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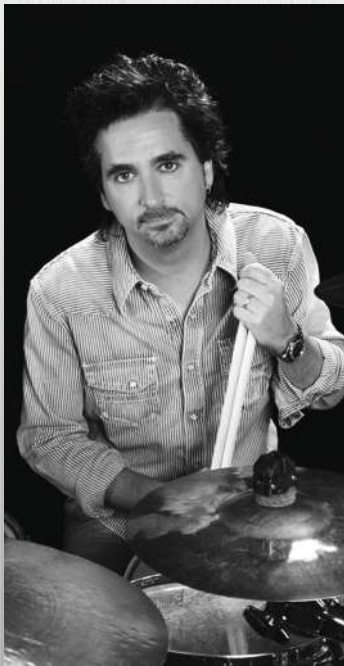
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# AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

## Appreciation and Gratitude

Happy New Year! It's that time again, when we reflect back on the past year and appreciate all the wonderful opportunities we've been blessed with.

Time has always fascinated me. Maybe being a drummer has something to do with that. I'm always amazed by how fast it tick-tocks on.

I'm one who believes we were each put on this planet for a reason, and that we should do what we were put here to do. I'm extremely grateful for the gift of music in my life, especially this year, as I continue my journey now as a sixty-year-old. I try not to think about aging too much, but I think I've accepted it pretty well. Anyway, do we even have a choice? Thankfully, I'm in a pretty good place mentally, and I feel healthier these days than I did when I was in my forties and fifties. (Well, today I do anyway!)

With the help and support of you, the readers, as well as my friends and family, I've accomplished many of the musical goals that I dreamed about since I started playing fifty years ago, at ten years old. By the time I was in my late teens, I'd developed a taste for the rock-star lifestyle through touring and having records on the radio. In the 1980s and the '90s, I got to do some studio work, mostly in my hometown of New York City, and my wife and I started a family. When I turned forty, I reinvented my career and started working here at *Modern Drummer*. For me, it was a nice way to break away from the madness of touring and performing, and to recharge my batteries.

I'm extremely thankful that I've been fortunate enough to meet and become friends with many of my influences and childhood idols. A good number have been friends for years, many from before life at *MD*. You all know who you are, and I appreciate each and every one of you. If I were going to drop one name, though, it would have to be Ringo Starr. Ringo is the reason that I (like so many others) play the drums, and why I first wanted to be in a band, writing and playing songs with my friends. I'm honored to have known him for almost thirty years now—we first met when he hosted *SNL*—and to be in his company is just magic. I was beyond thrilled when he invited me to play percussion on stage with him and the All-Starr Band; it was like reaching the mountaintop. (Search "Ringo & the All Starrs 2016 Encore" to watch the video.) Years earlier I'd interviewed Ringo for a *Modern Drummer* cover story, and recently the tables were turned when Dom Famularo interviewed me for a Sessions Panel video, where I got to discuss my fifty years in the music business. (That video is posted on YouTube as well.)


The interview made me think back to when I first started playing, and later when I was introduced to this informative and entertaining magazine. That led me to think more about all the people I've met and all the readers I've interacted with over the years. You know that saying "Always be nice to everyone you meet, because you never know who or what that person will do for you someday"? Well, the key is: Just do it, without expecting anything in return. Make it a habit, and good things will inevitably happen for you. These days it's so much easier than ever before to reach out, so take advantage. I'm a huge fan of social media, so if you ever want to fill me in on your life and career, please find me on Instagram and Facebook and let me know what you're up to.



Again, thank you, thank you, thank you for your support these past fifty years; it's much appreciated. Have a safe, healthy, happy 2018, and enjoy the issue. Peace and love always.



*Billy Amendola*

**Billy Amendola**  
Editor at Large

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| S.D.      | ●            | ●         | ●          | ●          | ●       |
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# READERS' PLATFORM

## December Issue

### Roy McCurdy

I wanted to thank you for featuring Roy McCurdy in your On Topic section of the December issue. I was blessed to hear Roy play live with Toshiko Akiyoshi in 1978 when I was sixteen years old. Being from a small town in Texas, I'd never seen or heard a drummer play with the taste, precision, and energy that Roy displayed on such a small Gretsch kit that night. I also spoke with him after the gig, and he was so kind and encouraging. He is truly one of the greats and a living legend.

### David Alexander

Southlake, Texas

### 12 Heartland Prog Albums

I wanted to send a quick reply to the "12 Heartland Prog Albums" feature in the December issue. Crack the Sky is happily still recording and performing in



the Baltimore and Mid-Atlantic area with three of the five original members, including drummer Joey D'Amico. For those interested in listening, Crack the Sky's two most recent releases, *Ostrich* [2012] and *The Beauty of Nothing* [2015], are every bit as good as the self-titled debut album referred to in your article.

### Dave Tarr

Charleston, South Carolina

## Drum Fills: Keep It Simple, or Shred?

*Drummers have to consider plenty of options when choosing an appropriate fill to play in a given situation. Factors such as voicing, subdivision, density, and speed comprise just a few of the choices.*

*While keeping these options in mind, we recently took to social media to ask our readers and followers if they generally prefer to play chops-burning figures or simpler phrases. Here are some of the responses.*

Fat, solid drumming anchors the band and makes it much more meaningful and exciting when you choose to play a fast fill.

### Nate Giebink

It totally depends on what's being played. If I'm playing R&B, taste is all I'm thinking about. If I want to play metal or something

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similar, I usually try to hit the gas a bit.

**Jesiah Yarish**

While it's fun to play fast fills, I've always regarded timekeeping as the primary duty of any drummer. If your groove is off, all the fills in the world are meaningless.

**Ralph Senecal**

I love both types of fills. But you can have huge, in-your-face fills that are also as fast as lightning. It's all in your sound, ability, and touch.

**Matt Bover**

It depends on what style I'm playing. If it's funk or rock, I'm going with a simple yet huge fill. If I'm playing punk or metal, I tend to go for speed.

**Isaiah Keller**

How about just laying down a solid beat that makes people get up and dance? Be the steady force that everyone in the band can rely on.

**Alvaro Perez**

**Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and keep an eye out for next month's question.**

## Remembering Barry "Frosty" Smith



Thank you for the piece about Barry "Frosty" Smith [September 2017]. I was surprised to learn that Frosty passed away this past April.

I was very fortunate to have seen Frosty perform with Lee Michaels in 1969 at the Northern California Folk-Rock Festival in San Jose. I went to this festival with some friends because Jimi Hendrix was headlining the concert.

There were several bands that played that day, and I hadn't

previously heard of most of them. There was a lot of anticipation as each band played because we couldn't wait to see and hear Hendrix perform. When it was time for Lee Michaels to perform with Frosty, I had no idea who either of them were. When they walked out on stage there was just a B3 organ and a drumset with a row of speakers that stretched from the left side of the stage to the right.

From the first chord and incredible groove, I was fixated for their entire performance. There were only two bands that would get standing ovations that day before Hendrix played, and Lee Michaels with Frosty was one of them. Unfortunately they couldn't play an encore because Frosty cut his hand while playing an incredible barehanded drum solo.

We've lost one of the unsung drum heroes of our time.

**Sid Thompson**

**Boulder Creek, California**

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# OUT NOW

## John Convertino on Calexico's *The Thread That Keeps Us*

A presidential election, a trip west to the coast, and an immersion in nature invigorate the indie mainstay's latest foray into Tex-Mex-infused Americana bliss.



For more than twenty years, the multifaceted and keenly eclectic Arizona-based group Calexico has seamlessly merged Southern Americana, world rhythms, and controlled grit into a unique blend of hook-driven indie rock. On its ninth full-length album, released on January 26, the group furthers that vision.

Drummer, multi-instrumentalist, and original member John Convertino complements the collective's brilliant melodies throughout *The Thread That Keeps Us* by channeling a diverse range of influences. North African-inspired handclaps dance around Convertino's creative 3/4 groove on "Voices in the Field." On "Under the Wheels," John avoids the hi-hat on backbeats, à la the Rolling Stones' Charlie Watts or Tony Thompson of Chic. And the drummer drives home Latin rhythms on the Spanish-sung "Flores y Tamales."

For Convertino and the other half of Calexico's core, singer and multi-instrumentalist Joey Burns, recent American political developments spurred the desire to produce this latest effort. "After the presidential election—and after getting over the initial shock—Joey and I decided the best thing to do was to get to work, get a record done, and get out on the road," Convertino explains. "Music is a positive force, and we want to get that force back out there."

After demoing, the group shacked up in the Panoramic House,

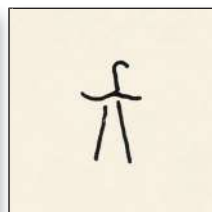
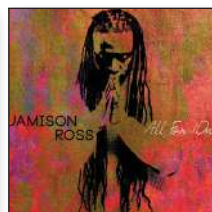
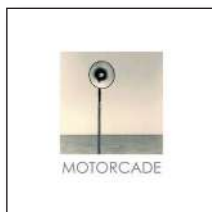
a dual-purpose recording studio/vacation home built just north of San Francisco on the Pacific coast. "It was so good to get out of the Southwest heat," Convertino says. "It was amazing to be out in nature, by the ocean, and in the mountains. It's easy to forget how important nature is and how it opens your mind and heart. The song 'The Town & Miss Lorraine' was written there, and it opened the gate to the session."

Although Convertino's setup—partly composed of a C&C kit, vintage Ludwig and Gretsch drums, and a Zildjian A cymbal he's owned since he was nine years old—contributed to the record's warm tones, the drummer explains how his kit's placement at Panoramic was as vital as the gear itself. "We put the drums in the front of the big room, where the windows are and the highest part of the ceiling is," Convertino says. "I could watch the sunset, the tide roll in, and the deer walk by. I think we've always gone for a nice room sound, and I was inspired by the tone of the drums and the sound of that room."

Twenty-plus years in, Burns and Convertino maintain a great working relationship. "I think we give each other lots of space," Convertino says. "Joey's got lots of ideas, and his songwriting just gets better and better. I'm just trying to stay out of the way and let the song find its way. It's been a hell of a ride, and I feel very lucky to still be doing it." **Willie Rose**

## More New Releases

**Motorcade** Motorcade (Jeff Ryan) /// **Mimicking Birds** Layers of Us (Aaron Hanson) /// **Jamison Ross** All for One (Jamison Ross) /// **Xylouris** **White** Mother (Jim White)



# ON TOUR



Erik Rosengarten

## Marty Beller With They Might Be Giants

The drummer and composer stokes an already roaring blaze underneath a raucous group's latest worldwide trek.

They Might Be Giants, the energetic alternative-rock duo formed in 1982 by guitarist and vocalist John Flansburgh and multi-instrumentalist and vocalist John Linnell, kicked off a world tour on January 17 in support of its brand-new album, *I Like Fun*. Marty Beller, the group's live and recording drummer since 2004, joins the duo's backing band on the trek, which lasts through late April.

To power the wild, high-energy performances, Beller doesn't hold back on stage. "I'm maniacally committed to throwing everything I have into every show," he says. "I don't think it'd be possible to perform any other way. And I want to be completely immersed in the show every night. There are many speeds in a TMBG show. Diving into each one and staying on top of that is a big part of the energy. The pacing of the set is also one of my favorite parts of my job. We do a bunch of quick segues, and I have to make sure I'm staying ahead of the changes.

"There's a lot of thought given to how faithful the live versions should be to the recordings," Beller continues. "Many songs have evolved greatly to become their own standalone versions over the

**Marty Beller plays Ludwig drums, including a vintage brass snare, as well as Zildjian cymbals, Roland electronics, and Vic Firth sticks.**

course of playing them every night. It's been really fun to create new live parts inspired by the programmed drums on songs from the band's early catalog. There's a spirit of improvisation and musical awareness that everyone brings to the stage. We're of course playing songs that have definitive arrangements, but within that structure there's room for surprises and for parts to evolve in unexpected ways."

Beller, who's written music for numerous film and TV soundtracks and for several international dance companies, says, "There are a number of ways that my approach to composing influences my drumming approach. What's the simplest, most direct way I can accomplish what the song needs? I'm obsessed with how a song develops and builds, and I want to accentuate and contribute to that. So I'm often focused on how the drums exist and support the song while we're tracking. Drama, fire, dynamics, and emotional connection—those words have a real crossover for me whether I'm composing or drumming."

With more than a decade under his belt with TMBG, Beller still feels right at home. "So much of what the band is about hits squarely on what excites me about being a musician," he says. "There's always a new way to approach an old song, the live show, or how we record. And of course I feel extremely fortunate to play music that I'm excited and passionate about. But we have a great combination of shared sensibilities—about music, for sure, but also about the way we look at and talk and laugh about the world outside of music. I think that's all connected to the ongoing creative relationship." **Willie Rose**

## Also on the Road

**Gene "Bubba" Chrisman** with Robert Finley, Dan Auerbach, Shannon Shaw, and Shannon & the Clams /// **Joey Baca** with the Contortionist /// **Kristen Gleeson-Prata** with BØRNS /// **Dave Smith** with Robert Plant

## In Memoriam

### Ben Riley

This past November 18, the American jazz-drumming great Ben Riley passed away at the age of eighty-four. A brief list of Riley's credits includes Alice Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, Woody Herman, Ahmad Jamal, Kenny Barron, the New York Jazz Quartet, and—most notably—the Thelonious Monk Quartet. Riley appeared on the venerated Monk recordings *It's Monk's Time*, *Monk*, *Underground*, and *Straight, No Chaser*, as well as the reissued 1964 recordings *Live at the It Club* and *Live at the Jazz Workshop*.

Riley was born in Georgia and moved to New York City with his family when he was four. After graduating high school, he served in the army, then moved back to New York in 1954. The drummer began playing professionally around the city in 1956 and joined Monk in 1964. His tenure with the idiosyncratic pianist and composer would last until 1968, when Riley took a four-year break from New York and music. He eventually returned to the kit in the '70s, playing with the New York Jazz Quartet, Alice Coltrane, the Ron Carter Quartet, and others. As a leader Riley released the albums *Weaver of Dreams*, *Memories of T*, and *Grown Folks Music*.



### Frank Capp

Frank Capp, the longtime Los Angeles studio and jazz drummer who appeared with Frank Sinatra, Stan Kenton, Peggy Lee, Nancy Wilson, and André Previn, among others, passed away this past September 12 at the age of eighty-six. Although he preferred working with jazz artists, Capp's prolific studio career saw him back pop acts such as Sonny and Cher and play supporting percussion behind Earl Palmer and Hal Blaine with the Beach Boys. Capp also did a significant amount of soundtrack work, particularly for the Hanna-Barbera animation studio, and his performances were featured on shows such as *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*. In the '60s, Capp started a long and successful contracting job pairing composers with musicians for various studio work, which he maintained alongside his notable drumming career.



### Grady Tate

The famed hard-bop and soul drummer Grady Tate passed away last October 8 at the age of eighty-five. As a sideman, Tate played on countless records with such jazz artists as Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Wes Montgomery, among many others. The drummer also had success as a pop studio musician with artists including Paul Simon and Bette Midler. As a composer, Tate produced a myriad of jingles and television and film scores. He was also a talented singer; in addition to his own vocal recordings, he contributed his voice to the famed *Schoolhouse Rock!* animated education series and to albums by Grover Washington and others. As an educator, Tate taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., as a lecturer of jazz studies starting in the late 1980s.



### Chuck Blackwell

Chuck Blackwell, the legendary Tulsa, Oklahoma, drummer whose credits include Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs & Englishmen, the Everly Brothers, Taj Mahal, and Freddie King, passed away last October 23 at seventy-seven years old. Blackwell was among a generation of Oklahoma drummers that helped define the "Tulsa feel," which comprised unique shuffles, slow and medium tempos, and signature low-pitched snare tones. The Tulsa sound would eventually influence musicians such as Eric Clapton and George Harrison.

Blackwell moved from Tulsa to Los Angeles after a tour with Jerry Lee Lewis and quickly established a name for himself around town. In addition to gigs with acts like the Everlys, Blackwell was a member of the Shindogs, the house band for the mid-'60s ABC television show *Shindig!* After the show's two-year run, Blackwell landed gigs with Mahal and Cocker, among others. In the late 1970s Blackwell moved back to Tulsa to open a stained-glass business, while playing sparse gigs for close to the next forty years. In 2014 he was inducted into the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame.



For more on these players, head to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).





# Ulysses Owens Jr.

During his long tenures with the jazz stars Christian McBride and Kurt Elling, Ulysses Owens Jr. aspired to build his own standing as a leader. The dazzling and seriously swinging drummer has taken another strong stride in that direction on his fourth album, *Falling Forward*, featuring his trio, Three. In addition to touring with that unit, Owens will continue to globe hop with the young pianist Joey Alexander. And this year he'll also tour his vocal-centric project, *Songs of Freedom*, featuring the music of Abbey Lincoln, Joni Mitchell, and Nina Simone.

"On *Falling Forward*, I really changed my setup," Owens says. "Before, I was into the traditional four-piece bop thing. But now that my sound has opened up, I'm using new things that are expanding my sound palette."

Owens currently uses a Tama Star Maple drumkit with Remo heads, Zildjian cymbals, and assorted LP percussion extras. "I'm trying to develop the left side of my body," he says. "I started to crave having something on the left side of the kit, beyond the usual. So Zildjian created a couple special flat rides for me. I'm using either an 18" or a 20" flat ride on the left, and I use two snare drums [maple burl and aluminum, both Starphonic 6x14]. That has opened up two different styles on the kit, so I can do the bop thing but I can also go into the Latin or African stuff that I have on the record."

Alas, jazz budgets and air-travel constraints make it impossible for Owens to transport his kit. He submits an advance rider in hopes that venues will provide a similar setup. But it's chancy out there. That's where must-have-gear travel choices come into play.

"I stand behind Gator," Owens says. "They have a narrow cymbal case with a collapsible handle [Roto Molded Cymbal Case with wheels].

That collapsible handle allows you to have a thin case that the airlines can't destroy." Ulysses brings his Zildjian 20" and 21" prototype rides, 18" prototype flat ride, 18" Kerope crash, 19" K Dark EFX prototype crash, and vintage 14" A hi-hats. "I also take my [Protection Racket] mini stick bag with my Regal Tip signature sticks [Ulysses Owens "U" model] and two or three extra pairs in other locations—like in a backpack or suitcase—just in case. Also, a Danmar foot pedal beater."

For added sound insurance, Owens packs Earthworks microphones: two SR30s for overheads and two SR25s for snare and bass drum. "They're so killin' that every sound engineer that hears them wants to buy them from me," the drummer chuckles. "I'm into playing textures and dynamics, and those mics bring out the clarity."

And don't forget Murphy's Law: "I created a 'survival kit' with washers, felts, and something all drummers absolutely need: rubber cymbal stand sleeves," Owens says. "Wherever I go in the world, that's the thing that's always missing. I buy them by the droves." Owens also packs a set of collapsible multi-tool pliers and towels to cut up for tuning and muffling purposes.

