**FUSION****Steve Smith**

Alex Solca

"His relaxed but studious disposition is the picture of control, making him an obvious role model for thousands of drummers who've admired his flawless technique and absorbed his popular educational materials." That's what we said about Steve Smith in our March 2014 issue, in the historic feature "The 50 Greatest Drummers of All Time." Smith came in at number 27 on that reader-generated list, and his popularity clearly shows no signs of waning.

2. Mark Guiliana
3. Harvey Mason
4. Nate Wood
5. Jonathan Joseph

**R&B****Omar Hakim**

Rahav Segev

"Sometimes things that are repeated over and over again gain momentum," Omar Hakim said in his *MD* cover story last July. "It's like a meditation—the mantra gains power and energy as you keep repeating it. I've almost always applied that concept to playing grooves, but also to being in the moment and just letting the moment unfold." Now take that advice, dear reader, go forth, and groove.

2. Brian Frasier-Moore
3. Nikki Glaspie
4. Omar Tavarez
5. Amadeus

# VINNIE PAUL

## HELLYEAH

From his historic run with Pantera to world tours in the metal super group "Hellyeah", there's only one word to describe Vinnie Paul - Legendary.

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Congratulations Vinnie for winning the Metal category in Modern Drummers Reader's Poll.

*Keep making great music.*



Photo by Brian "Birdie" Jones



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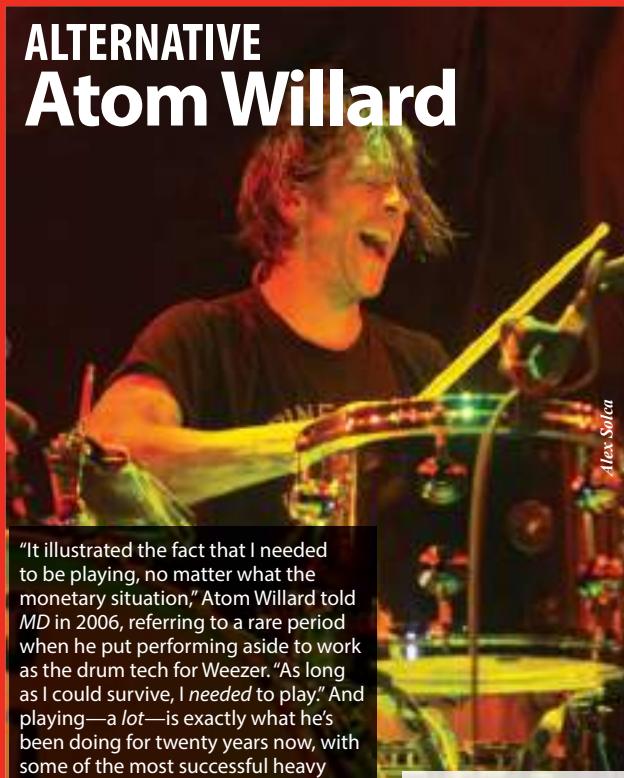
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## ALTERNATIVE Atom Willard

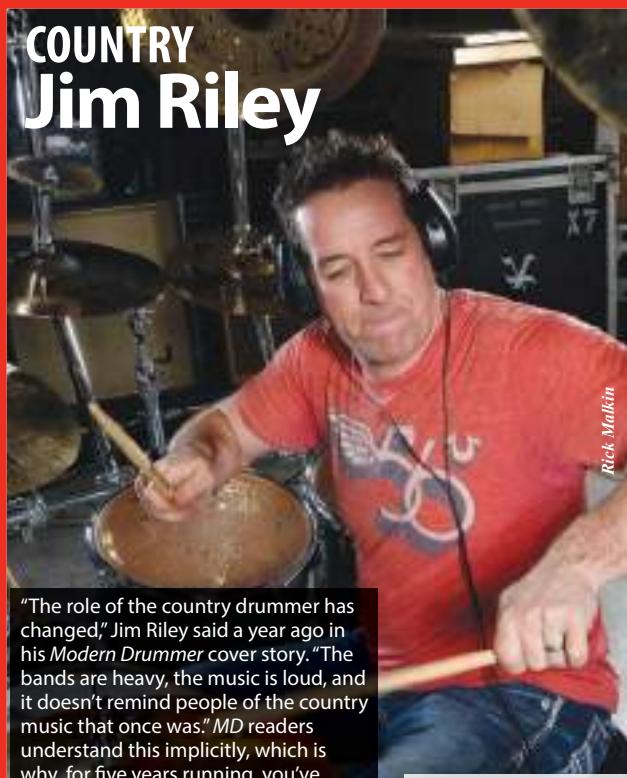


Alex Solca

"It illustrated the fact that I needed to be playing, no matter what the monetary situation," Atom Willard told *MD* in 2006, referring to a rare period when he put performing aside to work as the drum tech for Weezer. "As long as I could survive, I *needed* to play." And playing—a lot—is exactly what he's been doing for twenty years now, with some of the most successful heavy alternative bands, including Rocket from the Crypt, Angels and Airwaves, the Offspring, Social Distortion, Danko Jones, and, most recently, Against Me!

2. Bill Stevenson
3. Stella Mozgawa
4. Matt Helders
5. Jared Champion

## COUNTRY Jim Riley



Rick Malkin

"The role of the country drummer has changed," Jim Riley said a year ago in his *Modern Drummer* cover story. "The bands are heavy, the music is loud, and it doesn't remind people of the country music that once was." *MD* readers understand this implicitly, which is why, for five years running, you've put the Rascal Flatts drummer, whom bass player Jay DeMarcus lauds for his "unequalled intensity and passion," at the top of our Country category.

2. Tracy Broussard
3. Rich Redmond
4. Chris McHugh
5. Seth Rausch

## JAZZ Billy Hart



John Rogers/ECM Records

"How can I be overdue recognition," Billy Hart wondered in our August 2014 issue, "when this year alone I'm on four very interesting releases, one of them my own? I'm not underappreciated—I'm just trying to keep up with what's going on." Of course the jazz legend is being modest, as he's been doing far more than just "keeping up" ever since he made a name for himself in the '60s with jazz royalty like Jimmy Smith, Wes Montgomery, McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter, and Herbie Hancock. Keeping up? Nah, this man's pushing forward, always.

2. Dan Weiss
3. Gregory Hutchinson
4. Rudy Royston
5. Gerald Cleaver

## UP & COMING Alex Rudinger



Courtesy of Sumerian Records

"I don't think I could have done much of what I've done thus far without YouTube," Alex Rudinger said last March in his *MD* Up & Coming feature. "It helped me get exposure—as well as get some gigs." If drumming as intricate and passionate as Rudinger's is what we can expect from the YouTube generation, we say bring it on.

2. Maya Tuttle
3. Aric Improta
4. Valentino Arteaga
5. Hozoji Matheson-Margullis



**ABE LABORIEL JR.**  
WINNER: POP



**ALEX RUDINGER**  
WINNER: UP & COMING



**ATOM WILLARD**  
WINNER: ALTERNATIVE



**ERIC HARLAND**  
RECORDED PERFORMANCE (VIDEO)



**GREGORY HUTCHINSON**  
WINNER: JAZZ



**GGREGG BISSONETTE**  
WINNER: STUDIO



**HARVEY MASON**  
FUSION



**JAMEY HADDAD**  
FUSION



**JIM RILEY**  
WINNER: COUNTRY



**MATT CHAMBERLAIN**  
STUDIO



**MATT GARSTKA**  
PROG



**MIKE MANGINI**  
WINNER: EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT



**NATE MORTON**  
POP



**NEIL PEART**  
WINNER: RECORDED PERFORMANCE (VIDEO)



**NIKKI GLASPIE**  
R&B



**OMAR TAVAREZ**  
R&B



**PETER ERSKINE**  
CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR



**ROB BOURDON**  
ROCK



**RUSS MILLER**  
STUDIO



**SHANNON FORREST**  
STUDIO



**STEVE SMITH**  
WINNER: FUSION



**THOMAS LANG**  
WINNER: CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR



**TODD SUCHERMAN**  
WINNER: PROG



**VIRGIL DONATI**  
WINNER: RECORDED PERFORMANCE (AUDIO)

# REMO CONGRATULATES OUR 2015 READERS POLL WINNERS

## THE GREATEST HEADS IN DRUMMING



### HALL OF FAME

IAN PAICE

### MVP

RAY LUZIER  
RICH REDMOND

### ROCK

MIKE PORTNOY  
IAN PAICE  
TAL BERGMAN  
ROB BOURDON

### ALTERNATIVE

ATOM WILLARD

### POP

ABE LABORIEL JR.  
NATE MORTON

### METAL

RAY LUZIER  
BLAKE RICHARDSON  
ALEX LOPEZ

### PROG

TODD SUCHERMAN  
MATT GARSTKA  
TRAVIS ORBIN

### R&B

OMAR HAKIM  
NIKKI GLASPIE  
OMAR TAVAREZ

### JAZZ

GREGORY HUTCHINSON

### FUSION

STEVE SMITH  
HARVEY MASON  
NATE WOOD

### STUDIO

GGREGG BISSONETTE  
MATT CHAMBERLAIN  
RUSS MILLER  
SHANNON FORREST  
CHAD CROMWELL

### COUNTRY

JIM RILEY  
RICH REDMOND  
CHRIS MCHUGH  
SETH RAUSCH

### CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR

THOMAS LANG  
PETER ERSKINE  
STANTON MOORE  
RUSS MILLER

### UP & COMING

ALEX RUDINGER

### PERCUSSIONIST

ZAKIR HUSSAIN  
PEDRITO MARTINEZ  
JAMEY HADDAD  
JOHN MAHON

### EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

MIKE MANGINI:  
THE GRID (DVD)

PETER ERSKINE:  
JAZZ ESSENTIALS VOLUME 1 (APP)

WALFREDO REYES, SR. AND ELLIOT FINE: THE 2-IN-1 DRUMMER (BOOK/DVD)

### RECORDED PERFORMANCE, AUDIO

VIRGIL DONATI:  
IN THIS LIFE

TAYLOR HAWKINS:  
THE BIRDS OF SATAN (THE BIRDS OF SATAN)

### RECORDED PERFORMANCE, VIDEO

NEIL PEART: CLOCKWORK ANGELS TOUR (RUSH)

MIKE MANGINI: LIVE AT LUNA PARK (DREAM THEATER)

ZAKIR HUSSAIN WITH STEVE SMITH, ERIC HARLAND, AND GIOVANNI HIDALGO: THE SFJAZZ SESSIONS (ZAKIR HUSSAIN)

## PERCUSSIONIST Zakir Hussain



"Music finds a way to exist around the world, with the same positive energy," Zakir Hussain said in the July 2014 issue of *Modern Drummer*. "The way Elvin Jones addressed his drums, or Max Roach did, I can find a hundred similar things between them and how my teacher—my father [Alla Rakha]—found a way to talk through his drums." What the wizardly Zakir himself has had to say to audiences for decades has certainly been heard, loud and clear.

Courtesy of Moment Records

2. Pedrito Martinez
3. Steven Schick
4. Jamey Haddad
5. John Mahon

## CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR Thomas Lang



"My [drumming] approach is based in the classical tradition in terms of philosophy," Thomas Lang told *MD* in 2004, "and it's merged with the jazz tradition in terms of execution." Drummers who have been inspired by Lang have helped make his Bootcamps one of the most popular drum-tuition events today.

Alex Solca

2. Mike Johnston
3. Peter Erskine
4. Stanton Moore
5. Russ Miller

## EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT Mike Mangini *The Grid* (DVD)

2. Peter Erskine, *Jazz Essentials Volume 1* (app)
3. Hannes Grossmann, *Extreme Metal Drumming* (book/CD)
4. Zoro, *The Commandments of the Half-Time Shuffle* (book)
5. Walfredo Reyes Sr. and Elliot Fine, *The 2-in-1 Drummer* (book/DVD)



## RECORDED PERFORMANCE, AUDIO Virgil Donati *In This Life*

2. Taylor Hawkins, *The Birds of Satan* (the Birds of Satan)
3. Mark Guiliana, *Mehliana* (Brad Mehldau and Mark Guiliana)
4. Billy Martin, *Juice* (Medeski, Scofield, Martin & Wood)
5. Rudy Royston, *303*



## RECORDED PERFORMANCE, VIDEO Neil Peart *Clockwork Angels Tour* (Rush)

2. Mike Mangini, *Live at Luna Park* (Dream Theater)
3. Simon Phillips, *Live in Poland: 35th Anniversary Tour* (Toto)
4. Zakir Hussain with Steve Smith, Eric Harland, and Giovanni Hidalgo, *The SFJazz Sessions* (Zakir Hussain)
5. Brann Dailor, *Live at Brixton* (Mastodon)





The Chosen Ones  
Choose Yamaha.



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Congratulations from all of us to all of you.

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# Jojo Mayer

**His passionate call for artistic dissent may at first seem at odds with his tireless historical research. But everything Nerve's drummer/leader does and says has a singular purpose: feeding the fire of boundless creativity.**

Years from now, when those of us who save all our *Modern Drummer* issues dig back through the stack, we'll be hard-pressed to identify a dominant "type" of artist who appeared on the cover during this era of the early twenty-first century. Back in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, *MD* covers generally featured players who fell into one of several prevalent categories: members of popular bands, studio pros, jazz players.... With the upheavals brought on by this century's digital revolution, however, almost everybody who makes a living in the music industry has been forced to reexamine and to some extent reinvent his or her role in this mercurial environment, and typecasting has become less and less of a thing.

Drummers who saw the writing on the wall—and who carried a broad enough palette of paints to boldly splash their own positive narrative on top of the negative music-industry headlines—not only survive in this new reality but thrive in it. Jojo Mayer is one such artist. In fact, many observers see him as the ultimate new-millennium rhythmatist, filled to the gills with physical prowess and in possession of a historian's eye for the details of the past and a futurist's ear for where the music can go. Fiercely independent, Mayer has carved out his own place in the modern music landscape by, among other things, reverse engineering the previously unimaginable rhythmic possibilities of digital production, translating them to the acoustic drumset, and spearheading a new style of fusion-with-a-small-f that has captured the imagination of drummers and non-drummers alike.

Late last year Mayer issued the second installment of his hugely influential *Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer* DVD series, dedicated to illuminating the history of what we do with our feet. (Part one did wonders for our hands.) And this year he put out *Live in Europe*, the first in-concert document by his band, Nerve. Somehow that release makes Nerve's meld of human grooves and mechanical concepts seem even more astounding than the group's handful of blistering studio recordings have. That the band incorporates large swaths of improvisation into its sets not only makes the tightness of Nerve's onstage antics that much more remarkable, it pretty much blasts the word *impossible* out of any artist's wildest creative imaginings. This is music that's defiantly modern but also remarkably human. The name of the band is Nerve, after all—as you'll learn in the following interview, Mayer is above all concerned with making connections and eliciting *feelings*. Yeah, he can pontificate with the best of them, as you'll also see, but if you think it's some sort of musical philosophy seminar he's after with his art, you'll be quite surprised.

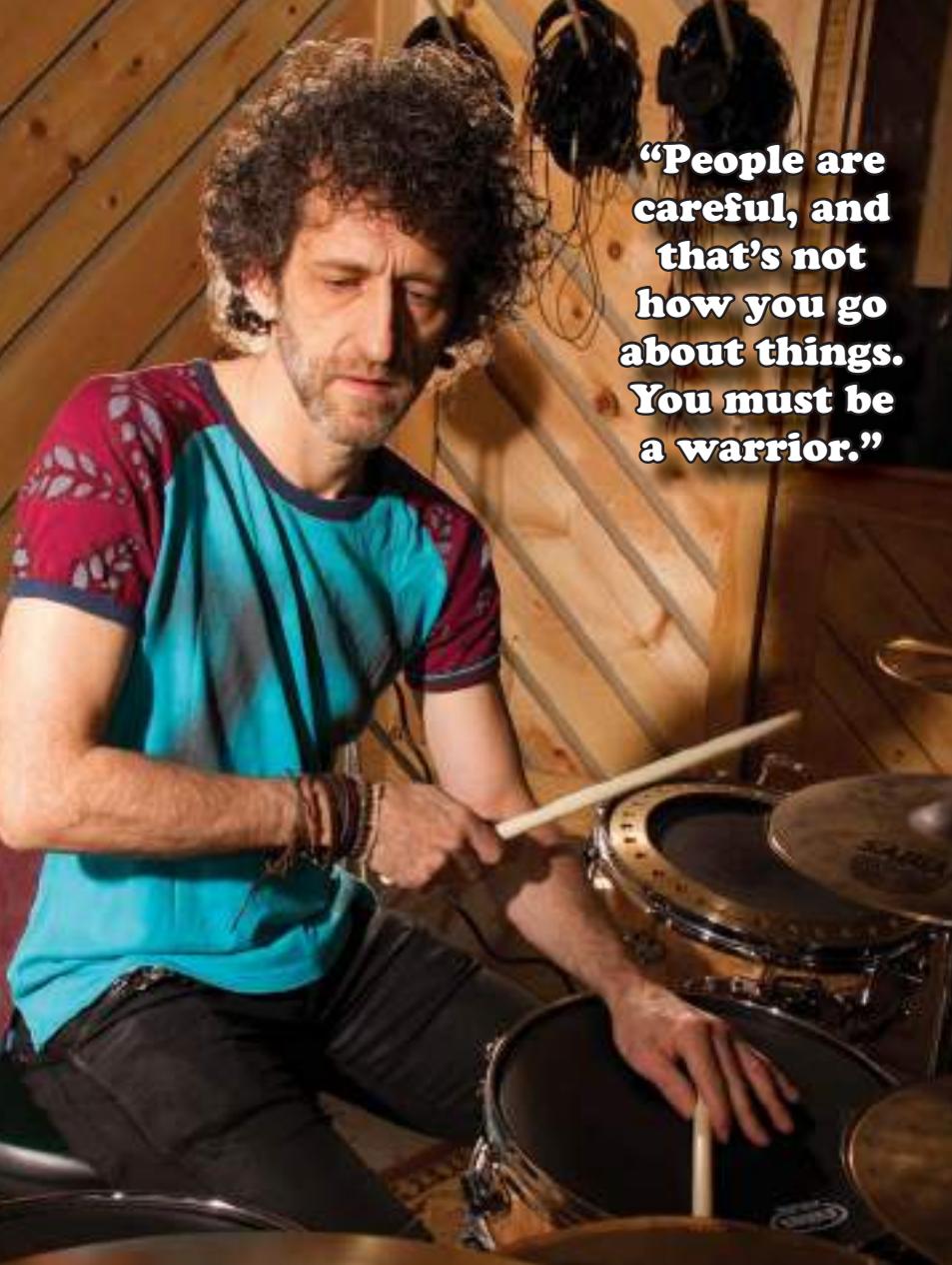
The word *nerve* also connotes boldness, a willingness to ruffle feathers in the process of making a point and seeking truth and beauty. This you will certainly pick up on as well.

We spoke with Mayer in a downtown New York City café, just a few days after the release party for *Secret Weapons Part II* at the Cutting Room club, a couple dozen blocks north of where we were now sharing an espresso and thoughts of where the music has come from, and where it can go.





**Story by Adam Budofsky  
Photos by Rahav Segev**



**"People are careful, and that's not how you go about things. You must be a warrior."**

**MD:** For *Secret Weapons II*, how did you research the way drummers historically played the pedals?

**Jojo:** It was like putting together a puzzle that has pieces missing. But I had enough pieces to see, "Oh, it's the Eiffel Tower," you understand? It was necessary to create the theory of how people played back then, and the pedals give it away. That's why I included the part in the DVD about the history of pedals. "Oh, they changed this. Something must have happened." People began to play louder, etc. And between this, listening to the music, and getting some accounts from people, mostly second or third generation—"My teacher used to study with that guy," or "Cozy Cole told me this"—you patch things together.

**MD:** It's tough to find good footage of the early players.

**Jojo:** Buddy Rich was documented a lot because of who he was and what he did. And he provides a lot of information,

because he was born at a time when he was able to see the original guys. Sanford Moeller, Billy Gladstone, George Lawrence Stone—they were in the orchestral pits in the theaters that his parents performed in.

Unfortunately, some things are very difficult to find out. Getting the history of the chain pedal with Al Duffy—I think I made fifty phone calls just to find out about that. But eventually I got it. And then I found this Saul Goodman timpani, which is also on the video.

**MD:** You've said that drummers aren't as familiar with the mechanics of their instrument as other types of musicians are.

**Jojo:** When you start to play a trumpet, violin, or most other instruments, you have to get in touch with the physicalities of the instruments and create a relationship—how does it feel, how does it sound? Drummers have the luxury of striking the drum with a stick and something will happen, and that's why they don't know as

much about their instruments as trumpet players or violinists or guitarists. We don't usually pay attention until we start to develop calluses or carpal tunnel. Most drummers are completely mystified about the workings of their drums, and they fall prey to nonsensical notions.

I conclude in my historical chapter that the industry never aims to produce the best that they can produce—they produce the best that they can sell. If consumers put their money in quality, more quality will be there. If consumers put their focus on price points, that's what will happen in the market. So a critical consumer serves the industry, because it's more fun to make good stuff than to hustle for a cheaper price point. My pedal might not be for everyone, and that's totally fine. I just wanted an alternative to what's already out there.

**MD:** One of the great things about your Sonor Perfect Balance pedal doesn't have anything to do with its performance. It's the fact that you thought of pragmatic things like easy fold-up.

**Jojo:** That's why they made the first pedal collapsible, because drummers need to get around. The industry is not paying enough attention to the working drummer. It puts the focus on the garage drummer—understandably, but it's unfortunate. Let's just look at hardware. Who needs a boom stand anymore? Boom stands were invented to suspend, like, a 22" China cymbal above a 14"/15" concert-tom configuration. Who plays that anymore? And boom stands don't sound good. Straight stands sound much better, because you get a deviation of energy with heavy stands. I use single-braced hardware.

**MD:** What's your feeling on suspension mounts on toms?

**Jojo:** Now, that's good. The best system is the original RIMS. However, most of the time I've had a problem with drums having too much sustain. I want less. I want a *kunk*—a good, chesty, resonant sound.

**MD:** One of your themes is working with gear in the most efficient way possible, including this idea of minimizing friction on the bass drum pedal board. I love that you tack a leather sole onto your sneaker. But...

**Jojo:** I know where you want to go with this.

**MD:** So...

**Jojo:** Yeah, I tried ball bearings, but with them there's the weight consideration. And I tried to do stuff with things like Teflon. But Teflon is hazardous because it's toxic, and it wears off. I'm about things that make sense, and the leather sole is fine. All those guys back in the day used to play with them.

Gym shoes were not considered street wear until the late '50s, when James Dean and Marlon Brando popularized them. And the dress code for drummers was dress shoes, so up until the mid-'60s drummers played with leather soles, and their technique—they were all sliding on the pedals. Sonny Payne and Buddy and all those guys who had ridiculous foot technique, they were all using leather soles.

**MD:** In your DVD you allow for the opposite of what is usually preached in terms of hitting the bass drum, which is that you need to play off the head. Sometimes you want the sound produced when you keep the beater against the head, though.

**Jojo:** It's a good sound. I'm about choice, about curiosity, about evolution. Not dogma. I'm absolutely for breaking the rules—but you have to know what the rules are.

**MD:** I got pushback once from some drummers when I was excited about a used single-headed Slingerland kit I'd bought.

**Jojo:** Yeah, I remember those, with the silver strip on the bottom of the shell. A lot of that is fear. What's so scary about being playful? I don't like to work—I wanna *play*. Unfortunately, the road to playing involves some shedding, some work.

**MD:** At the release party for *Secret Weapons II*, you said that when you started playing off the bass drum head, you found that your balance was compromised. Just the fact that you said that was encouraging to the rest of us.

**Jojo:** Oh, I made so many mistakes. I had to trouble-shoot them, and that's why I know what I'm talking about. The road to clarity is bumpy. It was hard.

This was after Freddie Gruber showed me the constant-release technique. I started practicing and something terrible happened—I couldn't do it anymore. And then I lost my confidence about playing the way I used to play. I had a studio session and the bass drum sounded really bad—*brrrrrp-brrrrp-brrrrp*. I called up Freddie: "Man, my shit is messed up. I need another lesson." And Freddie was like, "I'm not your nanny! You had the best lesson; just do what I told you!" And you know what? He was right. I just needed more time.

That's the thing about Freddie that I think a lot of people didn't understand. I had two lessons with him, and Freddie didn't give you solutions. He certainly didn't give them to me. He gave you riddles. And if you solved the riddle, then you *owned it*. I own Freddie's blueprints, because I had to work very hard at it. And I think that was his

intention. He had disdain for a lot of young players, though. "There are guys out there that if I show them certain techniques, they'll play rubbish music with it." The worst thing you could do with Freddie was walk up to him and ask for a technique lesson. He would hate that.

**MD:** I've noticed a kind of disconnect with some metal drummers. Despite how heavy the music is, as their parts become more complicated, they physically move less and less. But one of the fun things about watching drummers is seeing how physically they play. Their heads move, their shoulders move, even if a lot of that stuff doesn't technically have anything to do with accomplishing a musical goal. You obviously have an immense amount of physical control, but you emote as well.

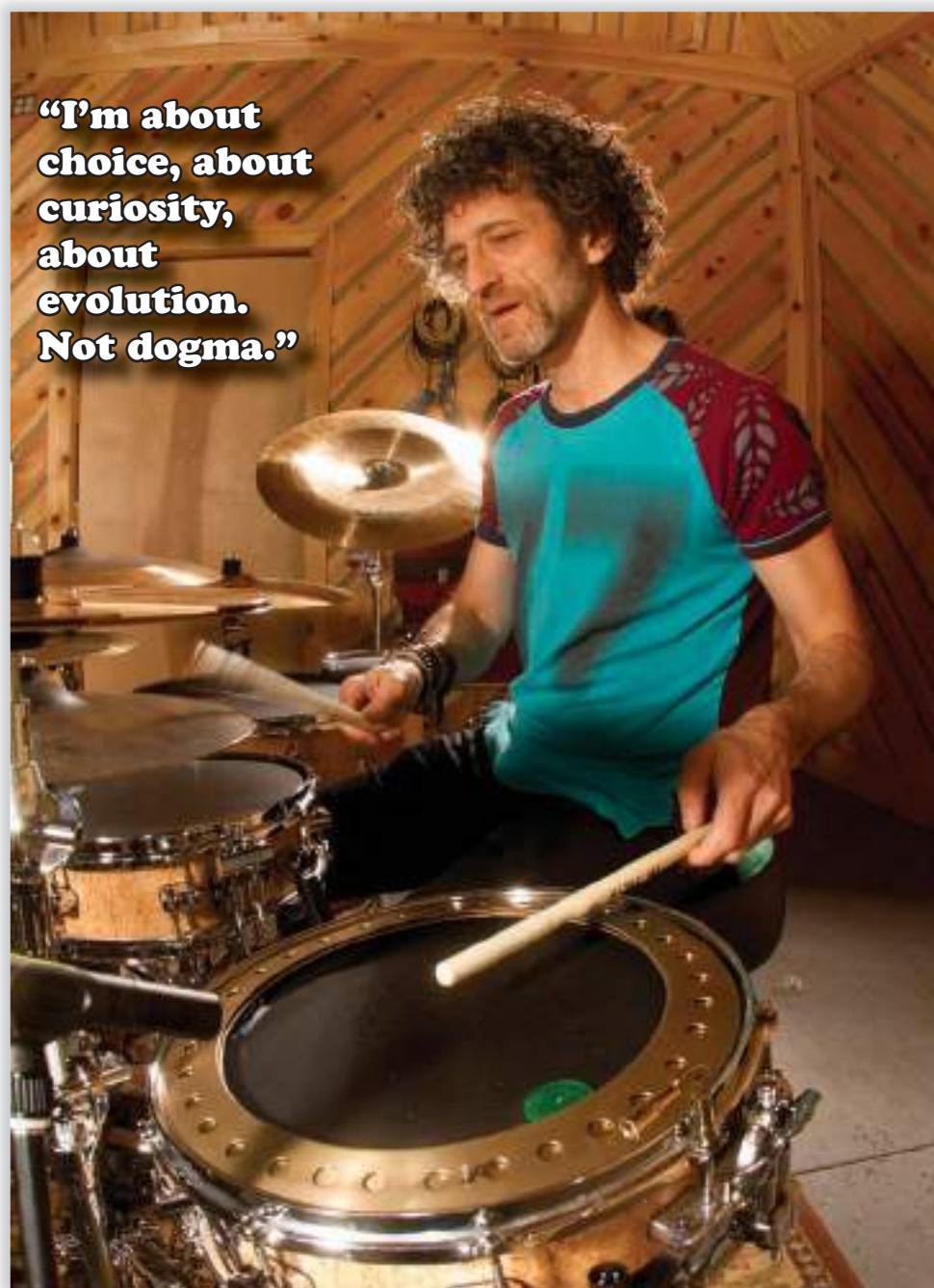
**Jojo:** Let me give you something, because I

think I know where this has to go. With math rock, there are some interesting guys out there. Let's take Zach Hill. He could be mistaken for someone who cannot play. But that guy has a certain deepness to him that I have to say, "Wow, this is cool. This is not the type of music that I would play, but I can see that this guy is plugged into something current. This is art."

**MD:** His playing is very idiosyncratic.

**Jojo:** Yes, it is what it is. I don't know where he's coming from. I've never met him. But no matter how you set up your kit, whether you play open-handed or not—none of that matters. What matters is the effect that you create in other people.

I had a key experience when I started to work in electronic music. No electronic producer would ever be impressed by a display of speed, because he can just turn a



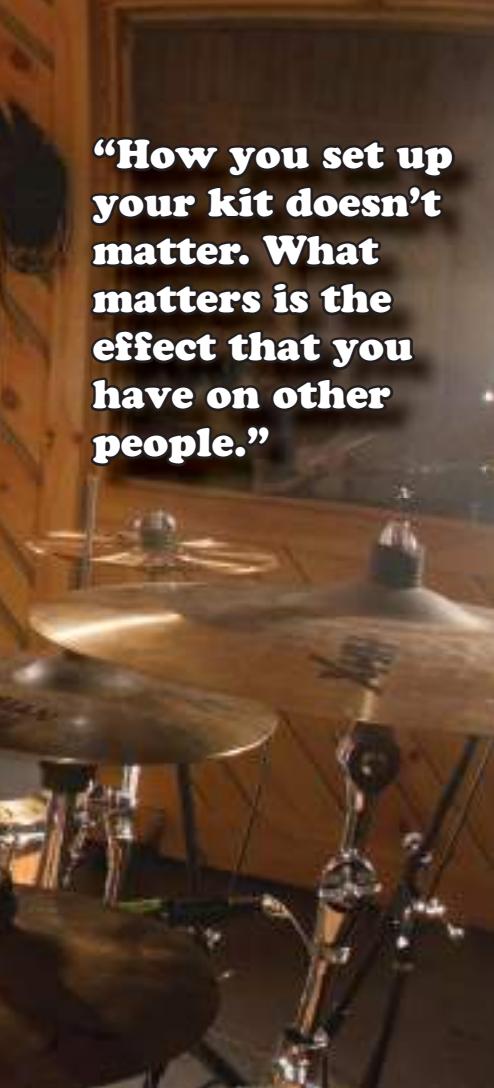
knob. So I started to think about the effect that speed has, not speed itself. That changed my playing. If I play something really fast, a drummer's mind might be blown: *How many hours did he have to put in to get that fast?* That is not my concern anymore. If I generate speed, it's because I want to trigger an emotional reaction in people, and not just drummers.