A constant road challenge is mental/physical health, and Owens cites blog writing as therapeutic. "I'll often steal away to a café to write, and that's part of what keeps me sane," he explains. Also an avid road reader, the drummer favors philosophy and autobiographies ("I'm into reading about successful people and their paths to success").

Owens' hotel room must-haves include his always-playing mini Bose speakers, and incense. "I'm also into holistic herbs and acupuncture," Ulysses adds. "I bring multivitamins and herbs to help me adapt to the changing environments. Just before I go on the road, I'll meet with my herbalist and she sets me up. It's my gig; I have to take it seriously. I've got to keep healthy to do what I love to do."

Jeff Potter



Rayon Richards



## PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

# Sugar Percussion 2-12 Series Mahogany Snares

An experiment with shell depths yields surprising results.

**If the ancient Greek saying** “A man is known by the company he keeps” rings true, then Santa Cruz–based Sugar Percussion is on a fast track to the drum maker’s equivalent of Mount Olympus. Not only do top drummers with discerning tastes, like session great Aaron Sterling and Black Crowes’ Steve Gorman, swear by the up-and-comer’s super-sweet stave snares and kits, but legendary producers/engineers, such as Eric Valentine, Vance Powell, and Ross Hogarth, are also singing their praises.

This small custom shop outputs some of the most refined and beautifully designed drums we’ve ever seen, and no detail goes overlooked by the keen eye of expert woodworker and company founder Jefferson Shallenberger. When asked how he knows that a drum is complete, Jefferson says, “The entire process is about quieting the noise in my head. My eyes see every flaw, and the flaws create that noise. When the noise is gone, the drum is finished.”

This quest for mental peace during the build is mirrored in how each Sugar Percussion drum looks, feels, and performs. The wood for the shell begins as a plank from a single tree. Once cut into pieces, the blocks are arranged strategically so that it’s nearly impossible to detect where one piece ends and another begins. Shallenberger prefers the stave-style design because it allows the wood to be

sizes and wood species. The sleek single-point lugs used on all drums are Sugar Percussion’s design.

One of Jefferson’s most recent endeavors is to craft sets of six 14” snares from a single tree that range from 2” to 12” in depth. Here we’re checking out a complete collection of mahogany drums to not only review SP’s handiwork, but also to assess the effects of shell depth on otherwise nearly identical instruments.

### The Median Three

The 4x14, 6x14, and 8x14 models had the most “normal” sonic characteristics. The 4” had very quick snare response coupled with a full, rich tone. Even though most would consider this a piccolo, I found that the 4x14 performed more like an all-purpose 5x14 drum. It had a full, unencumbered sustain with balanced overtones and a moderately quick decay. I could tune it up high for snappy articulation and pop, medium for a more balanced mix of crack and ring, or low for a thumping-yet-crisp attack. The mahogany shell maintained its naturally darker, softer timbre throughout, which gave the 4x14 snare a classic Art Blakey–type vibe when tuned medium-low. It came with twenty-four-strand Custom Pro brass wires.

The 6x14 was the standout of the set in terms of versatility and sonority. It had the fullest tone and longest sustain, which could be



manipulated into cylinders without applying excessive stress to the timber, which results in more natural tone and resonance.

The bearing edges and beds on Sugar Percussion snares are hand-shaped and customized for each drum, and they have a seamless contour from the shell wall to the apex. The interior of the shells are finished just as carefully as the exteriors, which satisfies Jefferson’s stringent quality standards for his work. Even the hand-carved wooden badges are perfectly placed inside beveled recesses so that they don’t distort the seamless, smooth curvature of the shell. Snares are outfitted with Remo heads, a Trick throw-off, Puresound wires, and either die-cast, triple-flange, or straight hoops, depending on the customer’s choice or Shallenberger’s recommendation for particular

manipulated and controlled easily via tuning and small amounts of dampening. I’d feel confident taking just this model to any session or gig that required a darker wood-shell sound. It was super-sensitive, as were all of the others in the set, and it had a seemingly endless tuning range, with an especially stellar sweet spot in the lower-middle register. It came with twenty-four-strand Custom Pro steel wires.

I expected the sustain and overtones to ratchet up when I played the 8x14, but it actually had less pronounced ring and a drier, chestier punch. For rock, studio, and modern country players favoring deep snare tones, this drum delivers a big, full sound with a lot of dark, woody ambience and super-crisp snare response. You won’t need—or want—to use any muffling on this drum; its tone is just too sweet



to dull with tape and gels. But if you desire a drier, tighter thud, it handles dampening well and doesn't become boxy or tubby at very low tunings. It came with Super 30 steel wires.

### The Outliers

Now that we've covered the more conventionally sized drums, let's dig into the oddballs. First up is the super-skinny 2x14 "pancake" model. Because of the limited amount of space to work with for this shell, Shallenberger had to forgo the triple-flange hoops and round lugs found on the other five drums for single-tension straight hoops with claws. Also different is the throw-off, which is a beer-tap-style mechanism that's bolted to the hoops rather than to the shell. The on/off lever is on one side of the drum, while the tension control is on the other.

Like the 4" and 8" snares, the 2x14 deceived me. I assumed it would be tailor-made for a tight, fast side-snare sound, but I discovered that it actually had the most intriguing voice when tuned super-low. The single-tension lugs had a limit on how tight they could go, which ended up limiting the upper register below that of the other drums. However, it was the 2x14's medium and lower tuning ranges that produced the most interesting mix of instantaneous smack, dark rattle, and chesty punch. If an Irish bodhran had two heads, snares, and metal hoops, it would probably sound like this. Gushy yet focused, this is a very distinct-sounding instrument.

The two larger drums (10x14 and 12x14) were set up more like floor toms with snare wires. They both featured leg mounts affixed to the shell and had Super 30 wires. The 10x14 had center-point lugs and extra-long tension rods, while the 12x14 had separate lugs for each tension rod.

The two deeper drums had fairly similar sounds, and were amazingly sensitive and versatile. They could be cranked to produce a high, dry bite, or they could be tuned lower for fuller, punchier tones. I doubt that in a blindfold test anyone could tell that these are unusually deep drums; they didn't sound boxier or choked at any tuning. Yet they offered something extra-special in the medium-low and lower registers that was deep and punchy yet full, open, and balanced. Neither required muffling, even when the batter heads were slack, which gave them more presence and projection than you'd get from a shallower drum that's been detuned and heavily dampened. I was surprised how controlled the overtones were on these deeper models. I expected them to ring on forever, but they actually had the shortest decay of the lot.

For drummers who are currently employing low, thuddy auxiliary snares in their setups, the 10x14 and 12x14 Sugar Percussion models can get that vibe very easily, while also doubling as floor toms when the wires are disengaged. I experimented with using a trio of these drums (4x14, 8x14, and 12x14) to create a standard bebop-style setup, and it sounded completely convincing. No one would have known all three were actually snares until the wires were engaged.

To sum it all up, yes, Sugar Percussion makes absolutely amazing drums. Like the others we reviewed several years ago, the six mahogany drums in this 2-12 Series looked flawless and produced a nearly infinite range of clean, articulate, open tones that varied from tight and cutting to deep and gushy. If you're looking for a workhorse, pick one of the middle three. But don't overlook the more unconventional sizes. They're not as stylized as you might think. In fact, they might actually be exactly what you need.

**Michael Dawson**

# Ddrum

## Dios Maple Series Drumset

After being shelved for six years, the go-to shell pack is back and better than ever.

**Florida-based Ddrum** debuted all-maple Dios series drumsets in 2008, and they quickly became the top choice of many of the company's artists and customers. So why was the Dios line discontinued in 2012?

We asked Ddrum's director of marketing and artist relations, Felix DeLuna. "We were attempting to follow suit with the rest of the industry with drums that had a bit of vintage swagger and traditional sizes," DeLuna explained. "That was the origin of the Paladin Maple series, which were great-sounding drums. However, that aesthetic wasn't embraced by our current fans, nor did it really bring in any new fans. We were too young of a company to succeed with a 'vintage-inspired' line."

### The Revival

Detecting a blind spot in its catalog for a dedicated all-maple lineup, Ddrum in 2018 decided to bring back Dios. "We had been receiving calls for its return," says DeLuna. "So it was a good time to revisit the series."

The updated Dios line includes thin 6-ply/5.6mm tom shells, 6-ply/6mm bass drums, and 8-ply/8mm snares. The bearing edges on all of the drums are cut to forty-five degrees with a thirty-degree counter cut. The toms feature ddrum's upgraded FixPitch suspension-mounting system, and the bass drums come with Resolift isolator feet, which elevate the shell off the ground slightly so the drum can produce a bigger, fuller sound.

The initial batch of re-launched Dios kits are available in four lacquer finishes (Red Cherry Sparkle, Satin Gold, Emerald Gold, and Satin Black) and three configurations, all of which feature ddrum's trademark 20"-deep bass drums. The five-piece kit, which we received for review, includes 7x10, 8x12, 14x14, and 14x16 toms and a 20x22 bass drum (\$1,599). The other setups are three-piece and include 8x12 and 14x14 toms with a 20x20 bass drum (\$1,149) or 9x13 and 14x16 toms with a mammoth 20x24 kick (\$1,249).

Add-on bass drums and toms and matching snares (6.5x14 and 7x13) can be ordered separately. The stock drumheads are made by Evans and comprise 2-ply clear tom batters and clear single-ply bottoms, and a clear single-ply kick batter and a white single-ply front with built-in muffling rings.

### Full, Contemporary Tones

For our review, we tested the Dios Maple drumset at high, medium, and low tunings. The top and bottom heads were tuned to the same frequency to ensure the purest and most resonant tones possible. No muffling was added to any of the drums, including the 20x22 kick. All of the drums tuned up quickly and easily, and the toms produced big, full sounds with crisp attack and pure pitches, and the sustain matched well from drum to drum. The toms opened up most naturally at a medium tuning that had an octave spread from D to D between the 10" and 16" drums.

To get to the higher tuning, I pitched up each drum by a major



third so that they had an octave spread at F# on the 10" and 16". The rack toms had increased cut and projection while still retaining pure pitch and rich sustain. The floor toms lost a bit of power and depth when the heads were put under that much tension, but they still produced clean tones that blended well with the rack toms.

For the low tuning, I loosened the heads about as far as they could go, and ended up settling on an octave spread at the note A. With barely any tension on the rods, the toms sounded super-punchy and had controlled, dense sustain—almost like a quartet of tiny kick drums. The floor toms excelled at this tuning, exhibiting deep, fat tones that served as a perfect bridge between the more



tuneful timbres of the rack toms and the thunderous smack of the kick. Across the entire tuning range of the Dios toms, there's plenty to work with, whether you need ultimate thump and depth (low), pure, classic tones (medium), or fusion-like cut and clarity (high).

With a solid front head and no muffling, the 20x22 kick drum wasn't quite as versatile as the toms; the heads needed to be kept fairly loose in order to produce enough attack and punch to balance out the additional power and sustain provided by the extra-deep shell. Porting the head would provide more flexibility for dialing different amounts of punch and focus via muffling, and it would allow you to take advantage of the 20"-deep shell to explore a wider

range of mic placements from inside the drum. The Resolifts on the underside of the kick drum did a great job of decoupling the shell from the floor. There was very little resonance lost from striking the drum while suspending it in the air versus playing it in context with the kit. I should also point out that the FixPitch suspension mount on the rack toms is one of the best in the biz. It's discreet, it doesn't impede tuning or head changes in any way, and it had no discernable impact on the drum's tone or resonance.

**Michael Dawson**



# Ahead

## Maxx 5A and Zummo Drumsticks, Stick-On Practice Pad, and Compact Stick Holder

The leading synthetic drumstick brand expands once again.



**AHEAD (Advanced High Efficiency Alloy Drumsticks)** was created in 1992 by Easton Company engineer Rick Grossman. Easton is best known for its innovative aerospace-grade aluminum sports products (arrows, baseball bats, hockey sticks), which were designed to replace wood in the manufacturing process. Being a drummer, Grossman set out to do the same for drumsticks and created a unique hybrid that utilizes an aluminum core and handle, threaded-nylon tips, and a replaceable sleeve made from injection-molded polyurethane.

The exclusive distributor for these sticks, Big Bang, purchased the rights to AHEAD in 1997 and has since gone on to expand the brand to include cases, snares, practice pads, thrones, and hardware. This month, we have a selection of new stick and accessory offerings to check out. Let's dig in.

### Maxx 5A and Frank Zummo Drumsticks

The Maxx 5A model is .5" longer than a typical 16" 5A in order to provide additional reach and power. The grip is .540" thick, which is a little thinner than wooden 5As from other manufacturers. The Maxx 5A weighs 59 grams, and that weight is controlled to less than one-percent variance from stick to stick.

To my hands, the Maxx 5As felt slightly heavier than what I'm used to, but there was no discernable difference in weight, rebound, or tone between the two sticks. The biggest concern I have with all synthetic drumsticks is the amount of shock that they transfer to my hands. AHEAD sticks are engineered to have fifty percent less shock than wood sticks, so they're actually better for your hands, especially for hard-hitting gigs and extended use. I compared the shock factor of these sticks to different sizes of wood models and was surprised by how little vibration transferred into the aluminum handles of the AHEADs.

The nylon tips produced clean, bright cymbal tones, and the plastic sleeves displayed minimal markings after an onslaught of cymbal crashes, hi-hat shanks, and rim shots. (The tips and sleeves are replaceable, if you ever need to do so.) I found the textured-aluminum grips to be a bit hard and cold, but AHEAD makes grip tape (sold separately) if you want to give these sticks a softer, warmer feel.

Sum 41 drummer Frank Zummo's signature AHEAD model is 16.63" long and .595" thick and weighs 65 grams. These rock-style sticks have a long taper and a large nylon tip. They were perfectly balanced and matched, and they had great rebound. (I found that they had a little better response than the Maxx 5A.) The large tip produced massive drum sounds and big, bright cymbal tones. The company claims that all AHEAD drumsticks can last up to ten times longer than wood sticks, which makes the \$29.99 street price much more palatable.

### 6" Compact Stick-On Practice Pad

For drummers who need a more portable alternative to traditional rubber-on-wood practice pads, AHEAD has created a 6" model that has a soft, black-rubber playing surface, a medium-soft red-rubber rim, and a tacky gel back that sticks to any clean, flat surface, such as countertops, desks, or tables. The pad comes with a reusable thin-plastic cover, which helps keep the back clean and prevents the gel from sticking to other objects when transported





in a gig bag.

The pad is washable, so if the gel gets dirty and loses tackiness, simply clean it with dish soap and let it air-dry. Most small, portable practice pads either move around too much or they lack rebound. The AHEAD Stick-On pad locks into place and doesn't bounce or slide while you play on it. It has comfortable, realistic rebound, and it's not any louder than standard rubber pads. For gigging and practicing drummers on the go, this is a great, compact option. Street price is \$20.99.

### **Compact Stick Holder**

Another practical and affordable accessory from AHEAD is the Compact Stick Holder. It comprises a ballistic-style 3"x9" nylon sack that can hold up to five pairs of drumsticks and a bike-seat-type quick-release clamp that fits .625" to 1" tubing. The nylon component threads onto a metal ring that can be angled and locked into place against the stand mount via a hex bolt. This is a simple yet durable solution for placing spare sticks within easy reach on hi-hat or cymbal stands. The Compact Stick Holder is super easy to install, and it can be folded up for compact storage. Street price is \$20.99.

**Michael Dawson**



# Alesis

## Strike Pro Drumset

A top-notch e-kit built to look and feel like an acoustic set while offering unlimited sonic capabilities.

**Since being founded in 1984**, Alesis has served the needs of semi-professional and professional musicians seeking high-quality digital audio equipment at budget-conscious prices. Some of the company's most notable early products are the HR-16 and SR-16 drum machines, ADAT digital recorders, and DM series electronic kits.

In late 2017, Alesis released the Strike Pro, which is its most professional-quality drumkit to date. We were sent the six-piece setup, which features 8", 10", 12", and 14" wood-shell/mesh-head tom pads, a 14" snare, a 14" bass drum, 12" hi-hats, three 14" crashes, and a 16" triple-zone ride. A sturdy chrome rack, a double-braced snare stand, and all the necessary cables are also included.

The high-powered Strike module comes with 118 preset kits and 1,760 multi-sampled instruments and has a crystal-clear 4.3" color LCD screen, physical faders for each pad, and a large scrolling wheel to facilitate quick and easy editing. MIDI and USB connections allow the module to interface with computers and other electronic instruments, and there are eight individual audio outputs that can be routed to separate channels on a mixer or audio interface for multi-track recording.

For players looking to import their own samples, loops, and backing tracks, Alesis created the intuitive Strike Software Editor, which allows you to drag and drop WAV files from your computer to whichever pad you'd like. (The Strike module comes with an 8GB SD card for storing custom kits.) The software also has editing parameters for reverb and other effects, as well as volume, pan, decay, pitch, and EQ filters. You can assign up to two instruments to each pad, and those instruments (which can be composed of multiple individual samples) can be assigned to trigger at all velocities or only when you strike the pad within a predetermined dynamic range.

If you have your own library of multi-sample instruments you'd like to import into the Strike module, the Strike Software Editor has a great feature called Auto-Map that determines the volume of each sample within a large group and then turns them into a multi-layered, dynamically responsive instrument.

While I preferred the speed and ease of editing kits within the Strike Software Editor, the module also allows for onboard sampling. This can be ideal for recording samples or loops from a smartphone or tablet when away from your computer. The large LCD screen displays the waveform of the recorded sample clearly, so it's easy to trim the audio to the desired length and then assign to a pad.

In addition to the impressively powerful, flexible, and intuitive software and module, which is loaded with tons of useful and musical electronic and acoustic samples, the pads and rack included with the Strike Pro kit are also top-notch. The 8"–14" wood-shelled toms were easy to lock into a comfortable position on the sturdy chrome rack, and the large 14" snare and bass



drum did a great job of withstanding a barrage of kicks and rimshots without slipping, dipping, or sliding out of place. The mesh heads and rubber hoops on the drums had a soft, realistic feel with excellent dynamic response and minimal impact sound. The mesh heads can be tuned to adjust the rebound, and each drum pad features a sensitivity knob to help you match the response of the triggers to your playing style.

The 12" hi-hats triggered open and closed sounds accurately, and they felt pretty close to their acoustic counterparts, thanks to the moveable top pad. The three-zone ride cymbal pad also had convincingly realistic response, and the crashes had a soft enough feel to absorb the impact of hard accents without transferring shock back into the sticks.

My only gripe with the Strike Pro kit is that it's only currently available in red sparkle finish, but I assume





additional finishes will be released soon. Overall, Alesis has made a giant leap forward with the Strike Pro drumkit. Not only does it have the realistic feel, response, and durability required by today's professional e-drummers, but it also allows for endless customization via uploading and editing your own samples, loops, or tracks to the super-powerful Performance Drum Module. The module also comes stocked with tons of great-sounding kits that you can put to use right away in the studio or on the gig. For me, that's a win-win-win! The six-piece setup we reviewed sells for \$2,299.