Let me share something. I've gotten different levels of feedback from audiences, from standing ovations to apathy. Some of the strongest reactions I've gotten are not because I did something extremely difficult, but I simply dropped my stick and acknowledged to them, Oh, I dropped my stick, and reached for another—just sharing that with the audience. *He's one of us—he's a human being. He made a mistake and acknowledges it.* Of course I don't want to miss a cue, but honesty goes a long way. So what I'm saying is, if I can trigger inspiration by doing something as simple as acknowledging that I made a mistake, I shall not be afraid of making mistakes anymore.

**MD:** You mentioned at the Cutting Room that at some point you made the decision to be a leader. Was that based on specific experiences?

**Jojo:** It's not that I didn't enjoy playing with other people. I just understood that my nature is to be a leader, not a sideman. Being a sideman, you must care about the





**"How you set up your kit doesn't matter. What matters is the effect that you have on other people."**

## Jojo's Setup

**Drums:** Sonor SQ2 (medium-weight Scandinavian birch)

- A. 4.5x14 snare
- B. 4.5x13 snare
- C. 14x20 bass drum
- D. 14x15 floor tom
- E. 7x8 tom

**Cymbals:** Sabian

- 1. 14" Hoop Crash
- 2. 10" Chopper
- 3. 14" Vault Jojo Mayer Fierce Hats
- 4. 19" HHX OMNI
- 5. 10" Vault Jojo Mayer Fierce Hats
- 6. 14" HHX China/13" prototype hi-hat stack
- 7. 22" HHX OMNI
- 8. 19" Vault Jojo Mayer Fierce Crash
- 9. 20" prototype China

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Jojo Mayer signature model

**Hardware:** Sonor Perfect Balance bass drum pedal

music, no matter how bad the circumstances are. I was getting tired of dealing with the psychological aspects of having to deal with certain egos, just to keep myself out there. I have something to say that's unique, and I needed something where I didn't need to show my résumé, who I played for, to get attention. There are 15 million people living in this city. All I need is a platform to communicate with them directly.

**MD:** Your TED talk got into this idea of expression in modern music lying somewhere between 0 and 1. Can you elaborate on that?

**Jojo:** As I exposed myself to more programmed music, I became more aware of the contrasts between electronic media and real-time playing. If you're a jazz drummer, you only live in a real-time world, so you don't have the contrast. But I was exposed to the premeditated medium of programmed music. The contrast creates the tension. And I understood that this is something that we should cultivate and be aware of.

**MD:** That's something that didn't exist twenty years ago, drummers manipulating time in a way that seems to be the opposite of the trance effect.

**Jojo:** If you're referring to the J Dilla type of programming with the glitchy beats that kind of don't line up, that sound like

mistakes, that creates a feel and can be as trancy as something that's slick. This is like drinking wine. If you're a connoisseur of food or wine, you are going to get bored of slick tastes. You want something that invigorates you or challenges you—Oh, there's this new type of pepper, or I like the way this lime mixes with ginger and this other type of pepper. You become more refined and have more interesting taste.

**MD:** Pursuing these ideas can be too far removed from some people's comfort zones.

**Jojo:** Yeah, well, life starts outside of the comfort zone.

**MD:** Speaking of that, you mentioned singing as one of the things you're focusing on now. Singing and dancing aren't talked about enough in relation to drumming.

**Jojo:** Well, they belong together. A lot of music is dance music. To have a drummer sitting in the trenches and realizing that I was playing five over four or whatever is nice and flattering, but if a girl gets up and dances, that's a compliment of the highest order. You can't be more honest than that. Totally fine with me.

**MD:** How about the singing?

**Jojo:** It's an adventure. I grew up with the notion that I am a terrible singer, but then I was like, that's a bad excuse not to sing. I have a talent for music, so I should be able to find a solution to be able to sing. I'm not ready to let it out of the bag yet. But it's self-discovery and it helps my drumming. It's very interesting, because I'm able to tap into something that I knew all my life and see it from a completely different angle. I'm trying to retain a sense of innocence, like, Wow, I can observe myself learning. I'm teacher and student in one person. It's kinda cool, frustrating sometimes.

**MD:** Hearing yourself back?

**Jojo:** Oh, God.

**MD:** I tried to sing one of my own songs a while back, and somehow I automatically fell into this British accent. I went with it, but I still sort of squirm when I listen back.

**Jojo:** Well, the hardest thing is to be yourself. I used to be into the martial arts, and Bruce Lee, who had chops for a thousand years, once said that you can be cocky, you can be all sorts of things, but to express yourself honestly is very hard to do. That's when you tap into the nature of music and sharing. Getting back to my deciding not to be a sideman anymore, I had learned that some people who were accomplished, rich, and famous could also be miserable and living in hell. Then there are people who are truly inspiring, and you're like, what makes the difference?

Becoming a leader, I started figuring out

Jojo Mayer

that the exchange between the artist and audience is kind of like the exchange of love between mother and infant. There's two types of love: conditional and unconditional. The love of the mother toward the child is unconditional because it's evolutionarily motivated: You want to keep your DNA going. The love of the kid to the mother is conditional, because the kid, even though it knows very little, does know that without the attention of the mother it will starve or freeze to death or whatever. So the kid becomes manipulative by smiling or crying, so that the mother gives

the kid what it wants.

With the artist and the audience it's exactly the same thing. Some artists are in the position of the child, and they long for approval, which is applause. Without applause, they're scared to death, and they'll do anything to get approval. They will even become someone else. They'll lie to themselves. And there are iconic people who have changed the world that were like this, and they ended up on the path of self-destruction. Then there's other people who are in the position of the mother. They just give. "This is what I have. I can't

lie to you. I know that not everybody's going to like it." And those are the people you want to be around. Those are the truly great people.

**MD:** It seems that the disposition of most people is that they don't want to be a leader.

**Jojo:** That's fine.

**MD:** But then where do they go with it? Some musicians aren't even that interested in having an original voice on their instrument. It's not one of the things they strive for.

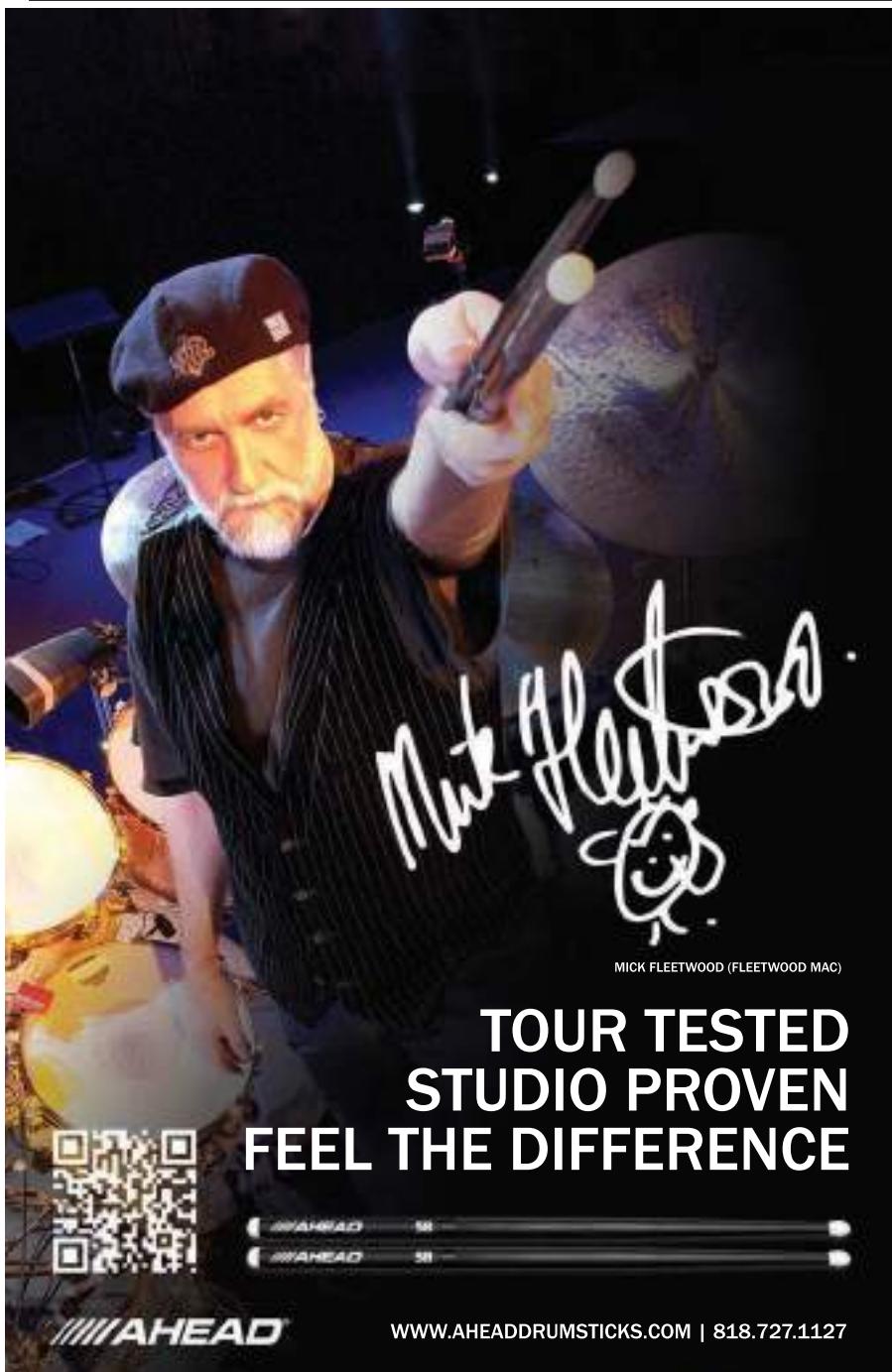
**Jojo:** Well, there are alpha people and betas, and we need both. It can't be a world full of alphas. I'm an alpha male, and I have to surrender to it. But I need people that I can share my concerns with. I need warriors that go with me, and some people do not want to do that, because there are pros and cons to any position. Being a leader has its drawbacks and advantages; the sideman thing does too. I'm responsible for my sidemen. Nerve really is a band now, though. John [Davis, bass player] is an equal partner, which is fantastic. We share responsibilities—I do more of that, he does more of this. It's a perfect symbiosis. He's glad he doesn't have to do my job and I'm glad I don't have to do his.

**MD:** Electronic culture has obviously influenced your music making. It has also affected the way you do business. To what extent?

**Jojo:** We should not become machinelike in order to live with machines. Robots were invented to do the dirty work so we can enjoy life and have an espresso. Unfortunately it's been shown that Twitter is more addictive than nicotine, and Facebook makes people depressed because you create an avatar of who you are, and by doing that you create a currency, a tangible for how popular in society you are: I have 300 likes, I have 3,000 likes.... So people get completely isolated and lonelier than ever.

But I must say, as a professional tool, the social networks have given me independence from what's left of the music industry. For the first time I'm actually making money with my recordings, because of all the people who follow Nerve, 25 percent buy everything we do. And it doubles every year.

At this point I'm completely independent from old protocol. The only ways that I'm still connected to old protocol is by doing interviews like this or by having Hudson distribute my DVD. I'm completely independent, and it works, because no label can offer me anything I don't have or won't have two years from now. The reason



I do interviews because it's an opportunity to voice my concern. Yes, I am successful. I have no economic worries. The days of struggle, economically speaking, are behind me. I'm living the dream. I'm feeling extremely happy and thankful that I can do this. But my story is one of dissent, of not doing it the way everyone else does it.

I can afford to be honest, and I want to encourage people to take initiative and say, "This is who I am." I'm also a very self-critical person, and being self-confident is a long process. You bump your head many times. And then maybe you become overconfident and you get hurt. *Maybe I'm not that good yet.* And I got cocky, and boom, I'm presented with a bill. [laughs] So it's a long process. At this point, I understand a couple things, looking at the world the way it is and being like, Yes, I'm reclaiming the shamanistic power of drums. I want to be able to speak to the next generation and be like, "It's up to you to grab it!" Just be confident. Don't listen too much to the old protocol, which is still here, like a big noise. But it will evaporate.

I have big hopes in the seven-year-olds and the nine-year-olds, waking up to become people. I think that they are going to be better than my generation and the one before mine. You know, we're a disappointment. We were handed over a legacy from the Beatles and James Brown and John Coltrane and Charlie Parker and Hendrix and all this amazing stuff. And what have we handed over to the next generation? Very little. In the music world at least. But look at someone like Banksy—now there's a hero. That's a guy who figured it out. I'm waiting to find someone who does to music what he did to art. It's possible. It's just a paradigm shift.

**MD:** At the DVD release party, you used the analogy of a monkey in a box to communicate the idea that in order to move forward, we have to let some things go. Does that extend explicitly to drumming?

**Jojo:** Do you know the John Bonham logo, the three circles that intersect? Those three circles I see as the physical or technical world, or the body; the conceptual world, or the mind—the choices; and the emotional world. There are areas where those three areas overlap, but you can also separate them.

Now, say there's a drummer who's ready to emote and share his feelings but is technically unable to execute his ideas. He's going to be frustrated. Now let's say there's a drummer who has a meticulous understanding of the physics of his instrument

and a very good concept, but he cannot emote. He will only be interesting to other drummers. He's going to be a clinician. He's going to do incredible things, but your girlfriend is going to go out and grab a coffee and meet you after. [laughs] Then maybe you have technical or body understanding and you are ready to emote, but you have no concept. You're going to become a clone of somebody who's already out there. And you're going to miss authenticity, which is very important.

So, all of us have to allow ourselves to be honest and aware of our emotions. We want to share these things with someone else, so we have to put them into some sort of structure so people can understand it. And then we need technique to do it. So in the process you make acquisitions of knowledge. You process this, but then you have to let things go, because you cannot be everything. You cannot be Jack DeJohnette and John Bonham and Stewart Copeland and Elvin Jones. But you can simplify and find clarity, and you find clarity when you remove things and you spend time with simple things.

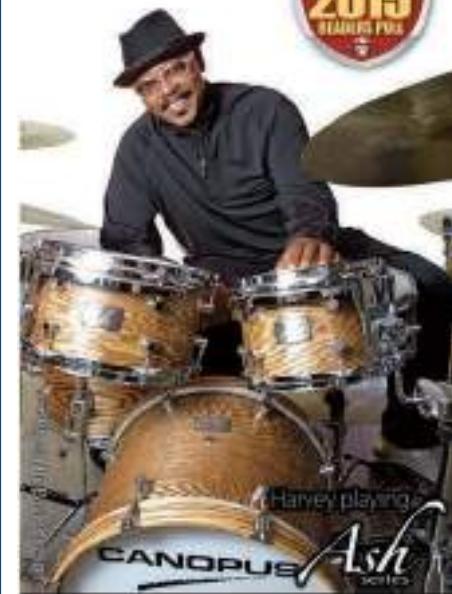
To paraphrase Gustav Mahler, who said one of my favorite things about music, "Don't pray to the ashes, pass on the fire." When we talk about that fire, it's in Mozart, it's in Beethoven, it's in Louis Armstrong, it's in Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Charlie Parker, the Beatles, Fats Domino, Hendrix, Zeppelin, Aphex Twin, the Chemical Brothers—it's always the same. And this is what I'm trying to capture. I can be a body for that to be shared, like the shade of a lamp that diffuses the light, so that people are not blinded by it but illuminated by it.