**Michael Dawson**





# Dream

## Re-Fx Naughty Saucer

A recycled cast-off turned into a multi-purpose electro-inspired effect.

**Canadian cymbal maker Dream** initiated a unique recycling program several years ago in which it collects broken or unwanted instruments from customers and cuts them into interesting special effects. The Re-Fx model we have for review this month, which was designed in collaboration with endorsing artist Scott Pellegron, is the Naughty Saucer.

### The Origins

The Naughty Saucer is made from recycled cymbal alloy and is available in one size (14"). It features a 5.75" center hole and provides an assortment of sounds when placed on drums or cymbals, depending on how you play it. When asked about the vibe he was after when working with the folks at Dream to create the Naughty Saucer, Pellegron explains, "I was looking for the ability to be raw and organic but get a fat, industrial sound from the acoustic kit. It's a crossbreed of a stacker, mute, and white-noise effect."

The obvious application for the Naughty Saucer is on top of a snare; it fits perfectly within a 14" hoop, and the bow in the medium-weight bronze lifts the saucer off the drumhead a bit so it doesn't completely deaden the drum. You can also place the disc on top of or inside the hi-hats, or you can hang it from a wing nut so that it rests on and rattles against a cymbal. There's no right or wrong way to use this funky instrument. As Pellegron says, "It comes in handy for creativity but also for the jobbing drummer. It's something—along with the Crop Circles—that's always in my cymbal bag."

### In Use

My favorite use for the Naughty Saucer is on top of cymbals, where it transforms any crash or ride into a trashy-sounding stacker. You can hang or remove it in seconds, so you don't have to have a dedicated multi-cymbal stack in your setup if you only use it for certain songs. The Naughty Saucer allows the bottom cymbal to resonate a bit more than it would if you stacked on a China or second crash, and you can get a variety of textures and overtones depending on whether you hit the cymbal, the saucer, or both at once.

When you place the Naughty Saucer on a snare and strike just the bronze ring, you get you a piercing industrial sound that reminded me of the junkyard-type tones Michael Blair made famous with smoky-voiced singer/songwriter Tom Waits. Hitting the drum without also smacking the saucer produced a tight, dry sample-type snare.

To achieve a gritty, lo-fi hi-hat sound, place the Naughty Saucer on top of the top cymbal. Or if you want a more muted yet trashy tone, put the disc between the cymbals so that it rests on the bottom cymbal. I found that either application worked best on 15" or larger hi-hats. Lastly, for more resonant, gong-like tones, try suspending the saucer from a piece of wire and hanging it from a boom arm. If you're looking to add some industrial-meets-electronica sounds to your kit, pick up a Naughty Saucer. It sells for about \$85.

**Michael Dawson**





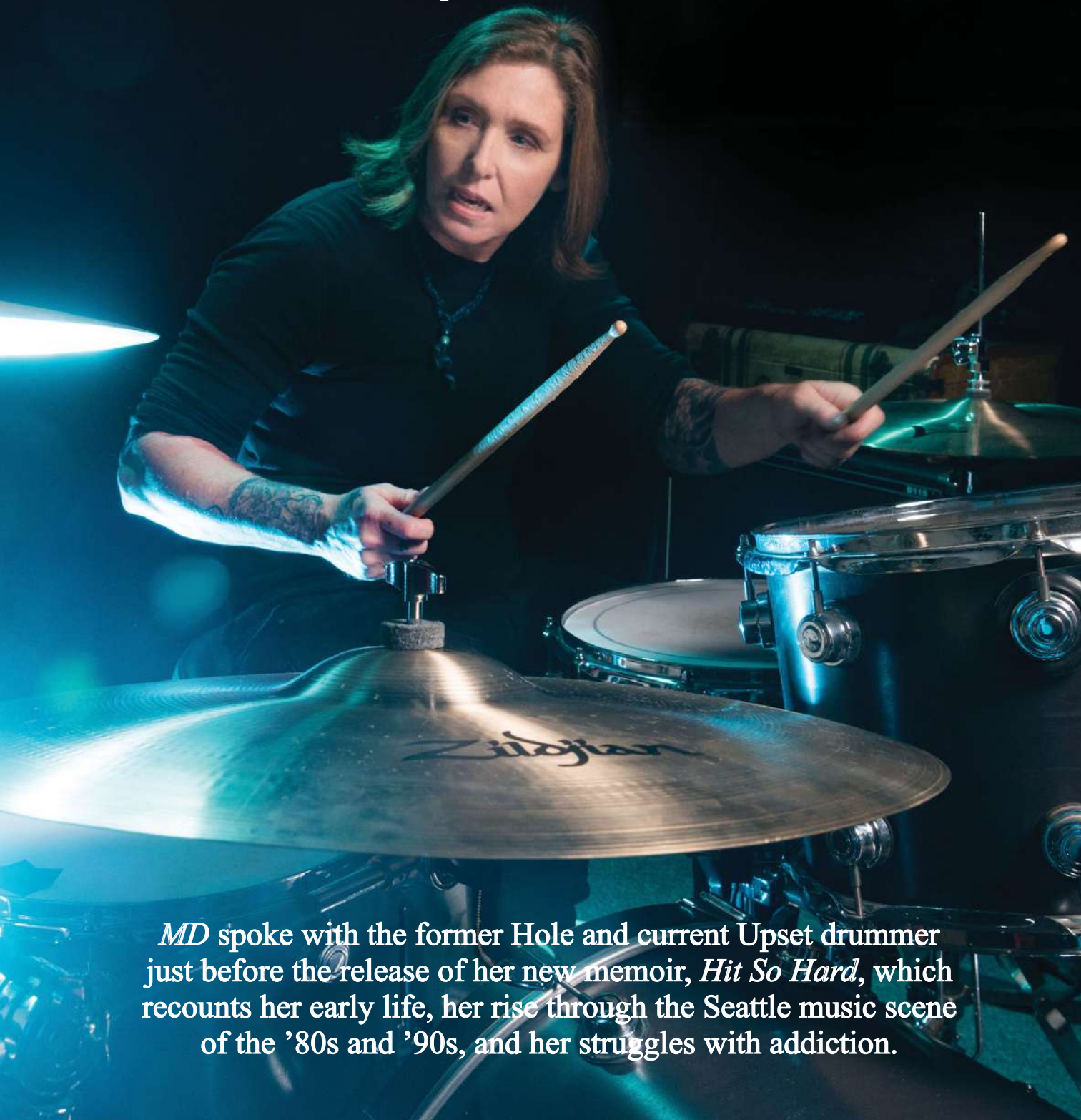
## THE RETURN OF A LEGEND

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# ON TOPIC

## Patty Schemel



*MD* spoke with the former Hole and current Upset drummer just before the release of her new memoir, *Hit So Hard*, which recounts her early life, her rise through the Seattle music scene of the '80s and '90s, and her struggles with addiction.

### **On her role in the indie rock band Upset.**

Recently we recorded six new songs with Steve McDonald, who plays bass in Redd Kross and is also in the Melvins. He records bands and produces, and he's a good friend.

Upset is kind of a pop-punk band, so there's a lot of energy and it keeps me on my toes. It's a good workout and it's fun. I was really happy with how the songs came out. We still need to mix them and record six more, but I really liked the recording. I'm usually really picky about that stuff, and I just had a good time with it.

I'm finding that, the older I get, I really like playing with a click in my ears when I'm recording. It's a good little security blanket. I never get the "I think you sped up there..." I might rush a fill or something, so it's nice to have that to lock into and get a good pocket with the click. Nowadays I really want to have a good groove, and I want there to be a nice rhythm-section vibe between the bass and drums. It's not a tangible thing. If you work on it and practice, it's easier to access, but it's not something you can really teach to somebody. You've just got to find it. We're not super-busy all the time, because I have a seven-year-old daughter and I have a lot of responsibilities at home. I like to go out on the road sometimes, but not all the time.

### **On her work with Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls.**

That started in 2010. I went in that first year and we kind of built up the drum instruction portion of the camp. Teaching girls drums every summer is really important and exciting, and I like being part of it. When we're not teaching, the other instructors and I will trade beats, and I always go in with a drumbeat idea that I want to learn. The other instructors are women that are amazing players, so I'll get a quick drum lesson from them and kind of check in. The camp is a week long with a showcase at the end. DW has donated some gear, and there's an alliance of Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls, so it's worldwide.

### **On playing as hard as she did in the '90s.**

I've found that all that stuff they tell you about posture actually applies. I look back and I see how I used to set up, and it's no wonder I was cramping up. Now I warm up before I play, and I feel like I have so much more stamina. I feel a lot more comfortable playing for long periods of time. Usually drummers do the old sticks-on-a-practice-pad [routine], but I'll take a five-pound dumbbell and lift with my wrists with my palm down to get my arm muscles warmed up. I'll do that for ten minutes on each hand and then grab the sticks and do some rudiments with the practice pad. When I get on stage and I pick up my sticks, everything feels really light. Warming up with the weights is equivalent for me to playing three or four songs.

### **On how her setup has changed in recent years.**

My drums are flat now. Back in the '90s my rack tom was a 14" and was extra deep, and now I use a 12" and a 16" floor tom most of the time. My snare is flat now and a little bit higher. It just feels better. My ride cymbal is lower than I used to have it as well. My kit used to be like the cockpit of a plane, but now it's more conventional.

### **On technique adaptations she's had to make after years of playing.**

All the stuff they say about learning rudiments and practicing is so important. It sounds corny, but rudiments present themselves in fills constantly. If you're on it with your rudiments, you've got so many more options to use. Spending time sitting down and playing and finding things that you want to play along with helps you to stay fresh. There are songs that have always been kicking around in my head that I want to learn the drum parts to, and there are patterns I hear that I'll spend time working out. I feel like I'm not getting anything done if it's not some awkward thing where I'm trying to get the sticking right and it takes me a while to get the groove. If I don't have to go through that process, I feel like I'm not learning anything new. I love seeking out new challenges.

### **On the importance of hitting hard and developing a strong bass drum sound.**

It's all based on that foot. When you're sitting at your drumkit and you look out at a billion people and they're moving from just your right foot, you've got a lot of responsibility there.

### **On other projects she's been involved in lately.**

I did a record with a project called Psychic Friend, and one of the songs just got picked up to be the theme song on Sarah Silverman's *I Love You, America* show.

### **On what she'd like people to take away from her new memoir, *Hit So Hard*.**

I would hope the reader would get a better understanding of the disease of addiction and that there is a way out. Playing drums for a living is a huge gift. Don't ever take it for granted.

**Interview by Stephen Bidwell**

Schemel alternates between a DW kit and a 1957 Ludwig set. She plays Zildjian cymbals and uses Vater sticks.



# Drum Wisdom

## Michael Carvin

by Keith Carne

One could take issue with Michael Carvin's insistence that he isn't a jazz drummer. His credits as a sideman for Freddie Hubbard, Jackie McLean, and Pharoah Sanders, of course, suggest he's wrong in that assertion. But in talking with him about his history in the "sound business"—his term for the music industry—you understand why he presses this point. Carvin is not a musician

a drummer for the jazz legends Louis Armstrong and Illinois Jacquet, insisted that he develop his fundamentals early, and that experience served Carvin well. He won his first rudimental competition a full year before his father allowed him to even touch a drumkit.

While he was still in high school, Carvin went on to work as a weekend warrior playing shuffles and cha-chas for blues singer/guitarist Johnny Copeland's band. As a young man he moved to Los Angeles, and while playing for TV's variety hour and soundstage bands, he learned to apply a laid-back, gentle swing to all sorts of music—a feel he calls "floating." Carvin worked as a house drummer at Motown Records from 1968 to 1970, though he doesn't know which of the tracks recorded in those years features his playing. He likens that experience to working on an auto plant's assembly line: Songs were neatly pieced together from the small parts, or phrases, that the instrumentalists crafted on their own. Carvin then moved to New York in 1973, when he took over the drum chair in Hubbard's quintet.

Experiences facing various environmental and social climates—Houston's hurricanes, Southern California's golden sunshine, San Francisco's obsession with the avant-garde, Detroit's assembly-line culture, New York's snowy winters—helped shape Carvin's process and aesthetic as much as the music he was actually playing. You hear it clearly in his work on Sanders' monumental live album *Elevation*. Carvin's ideas come tumbling out on the drums, yet a buoyant swing also seems to pull the band together in tornadic updrafts. As freewheeling as it all seems, the phrases on the recording are largely based on the rudiments Carvin mastered as a young marching drummer. There's also a sensitivity in his sound: He has the maturity to curb his own bursts of wild expression with meditative and minimal supporting playing on tracks that require a more delicate approach.

Carvin, now something of a drumming statesman, has recorded fourteen albums as a bandleader and still plays around the world with the Michael Carvin Experience. He also trains aspiring sound professionals at the Michael Carvin School of Drumming in Manhattan. All this makes clear that Carvin is, after all, a jazz drummer. But describing him

that way hardly does service to his sound.

In this first chapter of Drum Wisdom, a new series where we invite notable player/educators to talk in the first person about their teaching philosophies and methods, we ask Carvin to lay out his priorities and offer insights to help us craft the sound that we want to present to the world.



Rafhan Segev

whose feel and phrasing can be reduced to any single style. Rather, he's shaped a distinct sound from the diverse musical and geographic surroundings he's encountered over his six-plus decades as a professional drummer.

Carvin grew up in Houston and cut his teeth on Texas's cutthroat marching-band scene. His father, who worked as

**Tell 'em what to do...with rhythm!** I was the drum captain in school. So the drum major would signal me with the whistle, and I would start and stop that band with the sound of the drum. That gave me a great understanding of control at a young age. See, to control a hundred people with the sound of a drum, to have that control over people with a beat—*that's* powerful.

The reason why a lot of guys hired me is that I understand what a beat is. I'm not into playing licks. I'm into playing a beat that moves bodies forward, a beat that moves *people*, man. You play a consistent rhythm so people will buy into that rhythm; then they will do what you tell them to do through your rhythm. That's what I was mastering when I was younger.

**John Philip Sousa was the first bebop musician.** If you really listen to what it is...change the tempo [hums an up-tempo version of "The Stars and Stripes Forever" while snapping 2 and 4], you're like, *Wait a minute, John Philip!* That's what I was hearing while I was marching—that swing!

**Let your hands go!** You're stopping them with your mind. When you watch a fight and hear the cornerman say, "Let your hands go!" it's because the fighter's going through in his head: *stick-and-move, stick-and-move, peekaboo, uppercut, stick-and-move.* He's running the rudiments on his opponent. He's not going to knock this guy out fighting him with those techniques. If he lets his hands go and trusts that he's developed the rudimental technique, he'll be a champion. Just let 'em go! *That's* how you start actually applying the rudiments to your drumkit.

**We are in the *sound* business, not the drumming business.** [Audiences] will hear you before they see you. What do you want them to hear?

**This two-beat pickup is the only feel we used in Motown.** [Counts out 1-2-3, then taps along to &-4-e-&]. That way, it's not enough time for anybody to get lost. That's a hell of a concept: a two-beat pickup that built a whole sound. When you listen to the Four Tops, they say, "One, two, three..." [hums that two-beat pickup into "Reach Out, I'll Be There"]. That's a marching band!

**The energy around us defines our cadence.** I saw that connection to marching music then, and I still see it. The army march right here: [scats the rhythmic figure of "The Downfall of Paris"]. The American Army marches at 120 bpm. Why? Because the voltage coming out of that wall is 120. [Continues tapping quarter notes with his foot at 120 bpm and mimics a newscaster] "Good evening, ladies and gentleman, welcome to NBC News..." [continues scatting and tapping marching snare rhythms] The voltage, as we sleep, that's what's moving through our bodies. That's why a lot of American drummers can't play fast.

Europeans and Japanese drummers can [play fast]—Japanese [voltage] is 220. European is 180. When you watch European television, it's faster. That's because of the voltage.

**All of us are affected by our environment.** The first time I ever saw snow fall, I was forty years old. Snow can create blizzards that kill people, but it's solemn. And it's peaceful. What fascinated me about New York drummers is how they could play so quietly and so fast. Every drummer that I heard at Shelly's Manne Hole [L.A. jazz club owned by drumming legend Shelly Manne] that was on the road with a New York act, they had that same control on the cymbal. I was like, *Wow!*

I grew up in hurricanes...sheets and sheets of rain. Growing up, I was fascinated by the rain, and I'd watch how it would hit my bedroom window and you'd have these individual lines coming down and then some more would come over here—I could see rhythms. They're not heavy, but they're powerful. On something like "The Gathering" [from Pharoah Sanders' *Elevation*] I visualize this [waves arms in front of him, wax-on, wax-off style]. I see 180 degrees of rain here and 180 degrees of rain here, and once I get to 360 it doesn't matter what I play, because I have the band inside my circle.

**Shorten your stride.** For the students who came up outside the...let's call it "snow area"—New York, D.C., Chicago—shorten the stride on your cymbal. When I was first working with Freddie Hubbard, he said, "Man, you can play, but you play too goddamn loud." I was coming about ten inches off the ride cymbal and I didn't realize it—that muscle memory when you're just pushing. I struggled the other three sets that night because the muscle memory kept coming back.

I found the answer in the silence of the snow. In New York jazz clubs it's all brick. The floor is cement and the tables are bare. That's why all the New York drummers have this technique [demonstrates fast spang-a-lang ride groove where stick movement is fueled by bounce and comes only about three inches off the cymbal], because they don't have to push to cut through anything. That terrain really taught me how to listen and how to get into the *sound* business and not the drumming business.

**Spend more time around water,** especially drummers who grew up on the East Coast. I developed my double-stroke roll at Pacific Ocean Park. I'd practice to the ocean because of the motion of the waves. Everybody that rolls, except for me and my students, they roll this way [plays a double-stroke roll picking hands up and down vertically after striking the drum]. I'm working the speed bag and going this way [cycles hands around each other, à la cha-cha hand motion, after striking the drum]. Texas and L.A., you're around water all year, so that's why guys out there have more of a floating rhythm in their playing. Even the pop guys.

**Drummers have educated hands and ignorant feet.** If we play Chapin [Jim Chapin's *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*] as written, our hands are going to be very intelligent. But our feet have been sleeping. Any time you use your hands, use your feet. If not, then we're not going to be familiar with the pedals. Like, sometimes we stand in the shower on our feet and walk right out of the shower without washing them.

**Pay attention to what you're doing, not what you're playing.** Number one, we talk about hand position. Boxing, drumming. Okay, what you're playing today, hopefully you won't be playing three days from now. You *will* be playing the same thing if you don't pay attention to how you get to it. I never cared about what a drummer was playing. I wanted to know how the hell he was getting to it. Because if I can figure out how he's getting to it, I can take his job.

**All programs are subject to change at any given time.** Don't depend on nothing. Set yourself up in life where you have alternatives. It doesn't have anything to do with what bill you were gonna pay with that paycheck.

Carvin plays Pearl Drums and uses Promark sticks and Evans heads.