Now, everybody figured those things out way before we were born. It's just our job to find our own solutions. And what illuminates must bear burning, so sometimes it's painful and frustrating. Dealing with those things, that's when it becomes complicated. And then you add the element of having to make money at it to support yourself—it's going to make it extremely complicated. Anyone who promises you, "Do it this way and you're going to be fine"...there are a lot of snake oil salesmen out there, and maybe even people who sell you snake oil but don't realize that it's snake oil. But it is. It's a jungle out there.

What I'm trying to do is show people that you can be honest and you don't have to have fear. One of the things about this monkey in the box is that he's afraid of starving. People are careful, and that's not how you go about things. You must be

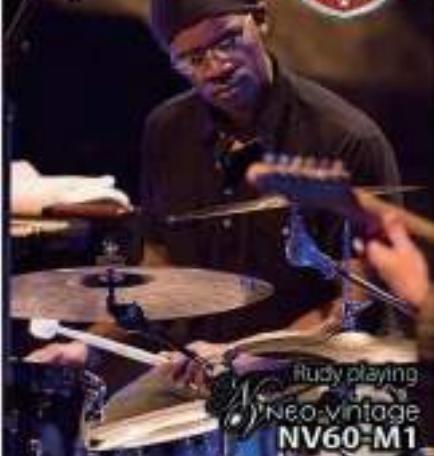
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## Jojo Mayer

enthusiastic, you must be a warrior. This is how I like things to be. That's what rock 'n' roll is all about, and that's what jazz is all about. I'm only interested in that fire, not in the ashes. Unfortunately that fire isn't in rock 'n' roll anymore or in jazz anymore, because those art forms have expired their capacity to hold the fire of the present. So everything that I do is an attempt at being authentic, and as much as I love jazz and rock, it's just that the time has passed to surrender those aesthetics. They're hollow for the most part.

I don't want approval from my heroes. It's nice if I get it. But I want approval from the next generation by opening a door for them. That's very important. And our generation has been so selfish, being handed down that legacy from Miles and Coltrane and all those guys. I think it's time for the people who are in the position to open doors, so we can witness the next generation make good shit again.

**MD:** Music where we have no idea what it's going to sound like.

**Jojo:** Exactly. And not go, "Oh, man, there's no rock 'n' roll." Rock 'n' roll will not sound like rock 'n' roll. That's not going to happen. But it's fine—we can still play the old music and honor it. It's important to understand the history and honor it. But show me something that gives me something a Monk record can give me.

**MD:** Maybe one of the reasons people still get excited about a new Zeppelin box set is because they see a lack of leadership among their own peers. They want their father figures. More Ramones T-shirts are being worn today than when the band existed.

**Jojo:** Yeah, and that's absurd. Where CBGB used to be is a John Varvatos flagship store selling leather jackets for \$3,000. It's the opposite of rock 'n' roll. Not to say it's bad design; it's good design. But this is a youth culture that disguises mass consumerism as rebellion. And they disguise conformism as individuality. That's why I'm saying that we need artists to make people see what's really going on. And I have an ulterior motive for that. I'd love to live in a better world with more culture and more concern. So that's why I do what I do.

To bring it back to the drums, I don't want to inspire a generation of garage drummers who are able to pull off incredible four-way-coordination stuff, because we have seen that it hasn't given birth to anything cultural. It's kind of like cars with five wheels. We have to bring it back to the nature of...not mathematics, but the guts of drumming.

**MD:** In what ways can you do that on a

practical level?

**Jojo:** You can look at the paradiddle, for instance. If you practice a paradiddle as a coordination exercise, everything that will come out of playing a paradiddle will sound like a coordination exercise. But look at a paradiddle as a melody. It's a very simple melody, only two notes. But once you surrender to thinking of it that way, melodies will come out of paradiddles, not mathematics. What you practice is not as important as *how* you practice. Your mindset. If you go about things in a mathematical way, it will always sound mathematical. So be aware of those things.

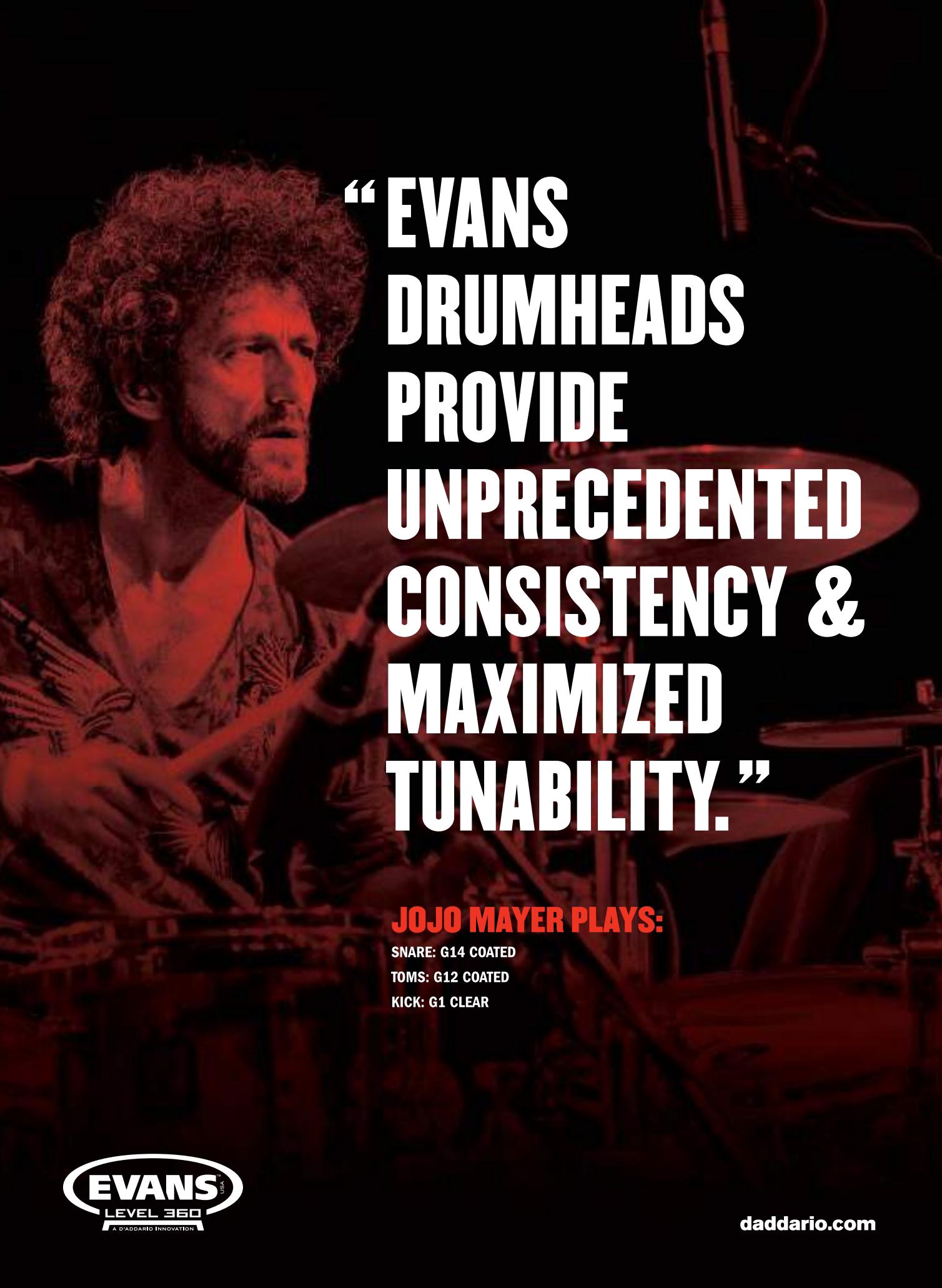
Now, when we're talking about *Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer*, we're talking about physics, the circle in the Bonham logo that is the body. Whether we're talking 5,000 years ago or 5,000 years from now, if I were to pick up that pepper shaker and drop it, it would fall to the floor. There are certain things that will not change, because we are talking about physical attributes. As I say in the introduction of the video, I am not a technique snob. Technique is just a method to achieve any desired effect. If you can create that effect, it's fine. If you create that effect and you hurt yourself, maybe there's a better solution. That's my approach to technique.

**MD:** The beauty is that the very building blocks of your videos is self-analysis: seeing what your body does, either naturally or out of habit or imitation, deciding for yourself whether that's the best way to go from point A to point B, and if not, here's another way. There's really no baggage to your approach. We get to see how you play, obviously, but if we took your performances out of it, your method is still valid.

**Jojo:** I simply want to make drummers more critical, give them more than just a method but a blueprint of how to observe things. That's the invisible byproduct you get with *Secret Weapons*. You acquire a tool of observing yourself, which is something that's very underdeveloped with a lot of students—and teachers.

The most important thing an artist can do today is light a fire and calibrate people's perception so they become curious again. Because without curiosity we're going to turn into executives of something. We become robotic consumers. So that's what I want to do, ignite curiosity. And the curiosity will be the antidote to frustration—because you are going to hurt, you're going to get tired and frustrated because you won't be able to go as fast as you want to. But the curiosity, that's going to keep you going.





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# Jojo's Modified Swiss Triplets

## A Slick Sticking for Quick Jungle Grooves

by Terry Branam

Jojo Mayer's command of the jungle/drum 'n' bass style took the drumming community by storm. Mayer manages to traverse the blinding tempos and computerized breakbeats effortlessly, thanks to flawless technique and his creative use of rudiments like the Swiss triplet.

Here's the Swiss triplet in its original form.

Mayer often modifies the rudiment by inserting an extra right-hand stroke, which turns it into a grouping of four.

Check out the opposing rhythms that the individual hands play when the extra note is added.

If you flatten the flams and place the lead hand on a cymbal, you get this:

Mayer uses these figures inside grooves to imitate breakbeats. Here's an example.

Another way that Jojo uses this figure is to play it consecutively. Note how the left-hand rhythm has a looped effect.

MUSIC KEY		
open	H.H.	R.C.
	x	x
S.D.	●	
B.D.	●	
H.H.	x	
w/foot		

These rhythms can be displaced forward or backward to further randomize the sound.

Finally, experiment with connecting the phrases using single and double strokes to come up with some unique grooves.

The following transcriptions are from Mayer's appearance at the 2005 Modern Drummer Festival with his band Nerve. Pay attention to the subtle ways he plays inside the accents.

"Far" (2:06)

"Jabon" (2:46)

$\text{♩} = 184$

10

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# Britt Walford

by Hank Shteamer

**His list of recordings over the past three decades isn't vast, and his drumming charms aren't the type that 32nd-note junkies fawn over. But his contributions to landmark albums by indie-rock kings and queens cannot be overstated.**

Sitting in a Vietnamese noodle shop in Greenwich Village, Britt Walford is polite and gracious. Compliment the drummer, and he sighs and utters a humble, "Man..." in his nasal Louisville drawl. But ask him about the *why* of what he does—his beautifully loose sense of groove, for instance, or his masterful way with ghost notes—and he seems bewildered. His most common response? "I guess that's just how I heard it."

It's somehow fitting that Walford's drumming might be a mystery even to the man himself. In the years since its early-'90s breakup, Slint, the indie-rock band that brought John Britton Walford to the world's attention, has inspired awe and curiosity worthy of a lost civilization. *Breadcrumb Trail*, an excellent 2014 documentary by Lance Bangs, fills in a lot of the facts, and an expanded reissue of the band's magnum opus, 1991's *Spiderland*, provides key context in the form of demos, outtakes, and a scrapbook of photos and flyers. But, even now, *Spiderland* seems almost like an apparition. It's not a drummer's record in the classic sense—you don't get the feeling

that many have puzzled over its parts in the practice room—but Walford's determinedly laid-back feel and wide, rumbling sound are integral to its hypnotic power. In 2014, *Spiderland*'s percussive DNA resurfaced on *This World*, the debut by the hypnotic post-rock trio Watter, Walford's first new project in nearly two decades.

Schooled in classical piano from age six, Walford began drumming in sixth grade, when he joined the Languid and Flaccid, which included his classmate and future Slint collaborator Brian McMahan. "It was purely a creative thing," Walford says of his early, self-taught drumming, "which was different from piano. That was a training thing." Aside from a brief audio snippet in *Breadcrumb Trail*, no recordings of this group have circulated, but the documentary contains anecdotes of the prepubescent band—friends dubbed Walford and McMahan "the baby hardcores"—sharing bills with menacing Louisville punk crews such as Malignant Growth.

Walford's list of early drumming influences is brief. "I listened to hard rock and lots of AM radio music, so the only

thing in particular was maybe AC/DC—Phil Rudd," Britt explains. "And then, once we were listening to hardcore, Jeff Nelson of Minor Threat was a big influence. That's the biggest step I ever took in drumming—in math class, trying to figure out the Minor Threat beat and how the foot was independent from the right hand."

Walford cofounded his first mature group, Maurice, with another future Slint bandmate, guitarist David Pajo. *The First Shall Be Last*, a 1985 Maurice demo available digitally from Pajo's Blazebirth Records, is the earliest extended



document of Walford's drumming. Maurice played a hyperactive, dauntingly complex form of progressive punk—miles away from the emotive, Hüsker Dü-style proto indie rock of Squirrel Bait, with which Walford had worked briefly after the Languid and Flaccid. (As he would later do in Slint, the drummer also contributed select guitar parts to Maurice.) With typical self-deprecation, Walford refers to the Maurice period as one of “peak silliness,” probably a reference to the manic, overstuffed nature of the songs. But while Walford’s hardcore-informed performances on tracks like “Imitate Christ” lack the grace and poise of his later playing, his ideas are ambitious and his execution fearless.

This daring approach carried over into Slint, whose early output bears some traces of Maurice’s off-the-wall invention. *Tweez*, the band’s often-overlooked 1989 debut, features a crushingly massive drum sound courtesy of producer Steve Albini. “I liked the Samhain snare drum sound, which is a pretty weird sound,” Walford says. (Like his bandmates, the drummer was a serious Glenn Danzig enthusiast, and he got to know the horror-punk legend when Maurice toured with Samhain in 1986.) “I think Steve was like, ‘No,’ and I was like, ‘Okay!’ So he was a huge influence on how that all sounded.” The record is the perfect place to appreciate Walford’s skillful navigation of mathy rhythms and counter-intuitive structures; listen to the lurching grooves on “Charlotte” or the loopy circus-fusion breakdowns in “Pat.”

While the band’s sound at this time seems to bear traces of prog, metal, and jazz, Walford portrays Slint circa *Tweez* as an island unto itself, simply the product of what he terms “audacious experimentation.” “I listened to Metallica’s *Kill ‘Em All* a

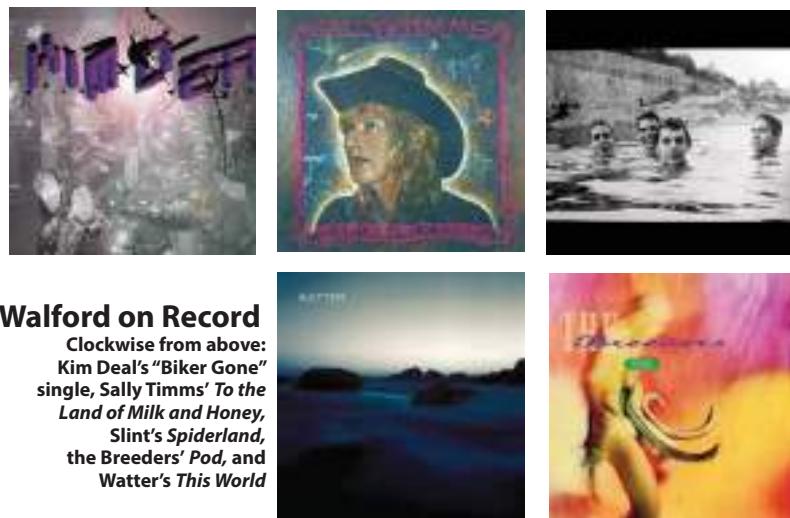
## Tools of the Trade

At press time Walford was between drumsets. With Slint he used a 1984 Tama Superstar kit with 12x13 and 13x14 toms, a 16x18 floor tom, and a 16x24 bass drum, along with a 6.5x14 Tama Imperialstar Mastercraft steel snare. “Nobody makes shells like Tama,” Walford says, “and I really like birch. Also, the hardware is still the best.” His cymbals include 14” Sabian Rock hi-hats, 16” and 18” Paiste Signature series Full crashes, and a 21” Sabian Rock ride. His bass drum pedal of choice is a Camco. “Those were single-chain with a circular cam, as opposed to oblong ones, and a ‘fall away’ heel plate. They were simple—and so light and fast.”

whole lot,” he explains. “That was a huge influence, mainly the guitars and the riffs. As far as metal, I wasn’t into anything other than Metallica.” Walford’s jazz exposure was even more minimal. “I picked up on [jazz] just barely at Doo-Wop Shop, the music store I worked at. Some guys asked me to play in their jazz group at the local university, so I did that a little bit. That was pretty much it—it was completely uninformed, lowbrow exposure.”

rehearsals shows Walford achieving his weighty sound with an unusually loose-wristed grip and an almost casual attack. Walford acknowledges his preference for a behind-the-beat feel, but he’s at a loss to explain where it originated. “Man, yeah, I’m not really sure what that is,” he says. “I think maybe [I was] just trippin’ out.”

A knack for minimal grooves also served Walford well during his brief time in the Breeders. The sole album he recorded with



## Walford on Record

Clockwise from above:  
Kim Deal’s “Biker Gone”  
single, Sally Timms’ *To the  
Land of Milk and Honey*,  
*Slint’s Spiderland*,  
the Breeders’ *Pod*, and  
*Watter’s This World*

The Slint sound, and Walford’s playing, grew steadily more meditative and minimal. The centerpiece of *Spiderland*, the band’s second and final LP, is “Good Morning, Captain,” a seven-minute mini epic driven by a wiry and hypnotic vamp laid down by Walford and bassist Todd Brashear. As guitarist/vocalist Brian McMahan narrates the story of a sea captain returning home after a shipwreck, Walford punctuates his unchanging beat with minimal embellishments that seem momentous against the stark backdrop. (Walford credits McMahan’s lyrics for inspiring some of these flourishes. He cites the lone ride-bell accent at 5:07 as a direct response to the line “delicate hand of a child.”) Listen for his slurry snare anticipations and brief triplet-heavy tom rolls, and, at the 5:30 mark, a five-stroke tom/snare fill that has the impact of a steel trap snapping shut.

The album’s heavier moments—the fuzz-bathed breakdowns in “Nosferatu Man,” the famously cathartic climax of “Good Morning, Captain”—showcase Walford’s relaxed approach to accompanying a riff, along with what friend and Matmos member Drew Daniel referred to in a *Wire* review of the *Spiderland* box as the drummer’s “sidelong lurch into the one.” *Breadcrumb Trail* footage of *Spiderland*-era

the group, 1990’s *Pod*—one of his favorite documents of his own playing, despite the fact that he appeared under the pseudonym Shannon Doughton—is an excellent place to appreciate the Walford feel. (The same goes for “Biker Gone,” a 2014 single by Breeders leader Kim Deal.) The basic, rock-solid beats are exactly what Deal and Tanya Donelly’s stripped-down alt-rock songs need. “The best thing about that experience was, just like Slint, the collaboration,” Walford says of the *Pod* period. “That was really cool, because the songs weren’t finished when I joined the band. We all kind of worked by consensus, so it made things pared down a lot. If one person didn’t like one thing, it was gone.”

Walford speaks with similar fondness about a brief but intense 1995 experience playing blues in a Louisville club. He felt out of place when he first showed up at a local blues bar—“I think there’s a scene in *Animal House* where some frat guys go to a bar and everybody turns around and looks at them; that totally happened,” he says—but he eventually became friendly with singer and harmonica player Fred Murphy. When Murphy mentioned one night that he was in the market for a drummer, Walford volunteered his services. “I said, ‘Well, I could maybe do that,’” Walford recalls. “So I showed

up at this place called the Red Devil Motorcycle Club and played with these guys, and they didn't say one single word to me except, like, 'Blues in G.' But then they asked me back, and we played there for maybe six months to a year. It was amazing, man. They didn't want me to ever play hi-hat—just never. So that was kind of interesting."

The experience likely fed into Walford's work with Evergreen, a punky Louisville indie band. The drummer's only recording with the group, a self-titled 1996 full-length, features some of his rawest, most straightforwardly rocking work on disc. Walford

### Walford's Faves

**Phil Rudd** (AC/DC) // **Todd Fuller** (Malignant Growth) // **Jeff Nelson** (Minor Threat) // **George Hurley** (the Minutemen) // **Neil Peart** (Rush) // **Dan Hobson** (Killdozer) // **Jeff McAllister** (the Monarchs) // **Jaki Liebezeit** (Can)

recalls that he had less input in Evergreen than in the much more meticulous environment of Slint. "I like that just as well," he says. "If there's no input to be had, I'm happy not to, because it's good how it is."

The same description would seem to apply to Walford's new band, Watter. "I like playing simple stuff, where I can concentrate on the finer points," Britt says when asked about his current preferences. And this project definitely fits the bill. A collaboration with multi-instrumentalists Zak Riles (Grails) and Tyler Trotter, Watter focuses on sprawling, sensuous post-rock that makes *Spiderland* sound busy by comparison. Songs on the band's debut LP, *This World*, often feature only one or two pared-down beats, but Walford's percussive signature is unmistakable—in the tastefully syncopated bass/snare trudge he lends to "Bloody Monday," for example, or the dynamic mid-tempo backbeat that closes "Seawater."

In Watter, as in conversation, Britt Walford is self-effacing. But there's a passion and conviction buried beneath the shyness. Walford knows what he wants to do. And he feels that he's just now discovering it. When asked how he thinks his playing and his approach to the instrument have evolved over time, he says, "Sometimes if I listen to stuff that I've done, I'll think, *That's too much*. Other than that, I feel like I'm a little bit less certain of things nowadays. But when I play music, everything makes sense."



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# Ty Segall



**The multi-instrumentalist—who's never off the drums for long, on stage or in the studio—always hits that sweet spot between retro and radical.**

**A**t first blush, you'd likely mistake Ty Segall for your stereotypical Southern California slacker. He's a surfer. He's a skateboarder. He's got moppy blond hair. In conversation, he exudes extreme nonchalance. But dial up the dude's Wiki and you'll quickly discover that the twenty-seven-year-old singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist is a straight-up

workaholic when it comes to kicking out the jams.

Over the last seven years, Segall, a walking rock 'n' roll encyclopedia, has recorded and released eight solo records and twenty-odd singles and EPs of brilliant psychedelic pop, garage rock, punk rock, lo-fi indie folk, and everything in between. And while the prolific wiz kid is best known

for his hooky, tripped-out melodies and scintillating fretwork, he plays virtually every single note on his records—including the drums, which just so happen to be his first love.

"I started drumming when I was eleven or twelve," Segall says while chatting over the phone from his northeast Los Angeles home. "I learned how to play to

**Story by David Jarnstrom**

**Photos by Alex Solca**



Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix records. I was obsessed with those drummers. Especially Mitch Mitchell—he's just the coolest. I would play forever and ever and ever. And then at thirteen or fourteen I started on guitar. My poor parents were bummed. It was always so loud."

Growing up behind the Orange Curtain (Laguna Beach, California, to be exact), Segall spent a good chunk of his adolescence holed up in his bedroom, crafting songs inspired by classic rock and early West Coast punk and psychedelic bands, and learning how to capture them on a 4-track. "Recording really forced me to focus on rhythm," he says. "It helped me develop my internal clock, because I was working all by myself and I always laid down the drums first. Everything else would go on top of them, so my time had to be super-solid."

These days, Segall can afford to pay someone to help him place microphones, thanks to a career that took off shortly after he relocated to the Bay Area to attend college at the University of San Francisco. But while he may take more time to focus on sonic nuance, his overall approach has changed little over the years. He recorded his most recent studio effort, *Manipulator*, almost entirely by himself over a span of thirty straight days at the Dock in Sacramento. The sparkling seventeen-track double record somehow manages to sound both familiar and fresh, with Segall sprinkling in a heavy dose of David Bowie- and T. Rex-inspired glam atop his psych-rock potpourri.

A stickler for classic tones, Segall turned to coproducer/engineer Chris Woodhouse to help him replicate the retro drum sounds of his favorite records. "I used my '50s Ludwig jazz kit—22" kick, 12" rack, and 14" floor," Ty says. "Chris detuned the front head of the bass drum so that you could

really hear the difference between the tight batter side and that loose, boomy front, kind of like a classic funk and soul kick. He was also into changing the key of the drums on a track-by-track basis, so the toms would be tuned to different notes depending on the song. I've never done anything like that before."

Segall handles drum duties on all but a pair of tracks, and several of *Manipulator*'s songs were written from the ground up, starting with distinct beats. The opening title cut is anchored by a driving, stutter-step pattern that cycles indefinitely as ethereal vocals and piercing guitar harmonies swirl overhead. "Tall Man Skinny Lady" kicks off with a snare march that foreshadows syncopated guitar strumming, while "Mister Main" launches with a funky breakbeat, setting the scene for the song's slinky bass line and delicate falsetto melody. One of the album's coolest moments occurs on the rapturous "Feel," when Segall shreds a devastating minute-long Neil Young-inspired guitar solo before dropping into an extended drum and percussion breakdown—a deliberate homage to the classic James Gang track "Funk #49."

Adding to the throwback feel of *Manipulator* is Segall's stubborn refusal to employ a click track or fuss with any superfluous editing of his takes. "I go by the clock in my head," Ty asserts, "and the takes are always live, straight through—no edits. Don't get me wrong; I love editing as an artistic statement. Like when it's super-obvious and almost jarring in a way. But I'm not into the standard way people use editing software nowadays to 'fix' their stuff."

As if his abundance of solo work weren't enough, Segall also has his hand in myriad collaborations, chiefly with longtime cohorts and fellow songwriters Mikal Cronin and Tim Presley (the latter better known as White Fence). Perhaps of most interest to the drumming community, however, is Segall's aptly titled proto-metal project Fuzz, which

he fronts from behind the kit. Channeling his childhood influences on the band's self-titled debut, the closet drum nerd flashes wicked chops not often heard on his other albums.

"It's harder to get bombastic and free-associative on my solo stuff, because, frankly, it usually doesn't suit the song," Segall says. "Fuzz has way more room for that kind of stuff. Plus we're typically all in the same room recording live, so it's just a different mindset. One is like jamming with somebody, while the other is like putting down the base coat on a paint job." Segall's explosive playing with Fuzz is even more impressive considering the haunting, Ozzy Osbourne-esque lead vocals he howls while slamming the skins. "I don't really struggle with drumming and singing, but sometimes it's hard just to find the breath to pull it off," he says with a chuckle. "Especially in Fuzz, because we have marathon songs in general, and then I have to scream at the same time. It's kind of insane."

Speaking of insanity, Segall may be long overdue for a break. But with a slew of *Manipulator* tour dates scheduled all across the globe—and a killer new home studio setup just waiting to be christened—don't expect a hiatus anytime soon. "It's good to take a breather now and then, but I'm not too worried about it," Segall says. "I just really love touring and recording. They're both very, very necessary for me, you know?"

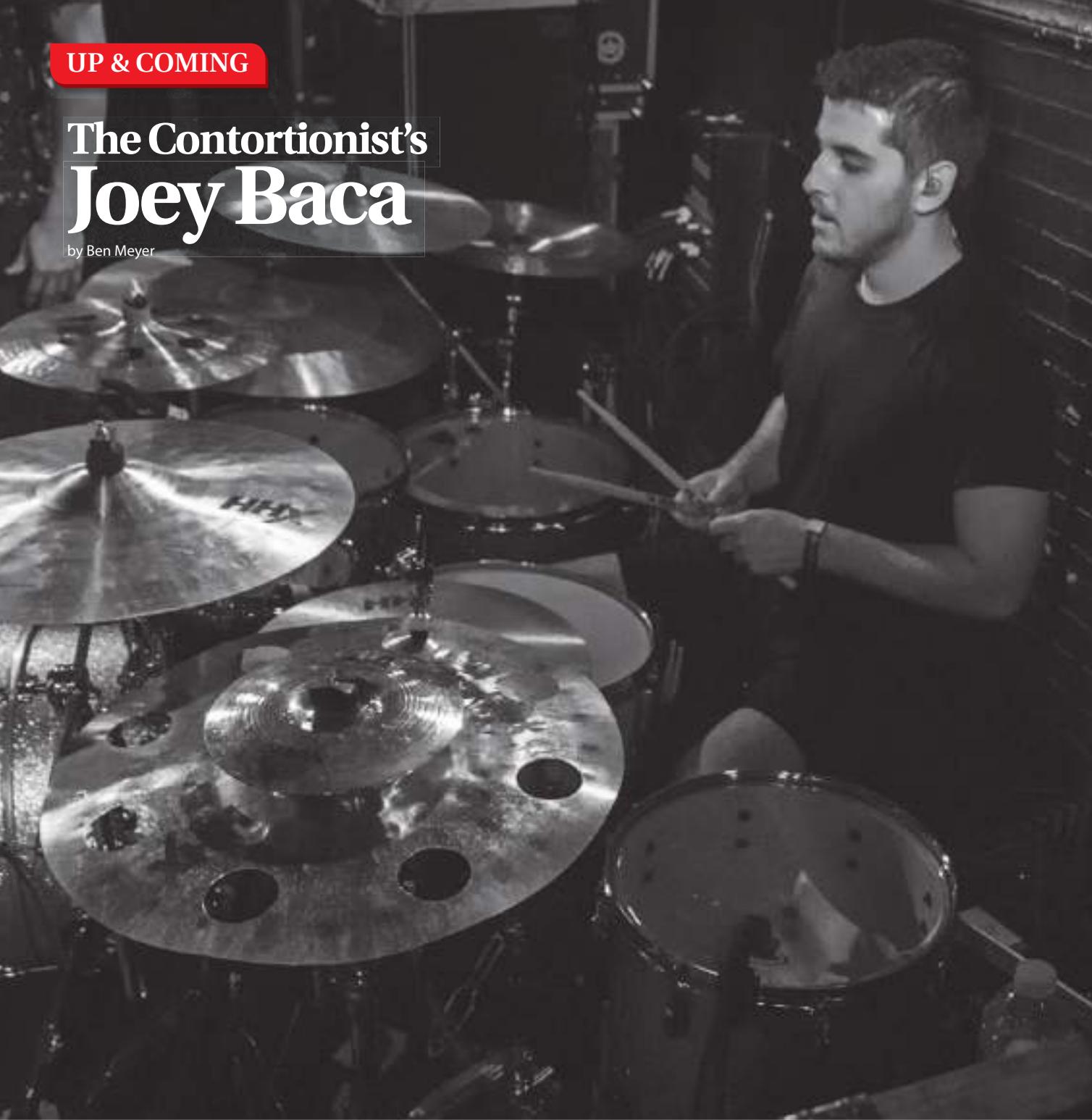


## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Segall plays a '50s-era Ludwig set (12", 14", 22") and '60s-era Zildjian hi-hats with a 21" Zildjian Sweet ride.

# The Contortionist's Joey Baca

by Ben Meyer



This phenomenal young talent clearly takes the term *progressive metal drumming* at face value, pushing his playing in more and more compelling ways with each new recording. More proof of the amazing things that can happen when you give a kid drums and all the Rush he can handle.