# Introducing...

the

## MODERN DRUMMER

# 2018

## READERS POLL



# Winners

## Hall of Fame Clyde Stubblefield

James Brown

He wasn't simply a funky drummer, he was *the* Funky Drummer. And all you have to do to understand how he earned that famous nickname is to listen to the music he recorded with the Godfather of Soul, James Brown. Stubblefield appeared on stage and on record with JB—often alongside his rhythm brother, drummer John “Jabo” Starks—during the singer's late-'60s heyday, and the uniquely syncopated, ridiculously grooving rhythms he played on tracks like “Cold Sweat,” “Mother Popcorn,” and, of course, “Funky Drummer” not only provided the hook to thousands of future hip-hop tracks, they taught generations of drummers what it means to groove, and they set a bar for creativity and execution that few, if any, have ever crossed. Stubblefield passed away last February, at the age of seventy-three, leaving a legacy that's sure to last far, far into the future.



### Past Hall of Fame Winners

2017: Peter Erskine

2016: Vic Firth

2015: Ian Paice

2014: Carmine Appice

2013: Bernard Purdie

2012: Phil Collins

2011: Jim Chapin

2010: Hal Blaine

2009: Mitch Mitchell

2008: Ginger Baker

2007: Jack DeJohnette

2006: Charlie Watts

2005: Stewart Copeland

2004: Mike Portnoy

2003: Simon Phillips

2002: Steve Smith

2001: Dennis Chambers

2000: Dave Weckl

1999: Roy Haynes

1998: Ringo Starr

1997: Terry Bozzio

1996: Vinnie Colaiuta

1995: Elvin Jones

1994: Larrie Londin

1993: Jeff Porcaro

1992: Max Roach

1991: Art Blakey

1990: Bill Bruford

1989: Carl Palmer

1988: Joe Morello

1987: Billy Cobham

1986: Tony Williams

1985: Louie Bellson

1984: Steve Gadd

1983: Neil Peart

1982: Keith Moon

1981: John Bonham

1980: Buddy Rich

1979: Gene Krupa



## MVP Steve Gadd

Chick Corea and Steve Gadd Band

**Q:** Describe a day in your life in 1970s New York.

**A:** You might do a jingle from ten to eleven. It could be a record date from ten to one and another one from two to five. And one from seven to ten. Often, after that we would go to Mikell's uptown to play with Richard Tee and Cornell Dupree and Gordon Edwards. Mikell's was the place to go, and we played some great music. The audience seemed to feel as good as we did playing. That's when it becomes spiritual and it feels magic. And you didn't want to say no to anything, because it was all so much fun. And it provided the opportunity to meet other people who were good musicians and who wanted to do the same things you were doing. The guys I met in those years are still my friends.

*From the May 2017 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Todd Sucherman
3. Kenny Aronoff
4. Josh Freese
5. Peter Erskine



## Studio Steve Jordan

Robert Cray, John Mayer

**Q:** You don't play many drum fills anymore. Has that been conscious?

**A:** Absolutely. That approach stems from Al Jackson, but now it just comes naturally. I don't mark sections like, "Here we go—we're going to the chorus." Or, "Here we go—we're going to the bridge." That is just so boring to me. It's natural for producers or writers to ask, "Can you hit me a crash there?" If it needs something, I'll do it. But when I'm playing now, I hear how the finished song is going to sound on the record. So if by the time we put everything on it I feel like it needs a crash, then I'll do it. If it doesn't, then I won't, because it'll be even more effective if I don't play that crash.

*From the October 2010 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Matt Chamberlain
3. Miles McPherson
4. Jay Bellerose
5. Blair Sinta



# Classic Rock Steve Smith

Journey

**Q:** You really applied yourself [to relearning classic Journey music after thirty-two years].

**A:** The process of memorizing all that music did take a while. It was like starting over. Then I had to condition myself to play that big rock sound for a ninety-minute show. To get ready I did a lot of yoga, a lot of practicing and blowing through the songs and improvising, just to get my chops up and have some fun. When I'm on the gig, though, I'm real disciplined and I play very clearly for the music. There's a feeling now that's different from when I did Journey in the '70s and '80s, when I felt like I was trying to prove myself, and maybe filling this up and that up a little too much. Now I don't need to do that at all.

*From the September 2017 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Ian Paice 3. Charlie Watts 4. Don Brewer 5. Simon Kirke



# Modern Rock Taylor Hawkins

Foo Fighters

**Q:** What advice do you give to younger drummers?

**A:** Kids always ask me, "How can I become a rock star?" I tell them to write their own material, but also do as many cover songs as they can. When you learn the inner workings of a song like [the Knack's] "My Sharona" or the Vapors' "Turning Japanese" or AC/DC's "Let There Be Rock" or Queen's "Under Pressure," you're learning how to arrange songs. And you learn how drums make a song work. I also always tell kids, "You need as much time on stage as you can get." If you really want to get great, play all the songs your audience wants to hear. That's what Van Halen did. They started out as a cover band.

*From the January 2018 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Ray Luzier 3. Tré Cool 4. Jon Theodore 5. Michael Miley

# Experimental Rock Stella Mozgawa

Warpaint

**Q:** Do you feel that there's a specific set of skills that all drummers today should keep up?

**A:** I think it depends on the job description of whatever project you're doing. More and more I find myself in situations where someone gets me into a studio and says, "I'll play you the track, and you play over it. Do what you feel!" And I like that just as much as I enjoy hearing, "I programmed a beat on a 606; make it sound the same, but play it live." All the skills I've learned since I started playing professionally have been very much influenced by the work I've been asked to do. And I think that's what's so exciting about it. It's not like I even know if I'm getting "better" as a drummer; I just know I'm having wider, richer experiences playing music.

*From the February 2017 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Dale Crover 3. Phil Selway 4. John Clardy 5. Greg Saunier



# Metal Brooks Wackerman

Avenged Sevenfold

**Q:** You've said that Tommy Aldridge and Terry Bozzio were big influences on your double bass style.

**A:** Yes, I watched Tommy's *Hot Licks* video a thousand times when I was in the fifth grade. I was blown away by his precision and execution. Another guy who has taken double bass to completely absurd levels is Tomas Haake of Meshuggah. He blows my mind. I always practice and try to figure out his patterns. For Bozzio, it's Zappa's video *Baby Snakes*, which shows Terry doing a lot of intricate and musical double bass playing. Even some Missing Persons—[my brother] Chad would take me to their concerts. Bozzio would solo, and his approach to double bass always blew me away.

*From the August 2011 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Gene Hoglan 3. Ben Koller  
4. Brann Dailor 5. Martin Axenrot



# Progressive Todd Sucherman

Styx

**Q:** Let's talk about progressive rock in 2017 and how your new music relates to the music you grew up with.

**A:** I let the music inform me of what needs to be there, what works, what feels right. In the context of this new Styx record, it definitely has roots in the band's past, specifically *The Grand Illusion* and *Pieces of Eight* and that era. But it's also the human beings that make up this band now and where we came from. That's what makes this stew so unique, where you can taste hints of this or that. With drums, there might be a moment where there's a little splash of Vinnie, a little splash of Steve Smith, or a little of Queen's Roger Taylor, or ... *And Then There Were Three*—era Phil Collins. Because that's the stuff that informs me as a musician and what I can bring to the table when I'm free to do what I want to do.

*From the August 2017 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Gavin Harrison 3. Matt Garstka  
4. Chris Turner 5. Joseph Arrington

# R&B/Funk/Hip-Hop Rashid Williams

John Legend, Jill Scott

**Q:** What was the audition process for John Legend?

**A:** I'd just come off the road with N.E.R.D. John called and set up an audition for a week later at SIR in New York. He sent me five songs. In the audition it was John playing piano, his MD on keys, and his bass player. I walked in; John called out "Show Me." Then he asked to play through a couple more songs. Then he said, "I want to hear you solo over 'Green Light.' Show me what you can do." We finished and he said, "I'll be in touch." The "Green Light" solo became the way we ended the show on my first tour. I added some stuff during the audition—I'm big on setting up changes. I wanted to make sure John knew that I knew every change in his music. I still keep the foundational patterns, but I always add a little bit. Two days after the audition John called and said I had the gig.

*From the March 2016 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Chris Dave 3. Adam Deitch 4. James Gadson 5. John Roberts



# Classic Jazz Jack DeJohnette

Hudson, with John Medeski, John Scofield, and Larry Grenadier

- Q:** As musicians age they tend to break the rules less. Yet you continue to push boundaries.
- A:** I'm playing more relaxed, and I pace myself now—I'm older. But my enthusiasm to play is just as strong as it was when I was twenty. I haven't lost that excitement to get on the bandstand and hit.

*From the October 2017 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Jimmy Cobb 3. Jeff "Tain" Watts 4. Al Foster 5. Louis Hayes



# Modern Jazz Mark Guiliana

Mark Guiliana Jazz Quartet

- Q:** How do you, as you say, "earn the right to be expressive"?
- A:** It's all about being in the moment. Whether I'm playing a part, laying out, improvising, taking the lead, or being supportive, every decision is of equal value. I try not to make any blanket decisions, like "I don't play on this tune, so I'm just going to lay out." Actually, you're deciding to lay out every quarter note that you don't play. Thinking about these micro-decisions within the big decisions helps me stay in the moment. Because there might be that special night where, even though you're not supposed to play on a given song, there's something in the air that inspires you to add something, and it's like, *I can't believe that's been missing this whole time!* I try to be open to many possibilities at any time.

*From the November 2014 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Nate Smith 3. Gregory Hutchinson 4. Eric Harland 5. Justin Brown

# Fusion Vinnie Colaiuta

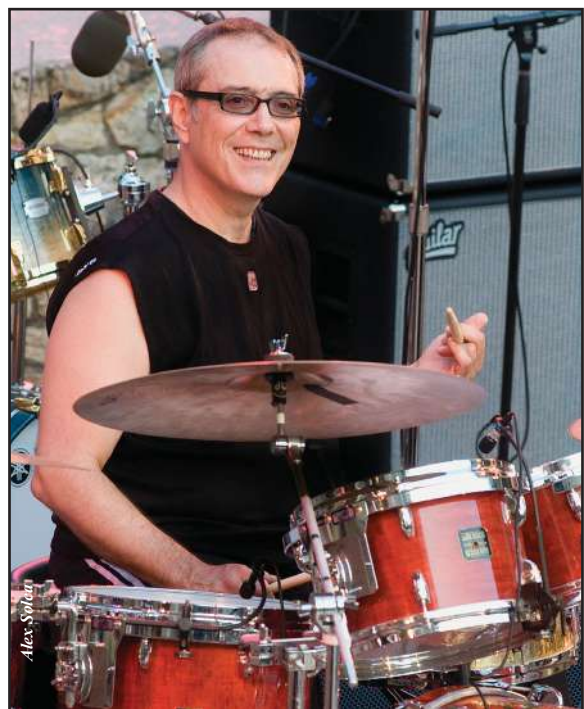
Herbie Hancock

- Q:** When you create music for a living, in the studio particularly, do people's emotions come into play a lot? Or is it just another day at the office at the top levels of recording?

**A:** It's a bit of both. It's been said that one of the hallmarks of professionalism is being able to put your problems aside and do your job. There's an element of psychology to this that goes on just like in any other kind of interaction. It's meritorious to want to get along with people. At the same time, there are political elements, and it really gets involved. Some people get very crafty at selling themselves. Some people are inherently confident and don't feel the need to take any attitude other than: *This is who I am and this is how I play.* Others are more timid, and there might be an inferiority complex or something, and somehow that translates. Or they might sabotage themselves in some way, as well as another person. So there is a heavy psychological element to it—you can't escape it.

*From the January 2013 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Anika Nilles 3. Benny Greb 4. Dave Weckl 5. Gerry Gibbs





## Pop Aaron Spears

Ariana Grande, Usher

**Q:** What should the average drummer practice?

**A:** Right now we're in a time when people are too focused on what they're able to do as far as chops and licks. Don't get me wrong, I love to be creative and try to play crazy stuff if I can, but that has such a small place when it comes to the music. So I think it's important for people to focus on playing the music. Work on the feel of what it is you're playing as opposed to what you can do over the top of the music. And don't be stuck just playing one style. You really have to get into some different things musically. It will definitely open your mind up.

*From the July 2009 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Eric Hernandez 3. Zac Farro 4. Eddie Fisher 5. Brian Dunne

## Country/Americana Rich Redmond

Jason Aldean

**Q:** What's special about your drumming approach?

**A:** One of my high school band directors told my dad, "Your son will probably be very successful in this business because he knows how to take direction." I took that to heart; I took that all the way to the bank—because I wanted to be somebody who takes direction, plays well with others, and is open-minded. As drummers we choose our spots, but ultimately my job is to make everyone else sound good. You have to have a musical instinct no matter what style you're playing and make appropriate choices and play well with others. The guys who really work, the ones who have a thirty- or forty-year career, are the ones who listen and who lift the band up.

*From the July 2010 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Billy Thomas 3. Chris Fryar 4. Sean Fuller 5. Seth Rausch



## Up & Coming Jonathan Barber

Jeremy Pelt Quintet, Jonathan Barber Group

**Q:** What surprised you about the New York music scene once you arrived?

**A:** That I had to constantly push and play at a high level. In Hartford [Connecticut], some gigs are meaningful, others are not. But in New York you always have to bring your "A" game. You never know who's going to be there. Even playing Smalls at 1 A.M., I've had Kamasi Washington, Kurt Rosenwinkel, and Peter Bernstein come by to hang. The intensity you feel in New York City every day grows on you. Moving here made me a better musician.

*From the January 2017 issue of Modern Drummer*

2. Kristen Gleeson-Prata 3. Gabriela Jimeno  
4. Gavin Wallace-Ailsworth 5. Aleks Girshevich



## World/Percussion **Daniel Reyes**

Zac Brown Band

2. Ignacio Berroa
3. Pedrito Martinez
4. Nate Werth
5. Tony Escapa



## Clinician/Educator **Thomas Lang**

Thomas Lang's Drumming Boot Camp and Big Drum Bonanza

2. Peter Erskine
3. Stanton Moore
4. Jim Riley
5. JP Bouvet



## Educational Product **Drumeo** (online lesson site)

2. Mike Johnston, [mikeslessons.com](http://mikeslessons.com) (online lesson site)
3. Stanton Moore, Stanton Moore Drum Academy (online lesson site)
4. Gil Sharone, *Wicked Beats* (book)
5. Bill Bachman, *Rhythm & Chops Builders* (book)



## Recorded Performance **Todd Sucherman**

Todd Sucherman, *The Misson* (Styx)

2. Matt Garstka, *The Madness of Many* (Animals as Leaders)
3. Antonio Sanchez, *Bad Hombre* (Antonio Sanchez)
4. Nate Wood, *Anti-Hero* (Kneebody)
5. Matt Wilson, *Honey and Salt* (Matt Wilson)



Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's Modern Drummer Readers Poll.  
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**MATT CHAMBERLAIN**  
Studio



**VINNIE COLAIUTA**  
WINNER: Fusion



**TRE COOL**  
Modern Rock



**CHRIS DAVE**  
R&B/Funk/HipHop



**DANIEL De Los REYES**  
WINNER: World/  
Percussion



**PETER ERSKINE**  
MVP/Clinician/  
Educator



**TONY ESCAPA**  
World/Percussion



**ZAC FARRO**  
Pop



**EDDIE FISHER**  
Pop



**JOSH FREESE**  
MVP



**STEVE GADD**  
WINNER: MVP



**MATT GARSTKA**  
Progressive/  
Recorded Performance



**BENNY GREBB**  
Fusion



**ERIC HARLAND**  
Modern Jazz



**GAVIN HARRISON**  
Progressive



**TAYLOR HAWKINS**  
WINNER: Modern  
Rock



**ERIC HERNANDEZ**  
Pop



**GREG HUTCHINSON**  
Modern Jaz



**THOMAS LANG**  
WINNER:  
Clinician/Educator



**RAY LUZIER**  
Modern Rock



**PEDRITO MARTINEZ**  
World/Percussion



**STANTON MOORE**  
Clinician/Educator  
Educational Product



**IAN PAICE**  
Classic Rock



**RICH REDMOND**  
WINNER: Country/  
Americana



**JIM RILEY**  
Clinician/Educator



**JOHN ROBERTS**  
R&B/Funk/HipHop



**ANTONIO SANCHEZ**  
Recorded  
Performance



**GIL SHARONE**  
Recorded  
Performance



**STEVE SMITH**  
WINNER: Classic  
Rock



**AARON SPEARS**  
WINNER: Pop



**TODD SUCHERMAN**  
WINNER: Progressive and  
Recorded Performance  
MVP



**JEFF "TAIN" WATTS**  
Classic Jazz



**DAVE WECKL**  
Fusion



**MATT WILSON**  
Recorded  
Performance

BILL BACHMAN, Educational Product  
JP BOUVET, Clinician/Educator  
SEAN FULLER, Country/Americana  
JAMES GADSON, R&B/Funk/HipHop  
KRISTEN GLEESON-PRATA, Up & Coming  
MARK GUILIANA, WINNER: Modern Jazz  
SIMON KIRKE, Classic Rock  
MILES McPHERSON, Studio  
SETH RAUSCH, Country/Americana

PHIL SELWAY, Experimental Rock,  
BLAIR SINTA, Studio  
JON THEODORE, Modern Rock  
CHRIS TURNER, Progressive  
CHARLIE WATTS, Classic Rock  
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NATE WOOD, Recorded Performance  
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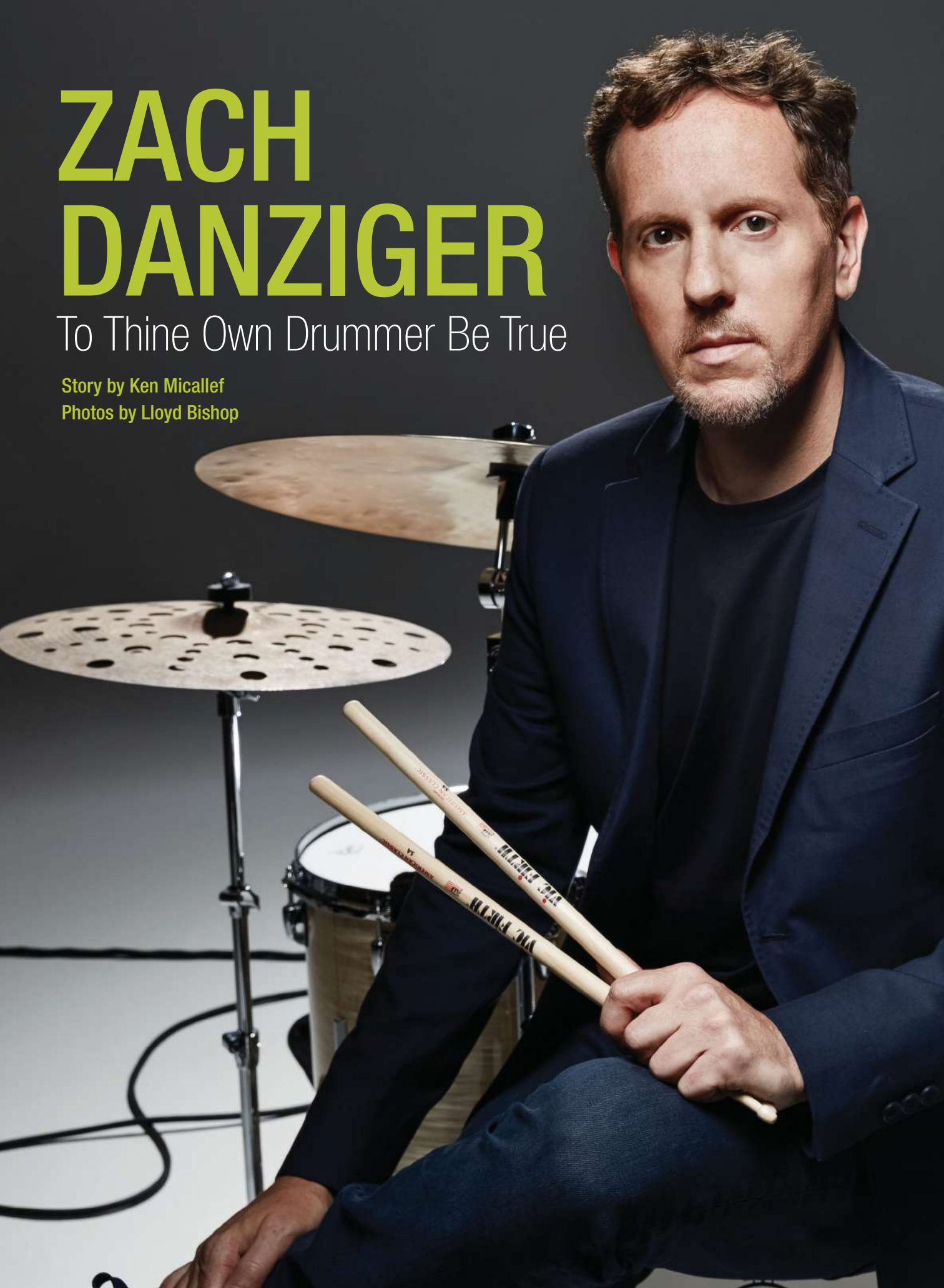
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# ZACH DANZIGER

To Thine Own Drummer Be True

Story by Ken Micallef

Photos by Lloyd Bishop





Wandering New York City's East Village can result in entertainment options that are absurd, decadent, shocking, and everything in between. DROM is one such option. One evening in the summer of 2014, the performer is the seasoned team of drummer Zach Danziger and bassist Owen Biddle, aka Edit Bunker.

Though Danziger and Biddle aren't, strictly speaking, standup comedians, there's no escaping the duo's intent. Edit Bunker's performances are one part NASA-like brain challenge (search for "Zach Danziger TED Talk" to have your mind blown and expectations dashed), one part video shock treatment, and eight parts astonishing technical display and innovative future-music language lesson.

Edit Bunker's wires run everywhere across the DROM stage: from headsets, laptops, instruments, and triggers to a large projector screen stationed aft of the band and its arsenal of LED-emitting gizmos. As

the duo begin playing their instruments, they unleash a track of proto-cosmic fusion to support onscreen dialogue by the characters Edith and Archie Bunker, of the popular '70s sitcom *All in the Family*. As the track progresses, the club crawler doesn't know where to look, or where to listen.

Two years later, at the Leipzig Jazz Festival in Germany, the duo has taken the performance to another level. Edith is now going off on a tangent: Her words stumble out, repeating, fragmented, distorted, delayed—terminal crack-up. "Your lyrics set to music," Edith says, reading a letter to her daughter, Gloria, "by one of the top composers on our staff and on its way to superstardom!" The video clip repeats and Danziger and Biddle get busy, first establishing a groove, then flying off and around it. Danziger makes large gestures that affect the shape of Edith's dialogue. He plays hyperspeed, odd-grouping fills, and Edith responds, almost in unison, her vocal splaying rapidly in 32nd-note squeals. As her face contorts, her speech cadence is twisted, syllables stressed and stretched, vocal melodies arcing

and pinching the ears. Edit Bunker cuts loose, Zach searing the drumkit, Owen holding it all down with a tranquil grin on his bearded face.

In time, Danziger and Biddle augment their man-machine manipulations with ominous cartoon characters, a smiling soul named Mitch Crenshaw ("I love to bake bread the rustic way"), Biddle singing opera, and amorphous circles and squares. Each new video element is a chance for Edit Bunker to deconstruct the bits, the consequences like nothing you've ever seen or heard before. Throughout, Danziger and Biddle improvise madly, as if their lives depend on it. When later you learn that they control every aspect of the video and audio purely from their rigs and groundbreaking musicianship, shock turns into awe.

But breaking ground is nothing new for Zach Danziger. As a fifteen-year-old at New York City's Drummers Collective, he could regularly be heard jamming with Dave Weckl and Dennis Chambers, the older drummers shaking their heads in wonder. Fast-forward a few years, and Danziger is playing in Michel Camilo's Latin trio; a few years further, in Wayne Krantz's innovative group, the drummer helping to forge the template for the guitarist's savagely delicate, improvisational music.

But just as he seemed ready to take the world by the short hairs, Danziger practically stopped acoustic drumming to focus on drum 'n' bass programming. His band Boomish became a prime mover in New York City's torrid electronic music scene of the latter 1990s. Zach scored soundtracks. He co-designed, with Zildjian director of R&D Paul Francis, the company's Re-Mix, Kerope, and Avedis cymbal lines. He was rumored to be working with a famous movie director in the jungles of Brazil...or spotted driving a white Cadillac in downtown Los Angeles. Eventually Danziger surfaced in the radiant electronic soul trio Mister Barrington, featuring keyboardist Oli Rockberger and bassist Biddle.

Danziger's career is similar to those of Bob Dylan and Artie Shaw, two brilliant musicians who, at the height of their powers, ditched the expected to seek out something truer to their beliefs. Zach easily could have followed the trajectory that seemed tailor-made for his skill set, that of fire-blowing fusion master. Instead, he charted his own course, designing electronic drumset interfaces to create sounds and video no one had yet imagined. He's taken the road less traveled for sure.

Staking a visionary claim in today's decentralized music world is difficult at best. There's nothing to fall back on. You're either all in or you're out. The challenges are enormous, the gamble real, the obstacles daunting. Currently working with Edit Bunker, Donny McCaslin, and Jeff Babko, and in various studio and live projects in Los Angeles and throughout Europe, Danziger is writing a still unfolding story that's a study in courage, talent, and determination.

## Drumming Deep in the Edit Bunker

**MD:** When Edit Bunker performs live, are you triggering chords and individual notes from the drums?

**Zach:** Right, I'm able to change chords and melodies from the triggers attached to my drums and cymbals. For each song, Owen Biddle has a chord palette on his computer that he can trigger by playing notes on his bass. That chord data is sent to my computer via MIDI. I can then play either individual notes from that chord data, or his full chord stacks.

**MD:** Is there a backing track running as well?

**Zach:** For certain songs we have backing tracks for sections where we don't need to generate improvised melodies and harmonies, or for when we want extra sonic layers to complement the live triggered stuff.

**MD:** And when you perform solo as Stix Beiderbecke, what creates the melodies you trigger from the pads?

**Zach:** For solo gigs I use MIDI clips that have chord data, or samples/backing tracks that I can trigger in various ways that allow for improvisation. I can also attach a MIDI keyboard to my rig and play chords with one hand and drums with the other, but my one-





handed drumming skills are not quite up to snuff!

**MD:** It's hard to understand exactly what you're doing. There's a sense of mystery.

**Zach:** This setup allows me to play melodic and harmonic content on the fly, in sync, from the drums. You'd have to be telepathic to improvise with another musician and get that degree of synchronicity. This approach is another flavor that you can use when playing either solo or with a group.

When I use these techniques with Mister Barrington and Edit Bunker, people often think that we've rehearsed these long, syncopated unison passages, but it's the setup that's doing the bulk of it. That said, there are many instances where I don't want everything in unison, and I've found ways of programming my rig to achieve that. With this setup I can create musical soundscapes from the drums in a way that I can't in any other way, and that's what drives me to do it.

**MD:** Your snare drum usually sounds natural and non-effected in both Edit Bunker and Mister Barrington.

**Zach:** When there are too many sources generating melodic and harmonic content, it can get cluttered and can also tax the computer. I do run the snare mic through effects, and I will sometimes trigger synthetic drums or percussion samples from the snare drum. Sometimes I'll assign a bass synth to the kick drum to trigger bass notes for Stix Beiderbecke solo gigs.

**MD:** In one Edit Bunker video you strike

## (Electronic) Influences

**Squarepusher** Feed Me Weird Things /// **Plug** Drum 'n' Bass for Papa /// **J. Dilla** Donuts /// **Dimlite** a/dd /// **Lapalux** Some Other Time /// **Samiyam** Sam Baker's Album /// **Luke Vibert** Rhythm /// **Com Truise** Galactic Melt /// **Cid Rim** (micro album) /// **Pomrad** This Day

"It's impossible to overstate the influence Zach has had not only on my drumming but on the way I think about music.

I was a fan long before I met him, and after Tim Lefebvre introduced us in 2009, we immediately became allies. Since then we've worked together in a wide variety of contexts—playing, writing, producing. His creativity is inexhaustible. Zach is always on the hunt for new approaches, new sounds, new ways of doing things. His relentless explorations and brave innovations inspire me every day. He is a true visionary and the hardest worker I know, and I'm grateful to have him as one of my closest friends." —Mark Guiliana

"Zach was the other half of my music in the old days. The creative groovers who followed all owe him, know it or not."  
—Wayne Krantz

"Zach is one of the most singularly talented and creative people I've ever met, and consistently so. He's followed his own vision and carries it out on a very high level as a *musician*, utilizing the drums and his drumming in that and ever-expanding contexts." —Vinnie Colaiuta

"Zach and I were playing busted-up beats together as far back as 1996. Zach was always on the cusp and far ahead of his time. He also turned me on to the drum 'n' bass scene from the '90s. He was one of the first guys really delving into playing *and* programming that style. He has quietly influenced an entire generation of musicians, myself included. Zach can swing, play pocket, gospel chops, progressive—whatever the situation calls for. At the same time, he has always been one of the most original drummers I have ever heard or played with—impeccable time and execution, totally in-the-moment musicality." —Tim Lefebvre

"I'm a huge fan of Zach Danziger. What he's doing with triggers and electronic music is amazing. I love Edit Bunker, Test Kitchen, and his work with Wayne Krantz—*2 Drink Minimum* is one of my favorite recordings of Zach. What inspires me most about him is his ability to keep pushing forward, to keep moving forward. When you hear Zach with Wayne you can tell he's influenced by Jack or Tony, but now he's gone even further and he's really found himself. I am most inspired by that." —Justin Brown

## Recordings

**Chuck Loeb** Balance /// **Wayne Krantz** 2 Drink Minimum [aka Tonight] /// **Blüth** Blüth /// **Walt Mink** Goodnite /// **Primal Scream** XTRMNR /// **Ocean's Eleven** soundtrack /// **Boomish** The Play at Home Version /// **Leo Abrahams** The Unrest Cure /// **Mister Barrington** Mister Barrington, II, Can't Turn Back /// **Domingo Dimanche** Electrovenous



“The sonics provide a lot of the groove in a way. I want the technology to be less time-consuming so I can get back to the joy of just playing the drums as I did before I went down this rabbit hole.”

a floor tom that seems to change the chords of the music; other drum surfaces trigger notes. But I imagine you can assign notes or sounds to any surface?

**Zach:** Absolutely. Any source can trigger chords or single notes. I can also program the rig to change synth sounds from section to section if I need to. I avoid that at times, because it can also tax the computer.

**MD:** The moments in Edit Bunker where you're stuttering or looping the dialogue of a video, how does that work?

**Zach:** In the same way that I use a foot controller to alter a synth parameter, I can use it to stutter and loop video. The pressure applied to the footswitch can also alter the speed of the video, adding more modifications on the fly. I can automate any of these parameters as well via MIDI clips. It's not a backing track per se, but a set of MIDI commands. There are things that may not make as much sense to do in real time. If I can automate certain things to make my life easier, I will. It's about making the best choice for the music. We can also alter the pitch of a vocal in video clips and create new melodies from them in real time. That allows us to

## Danziger's Setup



### Drums: Gretsch Brooklyn series

- A. 6.5x14 USA solid aluminum snare
- B. 6.5x6 tom
- C. 6.5x8 tom
- D. 16x16 floor tom
- E. 16x20 bass drum

### Hardware: DW 5000

Accelerator bass drum pedal, Mono cases

### Heads: Remo Coated

Ambassador batters and Clear Ambassador resonants on snare and toms, coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

### Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats
- 2. 10" Low Volume splash stacked on 10" prototype
- 3. 10" prototype stack (China/hi-hat cymbal)
- 4. 21" K Custom Special Dry ride
- 5. 17" K Custom Special Dry Trash crash stacked on 14" K Custom Special Dry FX hi-hat top

### Sticks: Vic Firth 5A wood tip

### Electronics: MacBook Pro

running Ableton Live (Native Instruments, Spectrasonics), RME Fireface UCX, Keith McMillen Instruments BopPad and SoftStep, Novation Launch Control XL, Elektron Overhub 7-port USB 3.0 hub

**Mics:** Audio-Technica ATM25, Sennheiser Evolution E604, Little Blondie condenser

**Triggers:** Yamaha DT-20 on cymbal stacks, Roland RT-30HR on floor tom

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### Zach Danziger

do things like make Edith Bunker sing different melodies each night in real time.

**MD:** You also improvised with the musicians in Mister Barrington via their MIDI data. It's one thing to create music with triggers and chords and a backing track, but to improvise with the other musicians' incoming MIDI is like adopting a new language.

**Zach:** It's actually much easier to play than it is to set up! When we did it with Mister Barrington, Oli had MIDI-assignable controllers on his keyboard that would send his MIDI note data to my CPU in real time as he played it. I was also able to gate Owen's bass or Oli's keys from the drums. It would silence their instruments until I started playing the drums. That effect made it sound like we were playing sections of improvised hits in unison.

**MD:** If you're sharing MIDI data and improvising, how do you avoid sound clashes and atonality?

**Zach:** With Mister Barrington, Owen doesn't send harmonic or melodic data like he does in Edit Bunker. He and I are rigged up so that I can gate his bass for that unison effect. With my Barrington rig, I don't have any preprogrammed chords of my own, so I'm essentially blank until Oli feeds me data. So there's never a clash.

**MD:** What are you hearing internally with electronics that you can't get from purely acoustic drums?

**Zach:** When you record a drumset for a project, there are many choices to make: drums, mics, placement, effects, etc. After you record, you can change the sound of the drums in postproduction and mixing. Today you can splice a quarter note and stagger and repeat it, and that only takes a couple keystrokes. I want to bring studio production to the live onstage performance.

### Zach's Gear Bunker

**MD:** How do you choose the tones of the synths you trigger? Are these Ableton Live soft synths?

**Zach:** Yes, I use some of the Ableton internal synths. I choose tones in the same way that you would if you were producing a track. I also use a lot of Native Instruments gear—FM8, Massive, Battery, Kontakt—as well as Spectrasonics Omnisphere. Ableton Live allows me to play melodic ideas from the drums. It's the only software that I've found that can pull it off. I've been talking

to software developers to create a more streamlined solution. The current setup does amazing things, but it's very time-consuming to get everything to behave properly.

**MD:** What's the mixer off to the side in your setup?

**Zach:** It's basically a MIDI controller, which functions like a digital mixer. It controls the levels and effects of the software synths, acoustic drums, audio samples, and tracks coming out of Ableton Live.

**MD:** What's the role of the Keith McMillen BopPad in your rig?

**Zach:** The BopPad has four zones; each zone can have its own MIDI note and can send a variety of CC [continuous controller] data, which makes it very powerful. I can have a different sound on each quadrant. I can stack one sound on all four pads; I can manipulate effects with CCs. It's a robust pad controller, similar to hitting keys on a keyboard controller. It's also very thin and lightweight, which makes it perfect for travel. I also use McMillen's SoftStep foot controller.

**MD:** Why use a foot controller in your setups?

**Zach:** Because of the many visual and sonic parameters that can be manipulated in real time, I like to have as many controllers as possible. Since my hands aren't as free when drumming, a MIDI foot controller near the hi-hat acts like a conventional controller. I use it to mute tracks, engage an arpeggiator, stop video clips, etc. I use it mainly for quick on-and-off functions.

**MD:** Do you also have triggers on your two mounted toms and hi-hat?

**Zach:** Not my main hi-hat, but the two tiny hi-hats over the bass drum have piezo triggers, which allow for MIDI triggering. The kick and snare drums are miked, and those mics act as triggers. Putting a mic on my snare or kick is no different from taping a piezo trigger to the heads, but I use a microphone because I also want the kick and snare to sound [natural], like it's miked conventionally.

### From Electronic to Acoustic-Electronic

**MD:** In 2016 you toured Europe and Asia with Wayne Krantz. How did it feel being back on the road with Wayne after all those years?

**Zach:** Playing with Wayne is special; he's such an incredible improviser and challenges me to stay fresh with what I'm playing. There aren't many people like Wayne, who want you to play differently

and create every night. In my formative years, he was the best person I could choose to play with. Our last tour woke me up again.

**MD:** With your acoustic and electronic projects, you often play fills that are uniquely out of time. One comment on a YouTube video asked, "How does he play in time and out of time at the same time?" It's not displacement or against the groove; the fills are off straight time, yet you always land on 1. What is that?

**Zach:** That began at the 55 Bar in New York. The acoustics are pretty harsh, which tends to make me play unrelaxed. With Leni Stern at the 55 once, I played a fill that I intended to be smooth and even, but it came out sounding jagged. For the rest of the gig, I decided to play fills more like how Elvin Jones or Jack DeJohnette might phrase a set of fours. It felt a little out of place to take that approach in a straight-8th musical setting, distorting the placement of the subdivisions but trying to come down exactly on the 1, but at least I didn't have to worry about being letter perfect with the inner workings of the fill.

I realized this could be a concept to expand on, and I've stuck with it. I hear the bigger pulse of time—say, quarter notes, but what goes into those quarter notes is similar to the sound of dropping sticks on the floor, or books falling down a staircase. The notes are landing both on and off traditional subdivisions, but I still hear quarter notes in my head, or mark quarter notes with my hi-hat foot to hold it together.

**MD:** It's not metric; it can't be counted.

**Zach:** Not in a straightforward sense. I suppose that if you analyzed it, it might look like some convoluted polyrhythmic groupings, but I don't think of it like that at all. I'm just stretching the time with a bigger pulse as the framework.

### History: From Camilo to Electronic Calculations

**MD:** What's your long-term vision for electronics with drums?

**Zach:** It's ever-evolving. With Mister Barrington, the goal was to replicate the production elements on the albums when we performed live. We had good songs, but the extra production elements took it to another zone. These days drummers are utilizing "production effects" in an acoustic way as well, such as placing a cymbal on a snare drum or tuning the snare low and putting a dampening ring on the head. Even just putting a towel or a



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## Zach Danziger

piece of paper on the snare and triggering a huge reverb can make a simple 2-and-4 groove have a flavor that it wouldn't have otherwise. The sonics, whether they're acoustic or electronic, inspire what I play and how I play it.