With the release of its third studio album, *Language*; appearances supporting groups like Periphery, Between the Buried and Me, and Protest the Hero; and its own recent headlining tours, the Contortionist has, in the minds of many

fans, entered the pantheon of modern progressive metal bands. The sextet's unique combination of lush synth textures, extended-range guitar punishment, and alternately ethereal and brutal vocals has also attracted reams of critical

acclaim. Within the gushing prose are high marks for drummer Joey Baca's approach to locking in the band's strangely syncopated instrumental interplay and presiding over its gargantuan dynamic range. More textural journey

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Baca plays a Pearl Session Studio Classic drumset featuring 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, a 14x14 floor tom on his left and a 14x16 on his right, and a 16x20 bass drum, along with a 6.5x14 Masters MCX maple snare. He uses Pearl hardware, largely from the company's 900 series, as well as a Demon Drive direct-drive double pedal set at a medium tension. Though Baca used Sabian AAX crashes and hi-hats to record *Language*, live he's been playing HHX models, with the exception of AAX Chinas, which he says gives his sound a bit more brightness. For the past several years he's bounced between Vic Firth 5B and 5A wood-tip sticks, and his heads of choice are Evans G2 Clear tom batters, a Genera HD Dry snare batter, and an EMAD Clear on his bass drum.

than full-frontal assault, Contortionist albums keep you on your toes rather than beat you into submission, and Baca's drumming is a prime mover of the music, which, even at its most demanding, has a logic of its own.

Raised in Noblesville, Indiana, just outside Indianapolis, the now twenty-five-year-old Baca grew up surrounded by music. Joey and his identical-twin brother and future bandmate, Robby, both started their journey on guitar. Around the age of thirteen, though, Joey's interest shifted. "Out of the blue," he recalls, "my parents bought a drumkit for me and my brother to mess around on. I just ran with it. Once I got my momentum going with the drums, I didn't really look back."

Initially self-taught, Baca would eventually participate in school music programs, but his aesthetic had been established much earlier. "I've been involved in music since the beginning of grade school," he explains, "but I didn't start getting into percussion until I was in high school. I did marching band for three years and played marching snare and quads. And during my senior year I tried out for jazz band and got the gig. I was pretty stoked on that."

Baca's rhythmic voice is unique within the sea of technical players that can be found shredding on YouTube. His drumming—a dizzying combination of hemiolas, melodic cymbal stabs, and sensitive snare ghosting—provides cohesion to the Contortionist's material, which can be very complex. So perhaps it's no surprise to learn that he was influenced early on by the '70s progressive rock his father listened to. "I grew up on Rush," Baca says, "so Neil Peart was a huge influence for sure. Early Genesis and Pink Floyd as well."

"Dream Theater was one of the first metal bands I got into," Baca continues. "The fact that they were progressive at the same time definitely found its way into my style. I was actually into Slipknot and Korn before I discovered Dream Theater, so they probably had a lot of influence on my early playing. I

also love Tomas Haake from Meshuggah; he definitely changed my perspective on drumming."

Baca is involved in writing the Contortionist's material, which is largely conceived while the members are in a room together, as opposed to the file-sharing compositional methods incorporated by many of the group's contemporaries. "For the most part I'm a responsive player," Baca says, "though there will be times when I'll come up with a certain rhythm and throw it their way. That will keep the ball rolling and sometimes inspire the next part of the song."

Due to the Contortionist's extensive preproduction work, basic tracking for *Language* took only five days. The album was recorded, mixed, and mastered by Jamie King at his Basement Recording studio in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. "We use Guitar Pro [5] software," Baca explains, "and I'll have that as my foundation. That way, when we get into the studio I have some room to improvise. The writing process for this record was partly done using my electronic kit, but right before we go in to track I'll run through everything on my acoustic kit to get that feel. The electronic and acoustic kits are totally different in terms of how they feel. Sometimes I like to write away from the kit and then hop on and off to develop ideas. But the sounds on the record are all natural—there's no sample replacement."

Two thousand fourteen was a banner year for the Contortionist, and the steady climb promises to continue in 2015, which the band rang in with a headlining U.S. tour. It's a pace that Baca has been happy to keep since graduating from high school. "That's when things got serious with the band," says Joey, who of late has also been delving more deeply into teaching, primarily through Periphery drummer Matt Halpern's Bandhappy program. "I'd love to continue doing what I'm doing now, getting to travel all over the world and play music. It doesn't get much better than that for me."

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# Pataflafla Builder

## Exercises for Developing a Challenging Yet Musical Rudiment

by Bill Bachman

One of the most beneficial of the forty PAS rudiments is the pataflafla. It's one of the few where each hand plays a totally different part. The leading hand uses what I call the Moeller whip-and-stop technique, and the secondary hand uses what I call the no-chop flop-and-drop technique. Playing a rudiment with the weaker hand leading usually involves just a mental switch, but now there's a physical learning curve as well.

When you dissect the pataflafla, you'll find that the lead hand plays two low taps immediately preceding an accent. When you play the rudiment slowly, there's plenty of time to execute the three consecutive notes as a tap, upstroke, and downstroke, using the wrists. At a medium speed and up, there isn't enough time to play the upstroke without tension and/or a rhythmic gap before the accent, so we'll replace the wrist motion with a forearm motion: the Moeller whip stroke. After the accent, there's time to stop the stick low to the drum before starting the process over, so we'll call it the Moeller whip-and-stop motion.

These three consecutive notes will be played as follows. First, drop the hand and stick, with the fingers open, for the first tap. Lift the forearm, while allowing the hand to drop down, and let the stick bump the drum for the second tap. (We can call this a Moeller upstroke.) Finally, throw the forearm down, with the wrist limp, to create a whipped accent. Immediately after you play the accent, grab the stick so that it stops pointing down and right next to the drumhead. This sets you up to repeat

the series of three notes starting from a low tap height. Practice the lead hand's motion slowly and with an exaggerated whipping technique.

The secondary hand plays “1-e-a, 2-e-a, 3-e-a, 4-e-a,” with the accent on the “a.” At slow tempos, playing a high accented note immediately followed by two low taps can work using a downstroke and two taps. But at medium tempos and up, there isn’t enough time to stop the stick low after the accent and before the low taps. Here’s where you’ll have to employ the no-chop flop-and-drop motion so that the high accented note can be followed by lower and lighter taps without the stick stopping. I call it the no-chop flop-and-drop, since you want to avoid using the fingers to add velocity to the taps after the accent. The tap strokes will not be as low as usual, but they will sound light as they drop down in height sequentially. Since the taps flow out of the accent, you can’t hit the accent hard. But be sure to attack the accent from a high stick height in order to get the most out of it.

In the exercise, we'll play pataflaflas with just the leading hand, then with both, then with just the secondary hand, and then with both again. It's a good idea to also play this with each hand on a different surface in order to make sure there's no change in the motion as the hands go from solo to coordinated. For an additional challenge, try counting each hand's part out loud.

Once you've mastered the pataflafla builder using right- and left-hand lead, you can move on to a 16th-note exercise where the rudiment gets scrambled around systematically. I've put the variations in the 4-2-1 format, where we play four counts of each variation, then two counts of each (and repeat), and then one count (repeat four times). Going into and out of the fourth pattern, you'll need to play three flams in a row. There, one hand

will need to flow from the no-chop flop-and-drop technique immediately into the Moeller whip-and-stop technique.

Do your best to exaggerate the accents in both hands, practice with a metronome, and tap your foot so that you're rhythmically grounded. These exercises are challenging for the hands, and the skills you'll develop from them will have applications far beyond the practice pad.

**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](http://billbachman.net).



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# Take Your Shuffle to the Max!

## Layering in Quarter-Note Triplets

by Greg Sundel

### MUSIC KEY



The two most common types of shuffles are the jazz and blues shuffle. We won't get into the history here, but the obvious difference is in the ride pattern. Either version can be used, depending on the song, the band, and the musical situation. Here's the jazz shuffle. Notice that the ride is playing the traditional swing pattern.

1

And here's the blues shuffle.

2

Practice the examples that follow with the shuffle pattern that you like best. Then, once you've mastered them, go back and repeat them using the other version. Here we're using the jazz shuffle.

One way to augment the shuffle is to superimpose quarter-note triplets on the bass drum or hi-hat. You should add these ideas sparingly and always keep the groove strong and flowing. Nothing you add should interrupt the pulse. These ideas work well for me when I want to elevate the dynamics during the climax of a song. They also serve as a subtle way to transition from one section to another. Play the unaccented snare notes quietly, like ghost notes. Start slowly, count out loud, and use a metronome to make sure the tempo stays steady.

In this example we're applying quarter-note triplets on the bass drum starting on the middle note of the triplet on beat 1. Then the bass drum plays the same pattern as the snare on beats 2 and 4. The pattern repeats on beats 3 and 4.

3

It may help to get a better feel for how the triplets fit within the shuffle by removing the bass drum on beats 3 and 4.

4

Now start the quarter-note triplets on beats 1 and 3. This time, the bass drum will be in unison with the snare on beats 1 and 3 and on the middle note on beats 2 and 4.

5

Again, it may help to leave out the bass drum on beats 3 and 4 so that you have time to internalize the placement of the triplets.

6

Once you have both triplet placements mastered individually, try combining them to create new ideas. In this next example the bass drum starts on the middle triplet partial of beat 1 and then flips to the downbeat on beat 3.

7

Now try the opposite, with the bass drum starting on the downbeat of 1 and the middle triplet partial of beat 3.

8

After you have all of the bass drum variations down, go back and replace the bass drum with the hi-hat. Play quarter notes on the bass drum while you play the quarter-note-triplet exercises with the hi-hat. Again, the goal is to have a smooth blend of sounds—don't use these patterns on a gig until you have total control over them.

9

10

**Greg Sundel** has performed or recorded with Billy Corgan, Lauryn Hill, and Joshua Redman. His book *Drum Your Way* is available through his website, gregsundel.com.



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# Traditional Percussion on Drumset

## Part 2: Bongos

by Arturo Stable

### MUSIC KEY



In order to fully understand the function and possibilities of the instrument called bongo, you must explore the Cuban styles of changui, rumba, and son. According to musicologist Fernando Ortiz, the bongo may have originated as ancient drums built specifically to perform songs during ceremonies dedicated to the Ibeyis orishas (twin brothers). But that's just a theory, because those ancient drums were never found.

We do, however, know of the bongo's predecessor, the bongo de monte ("bongo from the countryside"). This older instrument can still be acquired in shops in Cuba, and it can be heard on numerous recordings in the changui style. The city of Guantanamo is the birthplace of changui, which originally meant "party" or "celebration." In time, people started to associate the name with the kind of music that was played at these celebrations.

The original instrumentation of changui was tres guitar, marimbula, bongo de monte, and maracas. The earliest references we have of this music are from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and an African influence is obvious. The beauty of this style is that it consists of a few simple ideas that, once combined, provide a complex and intricate texture.

Here are some typical improvisation ideas played on bongo in changui.

As far as I know, there aren't records of changui being performed on drumset. But, often in jam sessions, if the pianist or horn player goes into a changui kind of sound, the percussionists and drummers will adapt their playing to fit that particular style. I use it in live situations from time to time, as it's a great way to move away from more typical Afro-Cuban drumset grooves, like songo. Here are a few ideas of how to play changui on the drumset.

As for how the bongo is played outside of changui, we must analyze two aspects: rhythm and function.

### Rhythm

There are two rhythmic approaches that players use. The first is more traditional and is normally used in Cuban music, salsa, Latin jazz, and so on. The second rhythm is employed in styles foreign to the bongo, such as funk, rock, and electronic music.

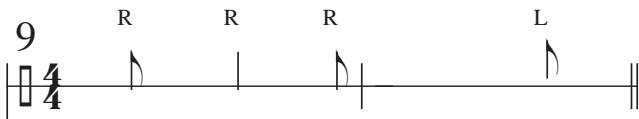
In a traditional setting, there's one main bongo rhythm: the martillo ("hammer"). (S = slap, F = fingers, O = open, P = palm.)

In funk, rock, or electronic music, you normally hear the bongo complementing or imitating the drumset groove. The low drum is often used as if it were a bass drum, and the high drum is used as if it were a snare.

All open tones

### Function

In a traditional setting, the main function of the bongo is to keep the groove going. If the bongo player happens to be performing in a larger ensemble alongside other percussionists and drummers, then he or she has the possibility of playing more open, filling out the spaces in the other players' parts. Here are some examples of filling in the spaces on bongo.



All open tones

clave



In order to translate these ideas to the drumset, think of the lower-pitched bongo as the bass drum and the higher-pitched bongo as the snare.



Next time we'll take a look at ways to apply traditional timbale patterns on the drumset.

Cuban-born percussionist **Arturo Stable** has performed with Dave Samuels, Esperanza Spalding, Paquito D'Rivera, David Sánchez, Giovanni Hidalgo, Miguel Zenón, and the Caribbean Jazz Project. For more info, visit [arturostable.com](http://arturostable.com).

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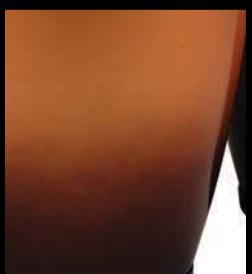
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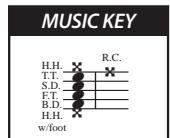
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# Elvin Jones–Style Triplet Fills

## Part 1: Creating a Rolling Melodic Feel Using Basic Stickings

by John Xepoleas



In this lesson I'm going to show you how to create high-energy Elvin Jones–style triplet fills based on common jazz rhythmic phrases, like those included in Ted Reed's classic book *Syncopation*. This approach was first developed by legendary drummer and teacher Alan Dawson, and this is my spin on it. Let's get started.

Here's a typical four-bar syncopated phrase. We'll use this to demonstrate how the concept works.

To begin, we'll turn each measure into accented triplets. Where you see a quarter note written, play a triplet with an accent on the first note, using an RLL sticking.

If an 8th-note rest is followed by an 8th note, play a triplet with an accent on the last note, using an LLR or RLR sticking. (When you use the RLR sticking, the first right will be played softer than the second one.)

If two 8th notes are written, play a triplet with an accent on the first and last note, using an RLR sticking.

If a quarter-note rest is written, play unaccented triplets using an RLR or LRL sticking.

Keeping those rules in mind, let's take the first measure from our four-bar syncopated phrase and turn it into Elvin Jones–style triplets. Here's the original phrase.

Now here's what that looks like with the triplets written out and with the accents added according to our rules. Practice this phrase until you're totally comfortable with it and have it ingrained in your muscle memory.

The next step is to move the pattern around the drumset. To start, play the right-hand accents using the ride cymbal and bass drum. Play them with an aggressive feel, and make sure they're treated as the lead parts in the pattern. Play all of the left hand notes softly on the snare.

You can also move the right hand between the snare and rack tom.

Now we'll apply the two previous examples to create a two-bar fill played after two bars of swing time. To transition smoothly into the fill, stop the ride pattern with a quarter note on beat 4 of the second measure.

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# Jazz Drummer's Workshop

Let's turn the entire four-bar syncopated phrase into triplets using the Elvin Jones–inspired stickings. Remember to practice the pattern until it becomes part of your muscle memory.

11 ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>>> ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>>> ><sup>3</sup>>

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

^ ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>>> ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>> ><sup>3</sup>>> ><sup>3</sup>>

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

Next, play the accents using the ride cymbal and bass drum.

12

Now mix it up a bit and play the phrase as a four-bar fill after four bars of swing time.

See you next month for the second part of this lesson series.

**John Xepoleas** has written two drum books, *Style Studies for the Creative Drummer* and *Essential Drum Lessons With the Greats*. He is also an active online educator. For more info, visit [johnxdrums.com](http://johnxdrums.com).