**MD:** You've been into electronic drum gear forever.

**Zach:** Yeah, my first piece of electronic drum gear was a Simmons SDS5. I had an Alesis MMT-8 sequencer and a Yamaha DX21 keyboard. I'd program melodic vamps to practice with instead of playing

to just a click track. I saw Dave Weckl with the Chick Corea Elektric Band in 1985; he had an electronics rack the size of a refrigerator. I wanted that; his drums sounded so great.

**MD:** In the early '90s you were regarded as the "next guy" on the fusion scene. By the age of seventeen you'd already played with Michel Camilo and Special EFX, subbed for Gadd with Eddie Gomez.... After that came Leni Stern and Wayne Krantz. You landed a touring seat with Beck, but the tour was canceled. At one point you eschewed all of

it, including the gig with Wayne Krantz—the chair was filled by Keith Carlock. Why the shift?

**Zach:** For various reasons. I come from a showbiz family. My mom used to be a nightclub singer. My dad is a pianist/arranger and wrote comedy for Joan Rivers and Gabe Kaplan. Jay Leno was the warm-up act for my mom at the Playboy Club in the '70s. Comedy has always been in my blood; it probably would've been my second career choice. It may still be!

In 1994, a drummer friend, Pete Davenport, took a gig on a cruise ship; the bassist was a young Tim Lefebvre. I went along as a passenger, and even sat in with the band. It was a blast. I asked Tim to move to New York and helped to get him on the scene. History has confirmed Tim's greatness. Long story short, I've always valued having fun when playing music. I totally bleed for my art, but a lot of the music that I make has a humorous slant. I realized that in order to make music I wanted, I needed to start my own project. In 1996 I formed Blüth with Pete Davenport and Tim Lefebvre, which definitely satisfied my aesthetic.

**MD:** And why did you quit working with Michel Camilo? You had taken Weckl's chair and the sky was the limit.

**Zach:** At sixteen my dream gigs were Michel Camilo, Chick Corea's Elektric Band, and Michael Brecker [with whom Danziger would later record]. Soon after getting the gig with Michel, I realized that I wanted to have my own voice on the drums. Camilo loved Weckl's playing, as did I, and he wanted me to play the gig very similarly. I worked with Michel for the first half of 1989. Weckl and I were going to share the recording credits on the next Camilo album. That would've been evidence of me not having my own voice, so I left the group.

Then Wayne Krantz asked me to join his new group. I knew that would allow me the chance to develop my own style. Wayne has always stayed true to his musical vision. You hear two notes and know it's him. He has such an unwavering commitment to his craft, and I really admire that. We recorded *Long to Be Loose* and *2 Drink Minimum* [aka *Tonight*].

**MD:** You formed the inventive drum 'n' bass bands Blüth and Boomish while also composing film soundtracks.

**Zach:** Yeah, Blüth was in 1996 and Boomish in 1998. Around that time I got asked to work on music for movies, and it snowballed. I've written music for a bunch of feature films [*Iron Man*, *Little Fockers*,

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*Friday the 13th*, *Transformers*, *Fantastic Four*, *Night at the Museum*]. Then I began working with David Holmes and played drums on the *Ocean's Eleven* soundtrack. He inspired me with his approach to electronic music making, as did the late Chuck Loeb, who used some of the earliest computer software for music.

**MD:** What have been the turning points in your career as a musician?

**Zach:** In 1996, you, Mr. Micallef, made me a compilation tape of some new music from the U.K. called drum 'n' bass. That tape had artists like Photek, Roni Size, LTJ Bukem, 4hero. You also hipped me to artists including Squarepusher, Luke Vibert, and Aphex Twin. I got so excited about that music on a production level, it took me down the programming foxhole. That eventually gave birth to Boomish with myself and Tim Lefebvre. Along with Jojo Mayer's Nerve, we did weekly residencies in New York clubs from '98 to 2000. We recorded *Boomish*, *Clearance Sale*, and *The Play at Home Version*. Tim and I are recording a new Boomish album, which I'm excited about.

**MD:** So drum 'n' bass brought you back to live drumming.

**Zach:** Not initially. What it did was inspire

me to start producing electronic music. In the beginning I wanted to approach it as authentically as I could, and that meant sampling drum breaks as opposed to tracking my own drumming. I bought an Akai S2800 sampler and Logic Audio. One of the important drum breaks used in drum 'n' bass is the Winstons' "Amen, Brother." I hunted down the 45 at an old record shop, which was like striking gold. Eventually I tried to replicate the programmed beats on the drums with Boomish, and later with Uri Caine and Tim Lefebvre in a project called Bedrock.

Another inspirational turning point for me was meeting Mark Guiliana in 2009. He invited me to a gig of his, and it was incredible. We've become close friends over the years; he's one of the absolute greats. I was asked to coproduce his first Beat Music album alongside Meshell Ndegeocello.

#### Electronic vs. Acoustic

**MD:** What are the pitfalls when combining electronic gear with acoustic drums?

**Zach:** I battle with this daily. Ultimately, once people get over the novelty of my rig, I assume that they're looking for good musicianship. The tricky part is, since it

takes so long to figure out how to program all of the technology, I'll go in a practice room and won't have played drums as you normally would for weeks at a time. Instead, I'm smacking a trigger for two hours, wondering why the sensitivity isn't working right. The electronics can compromise that pure sense of being agile as a drummer. I'm always worrying on the gig if everything is working as it should. All these things can affect my drumming negatively.

But for all the negatives there are positives. I can hit a snare drum with a certain sample on it, and it sounds so damn interesting that all I need to do is play a kick on 1 and a snare on 2 and 4, and I've got an amazing mood because of the sonics. In that way it's helped my drumming because it gives me fresh things to play. The sonics provide a lot of the groove in a way. I want the technology to be less time-consuming so I can get back to the joy of just playing the drums as I did before I went down this rabbit hole.

**MD:** How have the electronics changed the way you interpret music in live performances? Do you hear rhythms differently?

**Zach:** Yes. With electronics you can, for

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## Zach Danziger

instance, put a dotted-8th-note delay on a hi-hat and one strike will result in a trail of notes in a cross-rhythm. I often play live with a click, which allows me to sync effects to the tempo of the song. That influences how much I play. If I'm getting digital delays from one stroke, it's filling up the groove and I don't need to play as much. Or running the snare through a guitar amp plug-in might make me want to hit the snare every other bar because it's so in your face.

On the flip side, the technology can be finicky. I don't always feel relaxed when I'm playing with the electronic rig, because I'm worried: *Is it going to crash?* There are many fears that I don't have when just playing acoustic drums. I can become preoccupied with things that aren't purely musical, because I'm caught up in the technology. But this is a rite of passage for me, and I'm aware that things about my playing are going to suffer in the quest. I won't always hit the mark in things I'm going for

in hopes of coming out the other side and having it together one day.

**MD:** What are the major pluses?

**Zach:** Utilizing technology gives me more ways to have a unique sound and style. I have a wider palette to draw from than I do with just acoustic drums. It's also improved my production skills; that has led to a lot of composing and production work for movies and TV.

**MD:** It's a learning process.

**Zach:** To say the least! Maybe through the negatives I can take better control of the things that are holding me back and overcome those obstacles. The music that I make requires these tools. I have to deal with the shortcomings. Playing just acoustic drums is far less of a headache. But I've had this concept of a hybrid setup in my head for a while, so there's no turning back. I'm still figuring out how to do it effectively.

**MD:** How do you ultimately envision your drumming with Edit Bunker, Mister Barrington, Stix Beiderbecke, or any of the musicians you work with?

**Zach:** I ultimately want my drumming to be as dialed in and nuanced as if there were no electronics at all. The electronics tend to change everything just by the virtue of their existence. While I'd like to be practicing drum-esque things, I end up spending the bulk of my time on the electronic aspects. There's a lot of prep work involved, and I'm constantly having to troubleshoot things. I don't know of anyone who's combining acoustic drums with electronics and visuals in the same way, so I can't just call someone when I have a specific technical issue. It's extremely time-consuming and frustrating!

**MD:** Any guidance to young musicians to follow their vision, no matter the cost, as you have done?

**Zach:** Musically speaking, don't ever feel pressured to do what people expect you to do. Do what you feel is most genuine to your vision, however basic or outlandish it may be. And take responsibility for these choices. Hopefully something deeper comes across when you do this, and people will feel it. For a while now I've been possessed to fully realize this multimedia musical endeavor. Maybe in a few years I'll want to ditch it all and play in a more traditional musical setting. Either way, I'll know that I'd tried my best to pull it off with conviction.

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# Big & Rich's **Keio Stroud**



When national artists record in Nashville, they call on world-renowned studio greats like Paul Leim, Eddie Bayers, Lonnie Wilson, Greg Morrow, and Chad Cromwell to put down the ultimate version of a track. But when those artists need a sub to bring their music to life on stage as excitingly and accurately as fans are used to, the players they call are from an often under-recognized but by no means less valued short list—which this drummer is at the top of.



**K**eio Stroud grew up in Athens, Georgia, in a musical family, and began playing the drums at the age of three. In 2001, discouraged by the college experience, he took a leap of faith and moved to Nashville. It proved to be a remarkably good decision. Tireless networking and sitting-in gigs led Stroud to the realization that there was the need for a reliable and versatile go-to sub, and that there was no reason that he couldn't be the guy to fill that role. So Stroud set out to build his reputation as *the* first-call sub for Music City artists. Today the list of top acts that have enjoyed Stroud's gifts includes Terri Clark, Richard Marx, Jake Owen, Rodney Crowell, Keith Urban, Lee Brice, Jason Aldean, Brian Setzer, Little Big Town,

Florida Georgia Line, the Wooten Brothers, and many others.

Stroud took his career up another notch four years ago when he became a full-time band member with the country mega-duo Big & Rich. The skills that made him the most sought-after sub in the business—solid time, dependability, and knowing when to lay back—prepared him well for this dream opportunity. "Experiencing how tuned in he was to the lyrics and vocals," John Rich says, "as well as the sheer power he hits the drums with, there was no choice for Big & Rich other than Keio Stroud." In between Big & Rich shows, Keio keeps a full schedule with—you guessed it—sub work and sessions.

**Story by Aaron Strickland**

**Photos by Joey Tanner**

**Drums:** Tama Starclassic in chrome finish with Stellar wood hoops  
**A.** 5x12 maple snare  
**B.** 5x14 SLP bronze snare  
**C.** 8x12 birch/bubinga tom  
**D.** 12x14 birch/bubinga floor tom  
**E.** 12x18 birch/bubinga gong drum (with legs)  
**F.** 13x22 maple bass drum

All drum hoops painted and inlay installed by Stroud

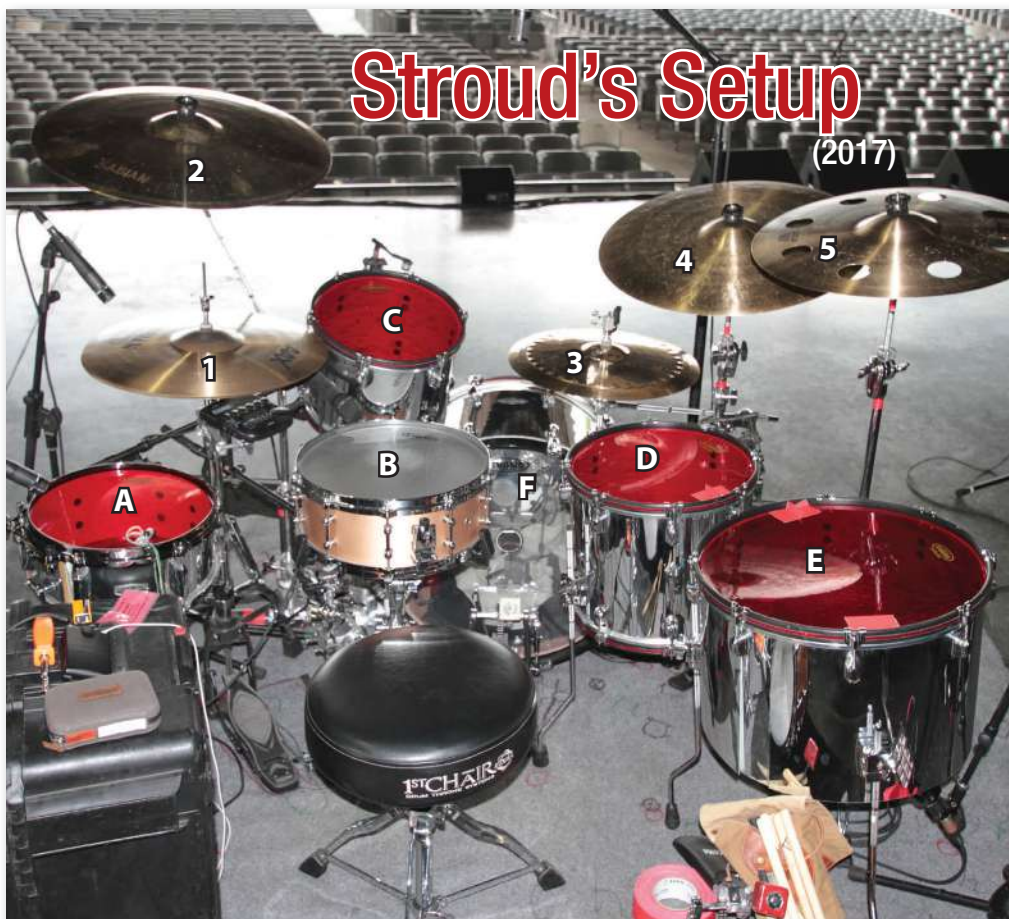
**Cymbals:** Sabian  
**1.** 18" AAX hi-hats  
**2.** 22" Paragon crash  
**3.** 14"/16" XSR stack (14" on top)  
**4.** 22" HHX legacy heavy ride  
**5.** 20" AAX O-Zone crash

**Heads:** Evans Hybrid snare batter and Hazy 300 snare-side, red Hydraulic tom batters and G1 Clear resonants, and EQ4 bass drum batter and custom graphic front head

**Sticks:** Vater Keio Stroud custom MV10 model

**Hardware:** Tama Roadpro boom stands and Iron Cobra hi-hat stand and single bass drum pedal, DW rack

**Accessories:** Audiofly in-ear monitors, Tama Rhythm Watch metronome, SKB cases, Big Fat Snare Drum dampeners, Danmar Zoro beater, Drumtacs, Kelly SHU 91 and 52 mic mounts, Cymbolts



**MD:** Big & Rich shows are often described as being a big party on stage. What's that like?

**Keio:** It's fun. It is a big party. That's why I like it. Those guys aim to bring good vibes to people, and that's what I like to do too. It's about dancing, it's about feeling, and all of that good stuff. It's a gig that I've wanted to

do for years, because I used to watch those guys play when I did tours with bands that opened for them.

**MD:** You started playing the drums pretty young.

**Keio:** When I was a kid my dad would have band rehearsals at the house, so I would

always go in there and hang out. Back in those days, his drummer didn't have a front bass drum head, so sometimes I'd just go hop inside the bass drum and cuddle up, like an idiot. But I grew up in Athens, Georgia, and there was music everywhere. I was always soaking it all in. And that's the



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way it's been ever since.

**MD:** Who were some of your early influences?

**Keio:** Dennis Chambers was a big one. As a kid I didn't know who Clyde Stubblefield and Jabo Starks were, but I knew their music because my grandmother would play James Brown all the time. Bernard Purdie was another one; she would play that Aretha Franklin *Amazing Grace* record daily. So it's kind of funny—my grandmother was my biggest influence because she had all of the records. Every morning she would wake up and put on a different record, and I would just nerd out and read the liner notes to see who the drummer was. It was either Motown stuff, Clyde and Jabo, or Bernard Purdie.

**MD:** When did you decide that you wanted to make playing the drums your career?

great guys. All of these great dudes were around, and we hit it off and just became buddies. Dave McAfee, who plays with Toby Keith, got me my first country gig, with Wade Hayes. Dave was super-nice to me and said, "We all moved here, and there are some people who are competitive, but then there are people who aren't. Surround yourself with people that you want to be around, and it'll never be competitive. You've just got to go out and be visible." That was before social media, so you had to get out. People knew you because you went out and actually met them, not because they saw you on YouTube or Facebook.

**MD:** Do you think social media has replaced that face-to-face networking?

**Keio:** It has. But it hasn't replaced forming quality relationships. People are informed



**Keio:** When I moved to Nashville in 2001, I was mentored to be a drum tech. I didn't think I was good enough yet to play drums on this level. My dad told me that he had a buddy here who needed a drummer for his dance band and that I could play drums in it until I could get a job as a tech. But I never got a job as a tech, and I just kept playing. I never really set out to have a career in drumming until I *had* a career in drumming, if that makes any sense. So then I just had to maintain it. And I obviously wanted to be a better drummer, so I started working on my drumming and I started networking, because I needed to work. I just decided I'd play gigs until there weren't gigs anymore.

**MD:** How did you break into the Nashville music scene?

**Keio:** When I moved to Nashville, I didn't find it to be competitive. I ended up meeting people that were just super-nice. J.D. Blair and that whole Wooten clan were

by whatever you put out there on social media. In person, you could meet somebody and know them for a year before they see you play. But on YouTube and social media, people see you and immediately form an opinion about what you do. Sometimes your drumming or whatever you're putting out there isn't ready for people to see. They'll form an opinion about that, and you may not work.

I always say to be sure that your product is on point before you start trying to sell it. So I think moving to Nashville in those early days and talking to people and seeing other people play and gathering information before throwing myself out there was big. Nowadays people just go for "likes" and stuff. Likes don't put money in your pocket. You have to go out. Artists like for people to come to their shows. If you want to support somebody, go see them in person.

**MD:** How did you establish yourself as a

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## Keio Stroud

first-call sub?

**Keio:** Rich Redmond and I came up with this thing that I was “the sub monkey.” [laughs] I think it came from just meeting all these people and my ability to learn songs quickly. I can learn an hour set in fifty minutes. Every week I was dealing with somebody different, so I had to be able to really get along with people.

I think personality, talent, and the ability to just be cool and responsible is what people saw in me. And if a drummer was hiring me to sub for him, [he knew that] I wasn't going to take his gig. So I did the one gig and that guy came back. The cool thing is that every sub gig I did led to another gig, which led to another. For years, that was my gig. Every year I would have forty or fifty 1099s. But I was working, so I did it. Eventually that led to me having this Big & Rich gig.