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The image is a vibrant collage of various music-related merchandise. In the center, the 'Rockabilia.com' logo is prominently displayed in large yellow letters, with 'YOUR MUSIC MERCHANDISE SOURCE' in smaller white letters below it. Surrounding the logo are numerous items: a dark blue t-shirt with 'Zoso' in white script; a red t-shirt with 'FOO FIGHTERS' and a lightning bolt; a black t-shirt with 'QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE' and a reindeer graphic; a white t-shirt with 'IVE FINGER' and a hand graphic; a black t-shirt with 'ROBIE 2112'; a blue t-shirt with a portrait of David Lee Roth; a QR code in the bottom right corner; and a small image of a Pearl Jam logo. The background features a green grid pattern.



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# Defining Your Role

## Six Degrees of Communication

by Russ Miller



**M**usic is a team effort, and figuring out our position on the team is key. This will help us better communicate in any scenario, which leads to more contentment on the job. This month we're going to look at the six main roles that you might play in the music business.

### "No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it."

Over my career, I've been in all six of these situations. Recently, I was reminded of the need for everybody to understand his or her role in each one. If you think your role is different from what it actually is, there can be turmoil. I was asked to do a gig a while back that comprised a jazz quartet and a singer. Everyone in the band was older and very established. The bulk of the material was from the vocalist's previous albums, but it wasn't presented to me as if we were sidemen on the singer's gig.

The job didn't pay very much, but I agreed to do it because everyone in the band was a world-class player. Also, it was a straight-ahead jazz gig, which I am focused on now, giving me more opportunities to substantiate my studies with my current teacher, Peter Erskine. We rehearsed as a quartet, and it was great. But at the first gig, the vocalist went "lead singer" on us and started asking us to play differently, requiring many things with the attitude of "I'm the leader and you're the sidemen." The instrumentalists looked each other, like, *What just happened?* The same scenario occurred at the next two shows. The gigs were sold out, and we had some great moments, but we were frustrated by the attitude.

Then the time came to do the record. At the sessions, the singer started asking us to play things that didn't make artistic sense. I disagreed and explained that, in my humble opinion, these weren't the best musical decisions. The vocalist was taken aback by this and didn't accept it very well. I explained that in this particular scenario we were in a band

environment and this was my opinion. I became "unavailable" for the group after that incident.

This singer didn't understand everyone's roles. If we were getting regular sideman fees, and if the gig had been presented that way from the start, there

don't come into the scene with a "dig me" attitude. Most of the time, older players are coming from an entirely different perspective. Take the opportunity to grow as a musician, and be an information sponge.

#### Old Cat

I'm a firm believer in sharing information. This is why I created my various books and DVDs and have an online classroom. When artists acquire information over a long career, it's their responsibility to share it with younger players. If our role models didn't do this, each generation would be starting from scratch. I know several established players who don't share, and I personally think it's a selfish attitude. Of course, not every great player is a great teacher, but high-level professionals gain experience that few others will ever have. I feel it is the obligation of those players to share their information. This holds true on a gig where you are the elder statesman.

But just because you're the oldest guy on the gig, that doesn't mean you automatically play better and know more than everybody else. As jazz great Tony Williams said, "Don't confuse experience with mastery." I'm talking about situations where you see things being done in questionable ways. Speak up! The younger players need to respect the fact that you've been around for a minute. Help when you can and hold yourself responsible to make a positive and solid contribution. Lead by example.

#### Featured Artist

This is a term used to describe a situation where you're being hired to be *you*. It can happen in two different scenarios. The first one is complicated. A solo artist (who is the boss) hires you because he or she wants you to do the gig, and only you can be you. In this situation, you're able to negotiate more than a traditional sideman (more money, a drum tech, cartage, and so on).

Getting hired to be yourself in a high-level situation is the goal of most players. You're expected to contribute musically, but—and here's the complex

—H.E. Luccock

would never have been an issue. I still might not have played what was asked, but I would've approached it differently. Let's talk about some of the roles we might find ourselves in and how to define and navigate them.

#### Sideman

This situation is the easiest one. You are a hired hand—an employee. What the boss says goes. This is typically the role when you're called for sessions, working for solo artists, or being hired by contractors. You need to supply what the client wants, and you're not in a position to disagree with much.

The biggest issue here is that you don't have much negotiating power and you need to basically shut up and play. The positive side is that you make money whether or not the gig or record sells. Also, you have no liability. If the project fails, you move on to the next one with no negative effects on you. You're there to play the best you can and serve the situation as fittingly as possible.

#### Newbie

When I grew up, the youngest guy on the gig held the older players in respect. We discussed this in the March 2015 issue, in my "Time Keeps You Humble" article. It's important to have humility in your presence and playing. I always say that you can't learn anything when you're talking. When you enter a situation as the youngest or least experienced player, it's time for you to listen and learn. Don't get me wrong: Say what you have to say musically when it's your turn, but

part—you're still a hired gun, rather than the main draw. The show can go on without you, but the artist would like it to go on *with* you.

The second version of the role of featured artist involves your being a part of the draw of the show. This could be an all-star gig or a situation where a lead artist wants to have other well-known players on the bill to help sales and create a higher level of musicianship. In the promotion business, it's called a "soft ticket" sale. People are coming to this event. More might come if you're there, and fewer might come if you're not. But the gig will probably still happen. This is similar to being a band member. You should have a say in the decision making in this situation. Your name is attached, and you have a responsibility to your personal brand. Take these opportunities seriously, and make your contribution.

### Band Member

Being a band member is often misunderstood. The fundamental idea of this situation is equality. Everybody shares in the spoils and the failures. You should have the right to express your musical opinion at all times. Usually, you are not told what to play. You take suggestions from your bandmates, but your chair is your chair. Also, band members should be getting a split of things like ticket sales, merchandise, and royalties. The song-writing and publishing can be a discussion of contribution, but the overall aesthetic is a group effort. The backlash is that you also have the most to lose. Even though this can be the best situation in terms of money and artistry, it can also be the hardest to navigate, due to potential clashes of ego and personality.

### Leader

Here is where the work starts! This situation, which could comprise your solo material, your band, clinics, and so on, is all about you—you're the main draw. This is called a "hard ticket" sale in the music business. If you're not there, the gig doesn't happen. You're responsible for everything, and everybody else (your sidemen) gets paid first while you get what's left over. If there's a big profit, plus high visibility and great musical achievements, then you win! If not, you're the one who pays for it. It's the dream of most musicians to be the star, but a lot comes with this scenario. It's more difficult than

the band situation, because you have no one else to share the workload, finances, or failures.

The purpose of this discussion is to help give you a clear definition of the various situations you may come across in your drumming career. Knowing what is expected of you in the beginning can help you navigate your job. Learn to communicate with the people surrounding you.

Understand how much you can add to the music and to the conversations. But, most of all, work as hard as you can to achieve excellence in whatever you do.

**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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# Why I Stopped Playing

by Roy Burns

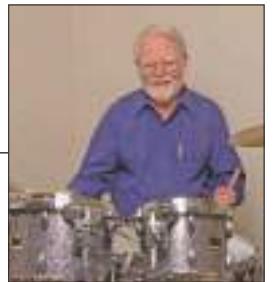
A legendary musician and successful entrepreneur describes his attitude toward drumming and aging, in the hopes that it will help others make their own decisions on the matter.

**W**hy did you stop playing?" That's the question that I'm asked more than any other.

The simple answer is that I couldn't ride two horses at once. The time required of me at Aquarian Drumheads, the company that I'd cofounded, was getting more and more demanding as the business began to grow.

I could also feel my drumming skills beginning to suffer as my age influenced what my body could still do. Things I used to do easily at the drumset were becoming more of an effort. I'd seen some famous drummers and teachers basically embarrass themselves by playing too long. I didn't want that to happen to me. After all my hard work and practicing for years, the thought of ruining the reputation I'd established was too painful to consider. And with so much of my energy going into Aquarian, I didn't have time to practice. I was forced to make a commitment either to drums or to the company. I realized that I couldn't do both any longer. I didn't want to choose, but I was going to have to.

Sooner or later, every drummer will be faced with decisions like these. There are many things to think about, and there is no one answer that will satisfy every drummer or every situation.



First, consider your health. If you move and set up your own drums, back problems can complicate matters. I've had some back problems, and the last thing I need is to be lifting heavy drums or band equipment. (If you don't have back problems, you're fortunate—at any age.) As you age, you might begin to struggle with other health issues. If you have serious problems, get medical advice. Ask if your health problems are likely to interfere with your ability to play the drums.

If you do decide that it's time to retire from active playing, you might need to think about what else you're going to do with your time. Do you have some activity to fall back on? Teaching might be an option. Sharing your experience with young drummers can be quite satisfying. Or perhaps there's some other music-related activity that you never had time to fully explore—arranging or writing, for instance. Studying and following through in these areas would allow you to remain involved in the creative side of music.

One other thing to consider: If you find yourself just going through the motions, with little or no passion, maybe it really is time to look at the possibility of retiring.

So take a long look at yourself, including your body, your age, and your mind. If you want to "play until you drop," like I've heard some people say, that's your choice. It all depends on how you feel. If you find yourself not playing as well as you used to, it might be time to give some thought to stopping before you embarrass yourself. Just be honest with yourself, and you will come up with the answer that is best for you.

Now, I must say that I have very fond memories of my playing career. I started playing professionally when I was fourteen years old, with a local dance band in my hometown of Emporia, Kansas. I left Kansas to go to New York City with a \$300 drumset. I took a train, and the ride lasted four and a half days. I remember thinking when I got off the train in New York City, *This is a BIG town*. In time I played with a great many famous musicians, including most of my heroes, and that's what I am most happy about musically. And I was lucky enough to catch the end of the big band era. That was important to me, since I grew up listening to the big bands.

But at age sixty-two I realized that I wasn't going to play any better than I already had. I wanted to quit while I was still at the top of my game. In 1997 I played at the Modern Drummer Festival with the Percussion Originators Ensemble, which also featured *Modern Drummer* founder Ron Spagnardi, Promark's Herb Brochstein, DW's Don Lombardi, and Vic Firth—all drummers who had gone into business successfully. It was my last public performance. I really played well that day, so I felt very satisfied. It was a great send-off for my career, and I'm glad it was at the Modern Drummer Festival.

Today I'm busy at Aquarian in a number of ways, including product development, testing new products, and communicating with many of our endorsers on a regular basis, which is very gratifying. These days I don't have any drums at my house, and that surprises people who ask, "Don't you want to just sit at the drums and play for fun?" Not really. I'm still having a good time. And I'm still a drummer at heart.



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The editors of *Modern Drummer* would like to state clearly that most of the drummers mentioned in the Bonzo Bash kit giveaway ad in the March 2015 issue are not full Ludwig, Paiste, Remo, Regal Tip endorsers. All involved sponsors apologize to the drummers and the respective companies they endorse for inaccurately and incorrectly including them in this ad.

Furthermore, the Ludwig Bonzo Bash giveaway kit and Paiste cymbals, along with Remo heads, were not used on stage as stated, though they were displayed and showcased in the VIP area. We apologize for any confusion that this may have caused. Nonetheless, this beautiful drumkit and cymbal set are a part of drum history!

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



## REMO Powerstroke 3 Black Dot and Powerstroke 77 Drumheads

The Powerstroke 3 Black Dot bass drum head features a thin underlay ring at the outer edge to subtly dampen overtones. The 5 mil bottom-side dot is said to provide deeper low tones, focused attack, and increased durability. The head is available in clear and coated versions, in 18", 20", 22", 24", and 26" sizes.

The Powerstroke 77 snare batter consists of two plies of 7 mil film with a 7 mil inlay ring and a 5 mil clear dot on top. This combination is said to provide excellent response and projection combined with warm, full tones. The inlay ring reduces overtones, and the top dot adds durability. Coated and clear versions are available in 10", 12", 13", and 14" sizes.

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



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[bass-plate.com](http://bass-plate.com)



## SABIAN B8X Cymbal Series

The B8X is a new series designed to replace Sabian's best-selling B8 line and features fully hammered bells, adjusted profiles, and a new logo. The body of these models is hammered considerably more than original B8s.

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



## YAMAHA Hybrid Packs

The DTX502 Hybrid pack consists of a five-piece Stage Custom Birch acoustic drumset with Yamaha 700 series hardware, a DTX502 module, two acoustic drum triggers, and two electronic drum pads—the TP70 (7" single-zone)

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The pack also includes cables for the triggers, plus clamps and mounts to affix the electronic components to the acoustic set. List price: \$2,600. Three other packs, meant for players who already own an acoustic kit, are offered, and they include the DTX502 module, triggers, one or two pads, cables, and mounting hardware. List prices range from \$660 to \$1,150.

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



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# CRITIQUE

## TAKING THE REINS

DRUMMER/LEADERS MAKING THEIR MARK

### Otis Brown III *The Thought of You*

#### The busy NYC jazzier's debut as a leader burns from top to bottom.

Otis Brown III arrived in New York heavily weighted with talent and proceeded to storm the scene, resulting in steady work with saxophonists Joe Lovano and Oliver Lake and trumpet player Terence Blanchard. Brown surrounds himself with an equally heavyweight cast on his bandleader debut, including singer Gretchen Parlato, keyboardist Robert Glasper, and bassist Ben Williams. Forward thinking but essentially hard-bop inspired, *The Thought of You* provides space to stretch, as in opener "The Way," where such mentors as Eric Harland and Lewis Nash come to mind in Brown's dazzling sleight-of-stick drumming. The title track continues the high-octane message, with jagged swing underpinning nu-funk/jazz vocals. Every track is a scorch, from the blistering "Stages of Thought" to the muted drum symphony "You're Still the One." (Blue Note/Revive)

**Ken Micallef**

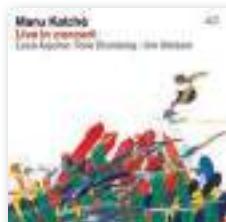


### Michael Carvin Experience

#### *Flash Forward*

**As usual, the famed performer and instructor plays both of those roles on his latest outing as a leader, which was produced by protégé Camille Gainer-Jones.**

Michael Carvin seems incapable of not teaching when he plays, and on *Flash Forward* he challenges his quartet, featuring bassist Jansen Cinco, pianist Yayoi Ikawa, and sax player Keith Loftis, to make a set of well-worn jazz gems feel brand new. The listener gets schooled as well, in the many ways a jazz drummer can elevate the music. Carvin sprays layers of accents on "Sayonara Blues," gearing down to a mellow outro vamp; "In Walked Bud" is dauntingly quick, with Carvin's round-ending solo a crisp, biting retort; "Night in Tunisia" gets a very cool rhythmic makeover, with Carvin's clear-headed, rim-rattling, mood-inducing solo ending, profoundly, in silence; and on "You Stepped Out of a Dream" the drummer somehow seems to be playing a different song—his own—and the Brown/Kahn standard at the same time. Beautiful minimalist arrangements highlight the tones, especially the wonderful ringing bass drum. Take good notes, drum students. (Motéma) **Robin Tolleson**



**Manu Katché** *Live in Concert*  
Following time spent in Jan Garbarek's group and a run of interesting records as a leader for the ECM label, the drummer takes it to the stage.

This live recording is heavy on atmosphere but features all the expected slinky grooves that Manu Katché is famous for. The Sting and Peter Gabriel sideman's wonderful backbeat displacement gives "Shine and Blue" an assured snap, while "Song for Her" moves along at a languid pace—until Katché throws in some pure-gold hi-hat and rimclick polyrhythms over the outro. There are burning up-tempo numbers ("Clubbing") and piano-led acoustic funk ("Beats and Bounce"), all with the added benefit of having been captured in front of what sounds like a rapturous audience. Dig the extended drum solo beginning the encore, a how-to of dynamic tom rhythms, head-bobbing thrust, and super-quick bass drum and splash work. (ACT Music) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

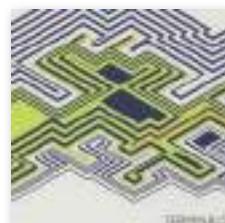


### Juan Pastor

**Chinchano**  
A melodically rich and rhythmically alarming set from a player to watch.

First you notice that Juan Pastor likes to toy with time—take "Negra Presuntuosa," a deceptive triplet with an offset phrase that fazes Pastor little.