**MD:** Did you recognize that you were filling a niche at the time?

**Keio:** Yeah. Once it started working, I realized it was a service that people needed. What drummer doesn't want to be able to take a vacation? What band doesn't want to know that this guy would come in and help them out? Some gigs don't work enough to employ musicians full-time, but they *will* have full-time musicians play every gig. So I recognized that and really tried to meet some of the people that were on those gigs, because I knew that they would need subs. I would just throw my name out there and say, “If you ever need somebody, call me.” And they'd call. If you do a good job, they will call you back. Then word just got around. I became the guy that people would call for this thing, because I was dumb enough to learn all of the songs. [laughs]

**MD:** The subbing side of the industry is one that is often overlooked. How can aspiring drummers focus on being a first-call live drummer?

**Keio:** The first thing is that being versatile is huge. What people think of as being versatile is learning all the different styles of music. But being versatile is also being able to adapt to any live situation that you're in. I think that's where people get lost. They can't adjust. They can't just turn off who they are, figure out what the situation is, and then apply who they are to that situation. The subbing gig is fun because it's always new music. There's always something to learn. And once you start learning all of these tunes, you learn patterns, and you can start to guess what might be coming next, which helps you learn songs. It also helps you communicate.

**MD:** Tell us about your Big & Rich audition.

**Keio:** When I walked into the room, I already knew everybody in the band because of all the subbing I'd done. I'd played with everybody in the band at some point, including Kenny and John [Big and Rich]. I'd never done the Big & Rich gig before, but John Rich had a TV show called *Gone Country*, and I'd played drums on a couple of episodes of that. Kenny had also hired me for some demo sessions. And six years before my Big & Rich audition we'd toured together in Canada, when I was playing drums for Terri Clark. I subbed that gig for three months, and part of that time was opening for Big & Rich. So we all kind of got to know each other.

One of the things John Rich said he liked about my playing was that I followed the vocal, which came from my years of playing drums with Rodney Crowell, where the vocal was king. You had to support the lyrics. It's funny that my years of playing in Nashville with that dance band, playing with Rodney, and my love of AC/DC basically helped land me this gig. It's funny that they kind of wanted a singer-songwriter version of Phil Rudd. If Phil Rudd could play at the Bluebird Cafe, that's what they wanted.

**MD:** You didn't record on the most recent Big & Rich record, but you did the latest Taj Mahal/Kebo' Mo' album, *TajMo*. What was the most challenging track on that to play?

**Keio:** There's a song called “That's Who I Am” that's really just a simple four-on-the-floor thing—it wasn't necessarily challenging, but I just wasn't getting what Kevin [Kebo' Mo'] wanted. It's really cool working with a guy like Kevin, because he knows what he wants, but I think the overthinking process was happening. But that can happen when you're making something out of nothing. It wasn't “difficult,” but at some point you have to stop and ask: *What does the producer want... what does the song want?* At that point, you've just got to figure it out. But finally we played what the producer and the song wanted, and there it was.

**MD:** Being a studio drummer demands a different skill set from being a live drummer.

**Keio:** The big difference is your personality. When you're a first-call studio guy, you don't have to live with everybody that you're making music with. You get to go home. When you're on the road subbing for someone, you're also filling in for them in their bunk on the bus, in hotel rooms, in vans or cars.... I think that's the big difference. Obviously the skill set of playing drums is what it is. But it's also the ability to get along with people, to be able to recognize differences, and move on.

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# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

## George Rains

by Cleve Warren

As music journalists, we try to avoid using superlatives, like, say, “the greatest living blues drummer.” At the same time, it’s inarguable that for those who’ve been in a room where the Austin drumming icon George Rains is playing, the notion is tough to ignore. Rains’ credentials in the world of blues are impeccable. In addition to backing Jimmie Vaughan since 1993, he was the house drummer at Antone’s blues club for a decade, and has played behind just about every blues artist you can think of from the early ‘80s onward.



Rains got into playing regularly in his hometown of Fort Worth, Texas, in the early ‘60s, sitting in with older musicians. A natural left-hander playing on a right-handed set, he became a left-handed/right-footed drummer. (Think of Billy Cobham or Lenny White.) “I started playing on other people’s drums,” Rains recalls today, “so I didn’t know that you set them up differently.”

Dallas/Fort Worth had a very active nightclub scene in those days, with the infamous Cellar Club being *the* hot spot. The Cellar actually had locations in Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio, with bands

rotating in and out of the various locations. Rains played in the after-hours band in Fort Worth, but the San Antonio club is where he met one of his most important musical contacts, the late Doug Sahm, who made an immediate connection with the drummer and told him he would be in touch. Back home a couple of weeks later, Rains got his first break, a gig in California with a rock ‘n’ roll guitarist and singer named Charlie Carey, who was originally from Fort Worth himself. Rains promptly moved to Los Angeles.

Carey was playing clubs around Southern California—“One of my first gigs with him

was playing in a bowling alley with topless go-go dancers,” Rains remembers—and got an opportunity to sub at the famed Whiskey a Go Go on the Sunset Strip. The band took up a short residency there, subbing for the Tulsa singer-songwriter J.J. Cale. Rains’ encounter with Cale and his band led to a lifelong friendship with all of the Tulsa musicians, including Leon Russell. Subsequently the drummer spent a great deal of time hanging out and recording at Russell’s Hollywood Hills home.

The gig at the Whiskey led to Rains and the band playing in the club’s other locations in San Francisco, Denver, and New



**George Rains performing with Mike Bloomfield's band in the mid-'70s. From left: Mark Naftalin, Bloomfield, Rains, Charlie Musselwhite, and Roger Troy.**

York; in Queens, New York, they performed at the 1964 World's Fair. Somewhere in the midst of this busy schedule, Carey's band got booked on a USO tour of the Far East, including Vietnam. "They offered the gig to Cale," Rains recalls, "but he turned it down and offered it in turn to Charlie. The Vietnam experience was surreal—a lot like *Apocalypse Now*." Upon his return to L.A.

from overseas, Rains went to see Sahn, his old friend from San Antonio, at the Whiskey. The reunion with his fellow Texan would prove to be career altering.

Sahn was a musical chameleon and a former child prodigy on steel guitar who once sat in with country legend Hank Williams. He cashed in on the British Invasion, playing in a Mexican-American

band with a British-sounding name, the Sir Douglas Quintet, and had a hit record, "She's About a Mover." He was an excellent R&B singer as well. Sahn told Rains he was folding his group and wanted the drummer to come to San Francisco to start a blues band with the help of the Bay Area music entrepreneur (and original Janis Joplin manager) Chet Helms.



**George Rains with the lineup of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble's *Live at Carnegie Hall* album, featuring the Roomful of Blues horn section. From left: tenor saxophonist Greg Piccolo, Rains, Double Trouble bassist Tommy Shannon, singer/keyboardist Dr. John, guitarist Jimmie Vaughan, singer Angela Strehli, alto sax player Rich Lataille, Stevie Ray Vaughan, baritone sax player Doug James, Double Trouble drummer Chris Layton, trumpeter Bob Enos, and trombonist Porky Cohen.**

## George Rains

Rains made the move to San Francisco with Sahm and gigged around the Bay Area, playing Wilson Pickett and Otis Redding tunes. "Along with Tower of Power and Sly & the Family Stone," George recalls, "we were one of the very few bands that I knew of to play R&B." At that time Rains met Boz Scaggs, who was just starting a solo career after leaving the Steve Miller Band, as well as the members of soul-rock singer Tracy Nelson's group, Mother Earth.

After the gigs with Sahm dried up, Rains moved to Nashville with Mother Earth and recorded the album *Living With the Animals*. It was also in Nashville that he ran into his friend Scaggs, who joined Mother Earth as well. Scaggs had just finished his debut solo album, featuring newcomer guitarist Duane Allman, to much critical praise. Internal problems within Mother Earth gave Scaggs and Rains a reason to go back to San Francisco and record *Moments*, the guitarist's first album for Columbia.

*Moments* was well received and yielded the FM radio hit "We Were Always Sweethearts." The follow-up album, *Boz Scaggs & Band*, was recorded in London with Glyn Johns (the Who, Led Zeppelin) engineering and producing. Midway through recording his next album, *My Time*, Scaggs decided to change direction and fired the band, including Rains, who consequently shares drumming duties on the release with the great Roger Hawkins. "I always thought Boz really wanted to be Smokey Robinson," Rains says. "He wanted something much slicker than what we were."

Rains was back in San Francisco,



freelancing around town, when Sahm called again with a new recording contract with Atlantic Records and the great Jerry Wexler producing. An all-star cast of musicians was recruited for the 1973 session, including Bob Dylan and Dr. John, with Rains playing drums on all the tracks. The album, *Doug Sahm and Band*, was generally well received by critics but sold poorly.

Rains recorded two more albums during this tenure with Sahm: The Sir Douglas Band's *Texas Tornado* and the fan favorite by the Sir Douglas Quintet, *1+1+1=4*. These records showcase Rains' ease with blues, country, rock, Tejano, R&B, and swing feels. After this tenure with Sahm, Rains went

back to freelancing in the Bay Area with guitar great Mike Bloomfield and remnants of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. He also did a short-term gig with Van Morrison.

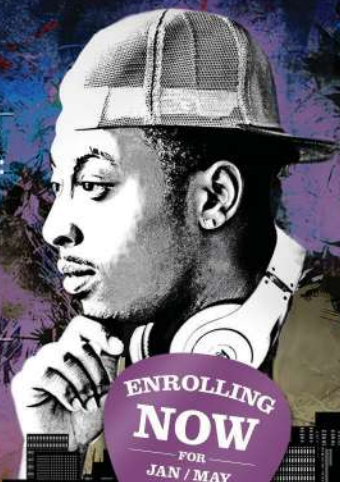
In 1976 Rains was convinced by Sahm to move to Austin and join the exploding music scene there. Dwindling finances, however, made this a short stay, and Rains headed back to California, but this time to L.A. rather than San Francisco. This period was not a high point in his career. Besides having to settle for gigs with bad country bands, he drove a cab, cleaned swimming pools, and got divorced. After a couple of years of this existence, in the early '80s Sahm appeared again and took Rains back to Austin. With this move, the drummer's

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## Tools of the Trade

Like the quintessential blues drummer he is, Rains has paid for every piece of gear he owns. With no endorsement deals, he still has the original four-piece Gretsch drumset he bought in the mid-'60s—though that rig was mercifully retired a few years ago after thousands of gigs and millions of miles. These days the drummer plays two Sonor sets: one with a 20" bass drum and small toms, which he uses for most of the in-town gigs, and one with a 22" bass drum and large toms, which he uses for louder shows. He plays a Fibes 6.5x14 fiberglass snare drum with both sets. Rains' cymbals are mostly K Zildjians; his ride is a Sabian 20" AA Heavy model that he's used for years. George's hardware includes a DW 9000 bass drum pedal, a Pearl hi-hat stand, various cymbal stands ("Whatever I can get the best deal on"), and a Roc-n-Soc throne. He uses Evans heads and Vic Firth 7A nylon-tip sticks.

luck began to change when he met blues singer Angela Strehli, who recommended him to the house band at the world-famous blues club Antone's. Finally, a job with some stability in Austin's volatile music scene.

The Antone's gig came with its own unique set of challenges. The club featured name blues acts every week, and many of the artists required Rains to learn the songs with little or no rehearsal. Great ears, lightning-quick instincts, and a vast reservoir of experience were required to survive in this tough and unforgiving environment. It was hard work pleasing so many blues legends, each of whom had a particular style and nuances. "It was a trial by fire, and endless slow blues and shuffles," Rains says.

Rains' visibility at Antone's led to friendships with many of the blues musicians in town, in particular the Vaughan brothers, Jimmie and Stevie Ray. This got Rains included on Stevie and Double Trouble's *Live at Carnegie Hall* album as a guest, playing with Jimmie, Strehli, Dr. John, and the Roomful of Blues horn section. The album also features a couple of songs with Rains and Double Trouble's Chris Layton playing dual drums.

Jimmie Vaughan left his band, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, shortly before Stevie's tragic death in 1990. Jimmie spent the next two years not performing, only writing songs—until his friend Eric Clapton called and encouraged him to start playing again to overcome his grief, just as Clapton himself had done following the death of his young son. One night Jimmie caught Rains on a break at Antone's and asked if

he would play a couple of gigs in London, opening for Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall. Rains said sure, and Vaughan said he'd be in touch. "Very casual, matter of fact, like it was a job at a bar down the street," is how the drummer describes the offer. The association that started that night continues to this day.

When he's not on tour with Jimmie Vaughan and the Tilt-a-Whirl Band, Rains can usually be found playing weekends at C-Boy's Heart & Soul on South Congress Avenue in Austin, with Vaughan and organist Mike Flanigin, a gig he took over following the passing of the Austin drumming legend Barry "Frosty" Smith, who was a friend. "I really like the trio format," Rains says. "Great communication, and no showbiz BS." The repertoire consists of blues, some jazz standards, and a few Latin tunes.

To hear prime examples of Rains' playing, check out his playlist at the *Modern Drummer* Spotify page. Some of his very best performances can be heard on the 1994 Doug Sahm album *The Last Real Texas Blues Band*, part of which was recorded live at Antone's, with the rest done in the

studio. The entire album contains brilliant playing, but two cuts deserve special mention. "Home at Last (My Little Country Girl)" features a remarkable-feeling Rains shuffle, and "Blessed Are These Tears" is a breathtaking blues ballad. The album should be required listening for drummers who want to check out authentic blues drumming—it features so many great songs, and Rains' consistency on both the studio and live tracks is remarkable.

No less than the legendary studio and touring drummer Andy Newmark (John Lennon, David Bowie, Sly & the Family Stone, Eric Clapton) has sung Rains' praises. Newmark played with Clapton on a portion of the *From the Cradle* tour, during which he watched Rains' beautiful shuffle every night, describing it as "smooth, sexy, really deep, and funky." According to Newmark, "George's groove has so much character. He's a soulful and sophisticated player, like Steve Gadd." Rains offers a typically modest response to this compliment: "What a really nice thing to hear from a great player."



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# Grant Hart: 1961-2017

It seemed that Hüsker Dü's Grant Hart existed to dispel the moronic clichés informing most drummer jokes. The dude could seemingly do it all. Killer drummer. Great singer. Amazing songwriter. He was also a supremely talented visual artist who designed all of Hüsker Dü's album covers, along with cover art for bands like the Replacements.

Hart, who died of cancer last September 13 at the age of fifty-six, first came to prominence as a member of the pioneering Minneapolis hardcore punk trio in the 1980s, sharing songwriting and vocal duties with Bob Mould. Immediately Hart established himself as a hard-hitting hyphenate with skills so equally impressive you didn't know which one to lead with. Was he a drummer-singer-songwriter or a singer-songwriter-drummer? According to fans like Superchunk and Mountain Goats drummer Jon Wurster, you could sequence those skills in any order and not be wrong.

"I have just as much of an appreciation for Grant's songwriting and singing [as I do] his drumming," says Wurster, who plays Hüsker Dü songs regularly in Mould's solo band. "He was a rare triple threat."

## The Drumming

Hart's hurricane-force beats and lightning-fast rolls—where he articulated each stroke with remarkable clarity—powered Hüsker Dü with the might of a hundred drummers playing for their lives. "He was the master of that fast around-the-toms maneuver, and I've yet to come close to that," Wurster says.

It wasn't all power and speed, though. There was a subtle swing to Hart's drumming, a byproduct of his days in high school jazz bands, which gave Hüsker Dü a feel that set the group apart from its contemporaries. Being a songwriter seemed to inform Hart's drumming. He knew how to inject a lot of personality into a song without crowding the band's tried-and-true verse/chorus/solo structure. Every lick Hart played, from his trademark frantic rolls to simple flams, served a purpose in the song.

"Bob has always said, 'Play the old songs however you want,'" Wurster explains. "You want to put your own spin on things, but as a fan there are certain things you want to recreate because they're so integral to the song: the snare rolls in the breaks on 'Makes No Sense at All' and the 'thwacka, thwacka' kick/snare/floor tom flams in 'New Day Rising.' There are some things Grant played that I will



just never be able to nail, but I always try to channel him the best I can when playing those songs he made famous."

## The Songs

Hart wrote and sang some of Hüsker Dü's most beloved songs before moving on to form his own band, Nova Mob, and then releasing a handful of solo albums. Alternately clever, feisty, and vulnerable, Hart's songwriting contributions to Hüsker Dü had little in common with all the red-in-the-face shouting about anger and alienation that dominated the American punk and hardcore scene in the early to mid '80s. His songs could even at times seem at odds with Mould's compositions.

Mould specialized in strident blasts of angst seemingly designed to rattle the windows and push dodgy PA systems to the limit at the all-ages venues Hüsker Dü usually played. Hart countered with messy shuffles

about stargazing female bookworms ("Books About UFOs"), drumless folk-rock kiss-offs ("Never Talking to You Again"), and throttling garage pop ("Don't Want to Know If You Are Lonely") that were punk rock in their ragged spirit, though they proudly bore classic pop and rock influences. Those influences would play a more significant role on Hart's solo records, all of them filled with soulful psych-tinged rock.

## The Legacy

Dave Grohl was once quoted as saying, "No Hüsker Dü, no Foo Fighters." It's fair to drill down a little further and say, "No Hüsker Dü, no Nirvana"—no multifaceted force like Grant Hart to light the spark, no Dave Grohl ruling the universe.

Just about the time Grohl began making his post-Nirvana ascent, the Bellingham, Washington, power pop band the Posies summed up Hart's influence on the '90s alt-rock explosion quite nicely in the lyrics to their 1996 song "Grant Hart":

Nervous children making millions  
You owe it all to them  
Power trios with big-ass deals  
You opened for it then  
I can see, I can see, I can see it all with my one good eye  
For a start take two Grant Harts and call me when you die

Story by Patrick Berkery





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# Phantogram's Chris Carhart

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**B.** 9x13 tom  
**C.** 5x12 brass snare  
**D.** 16x16 floor tom  
**E.** 16x24 bass drum with light brown hoops and matching inlays  
**Not shown:** 6.5x14 10-ply maple snare in light brown finish with 1" black-diamond pearl inlay (backup)

**Cymbals:** Paiste  
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**2.** 20" Signature Full ride  
**3.** 18" Signature Precision Thin crash  
**4.** 19" Masters Dark crash

**Heads:** Aquarian Response 2 Coated snare batters and Classic Clear Snare Side resonants, Performance II tom batters and Classic Clear resonants, Super Kick II bass drum batter and white Q Drum Co. logo front with 7" center hole

**Electronics:** Roland SPD-SX sampling pad, BT-1 Bar Trigger pad, PDX-100 snare pad, and RT-30S snare trigger; Radial footswitch (for talkback mic); 1964 6A in-ear monitors; and Porter & Davies BC-2 tactile monitor throne

**Hardware:** DW bass drum pedal, snare stand, tom stand, and hi-hat, and Tama cymbal stands

**Accessories:** Vic Firth 5A wood-tip sticks and Vic Firth VicKick bass drum beater, Snareweight dampeners, and Drumdots gels

**When he joined alternative electro-pop band Phantogram in 2013**, Chris Carhart had to quickly get up to speed on the more intense technological demands of the gig. "I was more of a groove/funk-oriented drummer," he says. "I had played with a click plenty of times in recording situations, but the click-heavy aspect [of this band] was an adjustment. The electronics in my kit grew over time. The setup started with an SPD-S, but now I have several triggers and pads around the kit."