And then you hear how he flows so easily between twelves and nines. The drummer/percussionist plays on unexpected beats, but the effect is welcoming, regardless of the vibe. "En Otro Talvez" is a luxurious 5/4, full of rhythmic candy but calm and grounded, while "Avellana" is provocative and packed with emotion. Pastor makes liberal use of rimclick throughout, creating the beat around it on the smooth "Lucia." "Tiene Picante" is a rhythmic, sonic, and melodic delight, and on "Amigo Stu" Pastor displays wonderful freedom with time on cajon, inverting and expanding it as Stu Mindeman hungrily explores the piano's melodic and percussive potential. Bassist Jorge Roeder makes funk from the fusion, adding a sparkling album-ending duet with Pastor, "Andino." (Ears & Eyes) **Robin Tolleson**



### Bobby Previte

**Terminals**  
The drummer, composer, and all-around conceptualist who busted out of New York's iconoclastic '80s downtown scene still gladly welcomes risk.

For this contemporary-classical-meets-improvisers collection, Bobby

Previte composed five concerti for percussion ensemble plus guests, featuring the marvelous quartet Sō Percussion. Each track features one prominent soloist, including guitarist Nels Cline, organist/pianist John Medeski, harpist Zeena Parkins, saxophonist Greg Osby, and Previte himself on the kit. *Terminals* brilliantly explores the thrilling possibilities of cutting-edge percussion soundscapes. The palette ranges from ethereal textures featuring Parkins to a hair-raising collaboration with Cline, whose noise-jamming excursion sounds like a shredder from outer space. Previte's feature is a drum-off blast, humorously opening with what sounds like hundreds of drumsticks being tossed on the floor. Highly imaginative, surprising, and thoroughly engaging. (Cantaloupe Music, available digitally and on double-LP; Previte's guest soloist track appears on digital version only) **Jeff Potter**

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## Ignacio Berroa

*Heritage and Passion*

**The brilliant Cuban-born player stretches out on originals and standards, captivating the mind, body, and soul.**

Ignacio Berroa shares the elastic time feel of jazz legends Elvin Jones and Tony

Williams, but he has carved out his own place among the legends. Berroa's ride patterns are so smooth, you hardly notice as he switches from straight-ahead jazz to mambo and Afro-Cuban feels. And his subtle infusion of left-foot clave makes all of his grooves infectious and unique. When he trades eights on Miles Davis's "Nardis," it's downright astonishing, with many twists and turns. Berroa kills on his originals as well: "Laura's Waltz" is a beautiful composition that showcases hypnotizing brushwork. And "Ignacio's Solo" is exactly what we've come to expect from the master: a tasteful, elegant dissertation. (5Passion) **Greg Sundel**

## Swingtime

**Three drummer/leaders keep the big band flame burning bright.**

**Tommy Igoe** relocated recently from New York City to San Francisco and wasted no time in forming the dynamic Bay Area group that debuts on *The Tommy Igoe Groove Conspiracy*. While still maintaining his Birdland Big Band in New York, Igoe holds court weekly with his Groove Conspiracy unit at the famed Oakland club Yoshi's. The fifteen-piece is an accu-chops machine leaning toward a funkier edge than the East Coast outfit. The ensemble rides a deep groove that's tighter than a vacuum tube on the moon. Igoe propels the hot arrangements with spot-on chops. This leader craves excitement, and plenty of it. Case in point: The hyper-syncopated, punching groove on "Jazz Crimes" will scorch your eyebrows. Another step up for Igoe. (Deep Rhythm Music)

It's a pleasure for the eye to behold a band of eager, youthful faces. But it's an even greater pleasure when the ear discovers that those fresh faces can blow up a hurricane. The eighteen-piece BloomingTones Big Band, led by drummer **Mitch Shiner**, certainly impresses on its debut, *Fly!* Shiner is an intuitive, swinging drummer, as well as a top-notch arranger, composer, and vibraphonist. The band's name refers to Bloomington, home to Indiana University; a recent graduate, Shiner formed the group with school colleagues. The young drummer draws eclectically from jazz, Latin, and pop—how about an Afro-Cuban take on Miley Cyrus's "Wrecking Ball"? (Patois)

On *A Swingin' Life*, the fifteen-piece, all-female institution Diva delivers a sonic rush in the classic, hard-kicking brass tradition. Leader **Sherrie Maricle** offers a cracking, nuanced drum performance beaming with positive energy. The live tracks featuring guest vocalists Nancy Wilson and Marlena Shaw are a glorious plus. Bucking tradition, Maricle doesn't allow herself a feature solo. Doesn't need to—she's in classy command all the way. (MCG Jazz) **Jeff Potter**



## Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

**Jack DeJohnette** Made in Chicago /// **Morgan Ågren** Batterie Deluxe /// **Reggie Quinerly** Invictus /// **Sean Noonan** In the Ring /// **Ernesto Cervini** Turboprop /// **Aaron Comess** Aaron Comess Quintet /// **Phil Haynes & Free Country** Live: Something Beatles /// **Curtis Nowosad** Dialectics /// **Makaya McCraven** In the Moment /// **Ananda Gari** T-Duality /// **Charles Ruggiero** Boom Bang, Boom Bang! /// **Christian Finger** Ananda /// **Diego Piñera** Strange Ways /// **Dominic Egli's Plurism** Fufu Tryout /// **Keith Hollis** Uptown /// **Jeff Hamilton Trio** Great American Songs Through the Years

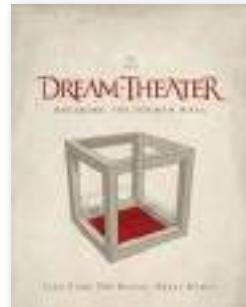
## MULTIMEDIA



### Dream Theater *Breaking the Fourth Wall:*

*Live From the Boston Opera House*

It seems as though Dream Theater caps off every album cycle with a live concert release, which is great news if you enjoy hearing stage versions of the group's latest material, the focus of this two-DVD set from 2014. **Mike Mangini** has settled in at this point, executing the back catalog with reverence ("The Mirror") and attacking with a healthy dose of inspiration newer songs that he had a hand in creating ("Illumination Theory"). His kit looks amazing on the rack, and he makes flawless playing appear effortless, his ambidexterity a marvel to behold. With multiple camera angles covering every conceivable viewpoint, the visuals will satiate hardcore music nerds looking to transcribe it all, while drummers should just sit back and enjoy Mangini's solo in "Enigma Machine," complete with no-sweat one-handed rolls, furious cross-sticking, and a "Whole Lotta Love" Bonzo quote. (\$14.88, Roadrunner) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### Ozzy Osbourne *Memoirs of a Madman*

This double-DVD collection of greatest hits, music videos, and assorted live

footage seems geared toward superfans seeking the unreleased, out-of-print, or new-to-DVD performances spanning the Ozz-man's post-Sabbath career. But the uninitiated will benefit as well. Osbourne has had a plethora of great rock drummers gracing his stage, and here we see



**Tommy Aldridge** choking cymbals in "Crazy Train" in 1981, and **Randy Castillo**, immersed in fog and lights, driving home "Bark at the Moon" in 1986. There's yet more from the great Castillo/Zakk Wylde groups from '89 and '92, before **Mike Bordin** takes over with serious bludgeoning on "Gets Me Through" from 2001. Osbourne's most recent era is represented by a very solid **Tommy Clufetos**, both hands on his hats, trucking through "Let Me Hear You Scream" from 2010. Fans can dig on the music vids and studio cuts featuring all the aforementioned drummers, but the concert clips are the real payoff, proving that you only get the Ozzy gig if you bring the thunder. (\$21.98, Epic/Legacy) **Ilya Stemkovsky**





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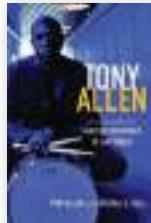


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# 10 Essential Drummer Autobiographies

by Patrick Berkery

**The most popular musician autobiographies tend to come from famous singers and guitar heroes. But drummers can tell a tale as well as anyone else. Here's a ten-pack of proof.**



**Tony Allen** *An Autobiography of the Master Drummer of Afrobeat* (2013)  
Every musician has obstacles, but it's a pretty small group that can relate to what Tony Allen endured. Allen takes a very conversational tone in his memoir as he details a complex relationship with Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti and the constant struggles to get his own musical career

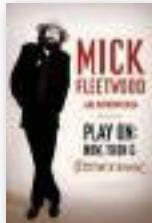
happening amidst political corruption and civil war in his native Nigeria. Even after relocating to France in the '80s, Allen describes being held back by a heroin addiction and subpar solo records. Redemption comes later in life as the drummer is embraced by musicians like Flea and Blur's Damon Albarn.



**Ginger Baker** *Hellraiser: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Drummer* (2009)  
*Hellraiser* rolls and tumbles like Ginger Baker slashing his way through "Toad." That Baker is still here to share these tales of musical and personal adventure and misadventure is amazing, given his onetime lust for chemicals. A passion for musical exploration, and later polo, kept him going. Baker takes great pains to set the record straight on the course he charted, from his jazz beginnings to Cream and Blind Faith to Ginger Baker's Airforce to Fela, P.I.L., and beyond.



**Peter Criss** *Makeup to Breakup: My Life in and out of Kiss* (2012)  
With its depiction of rock-star highs (coauthoring and singing "Beth"), has-been lows (contemplating suicide in 1994), and a stare-down with mortality (male breast cancer), Peter Criss's autobiography is a gripping account of a kid from Brooklyn's rise, fall, slight return, and graceful segue into the autumn of his life. Either in or out of Kiss, Criss has been a major player in the soap opera. But this book shows that there's another side to the "Catman" once the grease paint is off.



**Mick Fleetwood** *Play On: Now, Then & Fleetwood Mac* (2014)

This second autobiography from Fleetwood Mac's founder doesn't skimp on the cocaine-fueled dirt. But it's far more interesting to learn about Fleetwood's trials in the London rock scene in the '60s, as an aspiring pro admittedly short on technique but long on ambition. He meets his rhythmic soul mate in bassist John McVie, they form the first incarnation of Fleetwood Mac with blues-guitar visionary Peter Green, and off Fleetwood goes on another slog until Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks walk into his life. Fleetwood's palpable passion for his musical pursuits is inspiring.



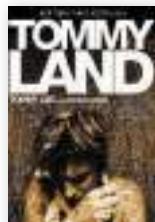
**Levon Helm** *This Wheel's on Fire: Levon Helm and the Story of the Band* (1993)

Levon Helm stoked the swampy sound that helped Dylan go electric and enabled the Band to become one of rock's most influential units. Helm's tale is a pretty amazing one, considering he came from the cotton fields of Turkey Scratch, Arkansas, and he spins it in the disarmingly folksy style he was known for. It's as though he's sitting at the kitchen table up in Woodstock telling you about hearing Sonny Boy Williamson for the first time or just what in fact he's doing in the verses on "I Shall Be Released." (Spoiler alert: He's running his fingers across the wires of an overturned snare drum.)



**Joey Kramer** *Hit Hard: A Story of Hitting Rock Bottom at the Top* (2009)

In the 1997 book *Walk This Way: The Autobiography of Aerosmith*, the topic of the depression that sidelined bedrock drummer Joey Kramer during the *Nine Lives* sessions was danced around carefully, described as a "blue funk" after the passing of his abusive father. No such fancy footwork here. With great detail, Kramer addresses the nervous breakdown he suffered, the hard work he put in to get healthy, and the sense of abandonment he felt from his bandmates and his then wife.



### **Tommy Lee** *Tommyland* (2004)

As his Mötley Crüe bandmate Vince Neil once sang in "Home Sweet Home," Tommy Lee's life has been like an open book for the whole world to read, what with the high-profile marriages, arrests, and the like. His autobiography touches on all the tabloid exploits but also serves as a reminder that none of that stuff would matter if Lee weren't an accomplished drummer. For Crüe fans, the book's a no-brainer—Lee pulls back the curtain on all the chaos and creativity, with his dude-speak flow.



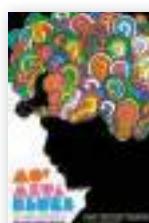
### **Marky Ramone** *Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life as a Ramone* (2015)

It's fitting that Marky Ramone is the last Ramone standing, because as his autobiography shows, he's a survivor. We learn how years before he manned the kit for the iconic punks, he'd headlined Cobo Hall in Detroit with his proto-metal band Dust, only to find himself back in Brooklyn as a working stiff shortly thereafter. By the mid-'80s he was an ex-Ramone who narrowly avoided prison after a drunk-driving accident. Putting down the sticks and working as a bike messenger helped him get sober for good, which ultimately led him back to the Ramones. He groused about the group never tasting the success enjoyed by many of the acts it inspired, but he does acknowledge that the fact that he's still walking among us is its own reward.



### **Jacob Slichter** *So You Wanna Be a Rock & Roll Star: How I Machine-Gunned a Roomful of Record Executives and Other True Tales From a Drummer's Life* (2005)

Semisonic's drummer doesn't present his life story so much as he gives the uninitiated a glimpse into once-prevalent and successful major-label machinations—and the soul-draining fallout when those strategies stopped working. With musical tastes that leaned toward funk and soul, Slichter wasn't really aiming to be the drummer in a big alternative rock band. He discusses how he acquired on the fly the chops necessary to hold it down for Semisonic, absorbing suggestions like, "Hit the hi-hat more insistently, more like the Replacements than the Spinners," from band members and (gulp) A&R men alike.



### **Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson** *Mo' Meta Blues: The World According to Questlove* (2013)

Long before Questlove was a hip-hop revolutionary, he was a music-obsessed nerd sticking out like a sore thumb in his hardened West Philadelphia neighborhood. The drums were his way out, and *Mo' Meta Blues* chronicles all the points along his head-spinning journey. Quest ties his formative years to specific albums, explaining with a musicologist's detail the impact that records like the Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique* had on him. Footnotes provide anecdotes behind the anecdotes and add context to his musings. This reads like a Questlove groove: steady on the 1 with lots of funky breaks.



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# Crash Into Me



Photos by Ayrton Guenke

“Carter Beauford has been my favorite drummer since I first saw the Dave Matthews Band in 2001,” Adam Parker of Hampton, Arkansas, says. “I love his style and approach. I started out with a basic five-piece setup close to his and eventually replicated the entire kit. I’m friends with Carter’s amazing drum tech, Henry Luniewski, so I keep up with the changes he makes to the kit and change mine accordingly, which keeps it fun and fresh. I tune as close as I can to get his amazing tom and snare sounds. I play open-handed on the ride, as Carter does, as well as cross-handed on the hats and snare.”

This outfit, which Parker plays in a Dave Matthews tribute band (he’s also a member of the Christian rock group Crutchfield), includes Yamaha Stage Custom Birch toms in raven black and a Sonor Force 3007 bass drum in deep red burst, meant to replicate

Beauford’s black Yamaha Recording Custom toms and cherry sunburst PHX bass drum. You can probably guess which Vic Firth artist model stick Parker uses.

A particularly noteworthy item can be found above the hi-hat. “The most talked-about piece of the kit is my Tibetan wedding bell,” Parker explains. “Carter has the famous Chinese wedding bell on his kit, and it’s one of a kind. I scoured the Internet to find something close. It adds a great voice to the kit and completes the Carter look and sound.”



**Photo Submission:** Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to [kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com](mailto:kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com). Show “Kit of the Month” in the subject line.



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