When it comes to figuring out how to reproduce the loop- and sample-heavy sound of Phantogram, Chris explains, "The approach to each song is different. On the new record, there are a couple songs that are only live drums with a looped shaker. But on my first tour, a lot of [the drumming] was supplemental; I was mostly playing over loops. My contributions to triggering and playing the looped parts live grew over time. But each song is a new project to figure out how I'm going to do it, which makes the job really interesting and fun. It's not about fighting the loops and trying to play too much, it's a collaboration with the computer."

When deciding what to play live versus what to trigger or loop, Chris takes a practical approach. "A lot of it is figuring out what I can physically do. Some of the beats aren't really possible to play, so I listen to what each layer is doing and figure out what's possible. If there's a signature sound that needs to be in there, I'll play it on a pad or trigger it."

"Right now, I only use the brass snare with the trigger on it for one song, 'You Don't Get Me High Anymore,'" Chris continues. "I do that mainly for feel because I'm playing that snare on the whole song. There's no mic on it, but it's being picked up a bit by the overheads. The Roland snare pad gets

used on almost every song. There are songs where I switch to the live snare on the chorus, but the verse has a different sound that we pulled from the record."

Playing with an open-handed position (left-hand lead on a right-handed kit) affords Carhart easy access to his electronics and auxiliary drums. "The SPD-SX is right in front of me because I have to access it quickly and often throughout the set," he says.

Regarding his cymbal selection, Chris is strategic about choosing the most versatile models he can find. "I consistently go to the Signature series," he says. "They're very musical, and they're not overly specific in regards to their application. But I also need something that's going to cut through all of the content that's coming through the front of house. Phantogram shows are very loud and bombastic, so things that are too dark don't work so great. I need stuff that sits in the mix."

When asked why he uses so much muffling on his snare and toms, Carhart says, "Too much resonance doesn't really work with this band. And the snare is tuned pretty low. It's an aluminum drum, so it has a dry, crisp, powdery sound that's not shrill at all. The auxiliary snare is cranked pretty high so it can sit right under the triggered sound, which is also pretty high."

One of the things Chris loves about playing with Phantogram is the inherent mental challenge of consistently nailing the choreography between playing live drums and triggered sampled parts. "It's hard to let your mind wander," he says. "In the song 'Run Run Blood' there's a tricky pattern that uses all nine pads on the SPD-SX. I had to memorize that because if I miss one hit, the whole thing sounds wrong. There are many things like that in our show, which keeps me on my toes."

**GEARING UP** ON STAGE  
AND UP CLOSE

Interview: Michael Dawson  
Photos by Nicholas Shelestak







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# The Fundamentals of 5/4 Rock

## Backbeat and Ghost Note Placement

by Joel Rothman

**Last month we explored** some possible backbeat placements for rock patterns in 3/4. In this lesson, we'll check out some options for the backbeat's placement in 5/4.

As a review, a basic rock or jazz backbeat is played on beats 2 and 4 in 4/4 time. In 12/8, the backbeat often falls on the 8th-note counts of beats 4 and 10. Typical backbeat placement in 4/4 and 12/8 is notated as follows.

Basic rock groove:                      Basic jazz groove:                      Basic 12/8 groove:

The image shows three musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Basic rock groove:' and is in 4/4 time, showing a backbeat on beats 2 and 4. The second staff is labeled 'Basic jazz groove:' and is in 4/4 time, showing a backbeat on beats 2 and 4 with triplet markings. The third staff is labeled 'Basic 12/8 groove:' and is in 12/8 time, showing a backbeat on the 8th-note counts of beats 4 and 10.

For time signatures other than 4/4 or 12/8, it can be argued that there's no general standard for the placement of a backbeat. You'd most likely position it according to the structure, melody, or tempo of the individual song that's being performed. Considering that, let's check out some suggested possibilities for the placement of backbeats in 5/4.

Dozens of bass drum figures can be played with these exercises. Because we're focusing mainly on the placement of the backbeats, only one bass drum pattern is notated for each exercise. However, in most of these examples one of the bass drum notes will be in parentheses. First play the exercises with all of the notated bass drum notes, and then practice it while omitting the notes in parentheses. This provides an extra bass drum variation for each exercise.

Here are some possible backbeat placements for rock grooves in 5/4.

The image shows two musical staves, both labeled with the number '2'. Both are in 5/4 time. The first staff shows a backbeat on beats 2 and 4. The second staff shows a backbeat on beats 2 and 4, with some notes in parentheses. Both staves include ghost notes (snare strokes) between the backbeats.

Ghost notes—quiet snare strokes that are played in between backbeats—add a richer, more intricate sound to grooves. Here are some ghost note possibilities in 5/4.

The image shows two musical staves, both labeled with the number '3'. Both are in 5/4 time. The first staff shows a backbeat on beats 2 and 4 with ghost notes on beats 1, 3, and 5. The second staff shows a backbeat on beats 2 and 4 with ghost notes on beats 1, 3, and 5, and some notes in parentheses.

These exercises represent just a few of the numerous options for backbeat placement in 5/4. I suggest that you use the examples in this lesson as a starting point to explore other placements on your own. Have fun!

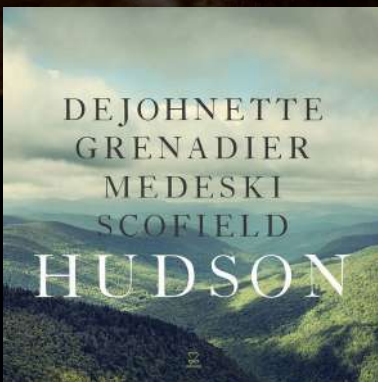
**Joel Rothman** is the author of nearly one hundred drum and percussion books, which sell worldwide through his company, JR Publications. For more info, visit [joelrothman.com](http://joelrothman.com).



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You can also play shorter sections of triplets and drags to avoid overcrowding the groove. Sprinkling these ideas inside a pattern can be more useful in real-world musical situations. Also, playing shorter runs of triplets or drags is easier, which allows you to play at faster tempos.



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

Try pushing the feel toward a swinging pulse when using the triplet pattern, and then toward a straighter interpretation when using the drags. It's important to clearly differentiate between these two versions. An 8th-note subdivision can imply either rhythmic feel within just a few notes.

This practice regimen has proven useful with my students over the years, and I've spent a good deal of time with it as well. Noticeable improvement can occur after spending a relatively small amount of practice with these ideas. Now all you have to do is find the time to do it. Get busy, and enjoy!



**Chris Prescott** is a San Diego-based multi-instrumentalist and is the longtime drummer for the indie-rock band Pinback. Chris has toured with Jimmy Eat World, Rocket from the Crypt, and others. He teaches privately and is the author of the drum book *Creative Construction*. For more info visit [ccdrumbooks.com](http://ccdrumbooks.com).



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## John Clardy On Tera Melos's *Trash Generator*

### Diving Deep Into the Experimental Trio's Latest Release

by Austin Burcham

**The modern-prog wizards** Tera Melos released their fourth full-length record, *Trash Generator*, this past August. The recording process brought the trio to Singing Serpent studios in San Diego, California, and marked the first time that the group's madman drummer, John Clardy, was present for the entirety of the tracking period since joining them in 2008. Dense grooves, wild accent patterns, and rapid time changes abound throughout the album as the group furthers its signature experimental sound. Here we analyze key moments on *Trash Generator* and gain insight into some of the tracks from Clardy himself.

#### "Your Friends"

The beginning of this track features a mix of heavy guitar and dense, tom-based grooves. Eventually, however, the song opens into the following 6/4 segment that lightens the feel. "In this section, the guitar has a really rad chorus sound, and it's pretty sparse for us," Clardy says. "So I wanted to fill things in with the ride cymbal. It mostly follows along with the way the guitar is arpeggiating the chords." (1:41, 146 bpm)

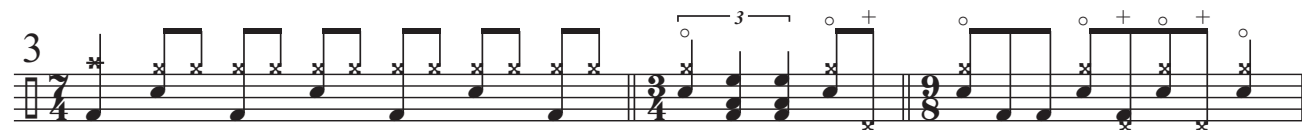


Shortly after that section, the song takes a wild turn into a barrage of mind-bending accent patterns and shifting time signatures—parts Clardy needed to shed before recording. "This part took up a lot of my time for a few months—first getting the changes down, and then playing it confidently and consistently," he says. "Because of all the time that I put into this part, I tracked drums to this song first in the studio, which turned out not to be a good idea." [laughs] Here's a brief taste of the beginning of that section. (2:04, 139 bpm)



#### "Trash Generator"

This song is built around a steady 7/4 structure, but the band incorporates some quirky little phrases that create some interesting breaks from the main groove. "Our bassist, Nathan Latona, and I worked out this post-chorus part to have a kind of 'falling-down-the-stairs' feeling," Clardy says. "It gets really rubbery on the first four hits, but then it rebounds a little with strong accents on the last two hits going back into the beat." (1:04, 146 bpm)



This second variation features an interesting five-note grouping between the drums and bass. (1:22, 147 bpm)



The song abruptly morphs into a 10/4 structure, which Clardy matches with funky kick variations. (2:26, 150 bpm)



#### "Dyer Ln"

This song's intro features complex grooves over alternating bars of 4/4 and 6/4. As Clardy explains, "This is another spot where the guitar is sparse in the first phrase or two. I wanted to fill in the space with something that was a little screwy." (0:26, 147 bpm)



6

### “Men’s Shirt”

The middle section of this track features a short drum break, and Clardy embraced the opportunity to play fills that are inspired by some of his influences. “The first two end phrases are inspired by programmed parts from the Run the Jewels track ‘Run the Jewels’ and an Aphex Twin-style linear triplet feel. I also wanted to throw in some hertas as a nod to Dave Grohl on Queens of the Stone Age’s ‘No One Knows.’” (1:59, 146 bpm)

7

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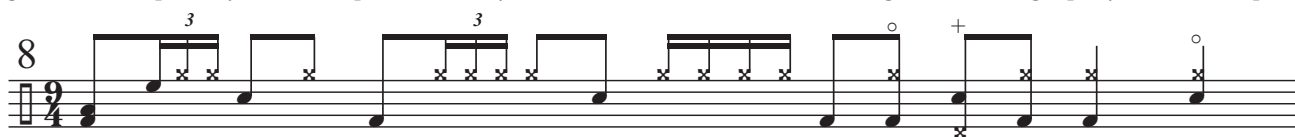


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## Style and Analysis

### “A Universal Gonk”

On this track, the drums enter with a tricky groove in 9/4. Clardy sneaks some elusive tom hits into the start of the pattern. “This groove was inspired by Stewart Copeland,” he says. “I wanted it to evoke a snake coiling and uncoiling rapidly.” (0:48, 144 bpm)



### “Drawing”

Clardy opens this track with a flurry of blazing kick work and strategically placed open hi-hats that give the pattern an aggressive feel. “It’s a kind of snaky, linear part,” Clardy explains. “It’s what I thought of from listening to the guitar part in the intro.” (0:00, 94 bpm)



These examples offer a mere taste of Clardy’s creative drumming on *Trash Generator*. So what’s next for the band? “For us, the foreseeable future is touring,” the drummer says. “We have some song ideas that didn’t make it past the initial writing stages, and we’ll likely explore those later. But for now it’s all about getting songs from the record into live shape and deciding what older material to mix in. I’m really excited for the challenge of playing these live.”

**Austin Burcham** is a drummer, educator, and graduate of the Musician’s Institute. He’s the creator of the YouTube lesson series *Study the Greats*, which you can visit at [youtube.com/abddrums](http://youtube.com/abddrums). For more info, visit [abddrums.com](http://abddrums.com).



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## Bebop Syncopation

### Part 3: Elvin Jones

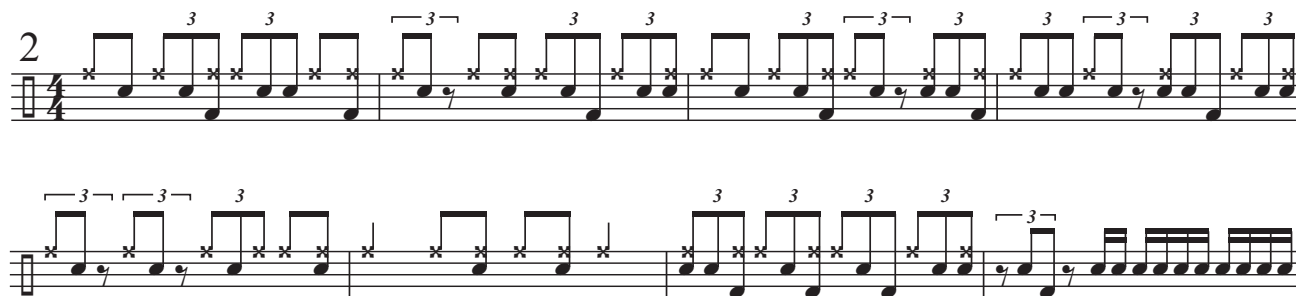
by Mike Alfieri

Elvin Jones was a driving force behind John Coltrane's explorations in the 1960s and is widely regarded as one of the most important figures in jazz drumming. This lesson applies the principles of his style to rhythms found in the classic Ted Reed book *Syncopation*. Here we'll interpret the first line of Exercise 1 (found on page 38) using Jones' concepts, however, be sure to apply the ideas to other rhythms. Exercise 1 shows the pattern we'll be using throughout this lesson.



Jones' rhythmic concepts moved away from previously established swing conventions and toward a newer freedom that aligned with Coltrane's ideas. The drummer's rolling triplets created a circular sound and feel, and his timekeeping produced a flowing continuum where no beat felt more important than another.

Jones also often emphasized the second partial of the triplet. To illustrate that, check out this comping example from "Resolution," which appears on Coltrane's legendary album *A Love Supreme*.



Exercise 3 mimics some of those comping ideas. The feet play the rhythm from *Syncopation* between the hi-hat and bass drum while the left hand fills in triplets.



Jones also used the hi-hat for more of a melodic role as opposed to only keeping time. Use Exercise 4 to develop facility with the hi-hat foot. Play triplets alternating between the hands and feet while the hi-hat plays the *Syncopation* rhythm.



The last two exercises were inspired by Elvin's polyrhythmic style and serve as independence challenges that will improve your triplets and strengthen your groove. Elvin often makes use of poly-metric phrasing, typically implying three over four. In Exercise 5, play the line with the bass drum while filling in triplets with the snare. Play a traditional 12/8 bembé bell pattern with the right hand.



In Exercise 6, the bass drum plays quarter notes, the right hand plays quarter-note triplets, and the hi-hat foot plays half-note triplets. Get comfortable with how the rhythms relate to each other, and then play the figures from *Syncopation* on the snare.

6

**Mike Alfieri** is a Brooklyn, New York-based drummer and educator. He has a bachelor's degree in music education from the Crane School of Music and a master's degree in jazz studies from SUNY Purchase. For more info, visit [mikealfieri.net](http://mikealfieri.net).



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10

Now we'll challenge ourselves by exploring the space in the seven-over-three polyrhythm. Exercise 11 removes all the ghost notes from Exercise 8, which leaves the riding hand and hi-hat foot playing the polyrhythm with only the kick and snare accents remaining.

11

Alternate between Exercises 8 and 11 and try to retain the evenly spaced right-hand pattern. Once you're comfortable, practice Exercises 9 and 10 in the same manner.

Exercise 12 phrases the seven-over-three rhythm within the first three quarter notes of a measure in 4/4. The final quarter note breaks from the figure, turning the phrase around to help keep the quarter-note pulse solid. You may want to omit the hi-hat accents until you've dialed in the basic coordination.

12

Next remove most of the kick and snare notes to embrace this pattern's space. Without the snare and kick embellishments, the hi-hat pattern speaks strongly through the groove.

13

The last example applies an alternating open and closed hi-hat pattern to the seven side of the polyrhythm. The result is a twisted seven-over-six disco beat with seven equally spaced hi-hat openings over a six-beat, four-on-the-floor-type pattern.

Applying a heel-toe technique can help you coordinate the hi-hat foot pattern. Slam your heel down on the heel plate of the hi-hat pedal for the open notes, and press your toe down for the closed notes. Make sure both are in time. Count out loud, and go slowly at first.

14

Once you've coordinated your feet and counting, it's time to add in the hands. Make sure your feet feel as comfortable and consistent as when they were playing on their own.

15

The hardest part of Exercise 15 is articulating the notes that line up right after a quarter note, especially on the second septuplet partial ("ka") of beat 6. Practice slowly, count out loud, and good luck!



**Aaron Edgar** plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. His latest book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is available through Modern Drummer Publications. For more info, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



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# The Failure Percentage

## Preparation and Professionalism Always Win Out

by Russ Miller

We spoke in a previous article about regularly redefining and evaluating yourself as a musician. I've been doing this for the past two decades, and it's always a work in progress. I do a lot of sight-reading (*American Idol*, soundtrack sessions, etc.), and I often play shows with little or no rehearsal. Although there's never a dull moment in this line of work, it can be taxing because I can't afford to fail.

My only real chance to spend time developing how I approach the music is with my band Arrival. When playing other people's music, I have to execute quickly, efficiently, and with as few mistakes as possible. While I don't think you should be afraid to

"There's a way of playing safe, there's a way of using tricks, and there's the way I like to play. It's playing dangerously, where you're going to take a chance on making mistakes in order to create something you haven't created before."

—Dave Brubeck (American jazz musician)

take risks—I'm always dreaming and striving to push myself to do more than the bare minimum—to progress and succeed as a freelance musician your failure percentage has to be very low. Let's discuss this and get to the bottom of what is expected of us as professional drummers.

### Other People's Gigs

I feel like a big part of my life is taken up by waiting for other people to do their jobs well. I'm often shocked at the difference between what my failure rate is compared to the average person's.

I frequently interact with corporate employees who make major mistakes but still keep their jobs. I often think to myself, *If I did my gigs like that, I'd be canned immediately.*

As drummers, we have the entire performance sitting in our lap. We have the power to make the music loud, soft, fast, slow, beautiful, or downright bad. That's why there are no truly great bands with bad drummers. On any gig, whether it's a high-pressure performance on live TV or a local

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club date, the drummer has to keep it all together. But as the gigs become more high-profile, so do the expectations. This is true with any performance-oriented job. For example, the flight commander of a space shuttle can't have as many workplace errors as a store clerk.

I'm always interested when drummers let the amount of money they get paid, or the number of people in attendance, affect how much effort they put into the music. That's like a football star saying, "I'll run faster and score more points when the money is right and the stadium is full." There have been many times when I didn't feel like writing detailed charts, programming electronics, or carrying gear onto flights. But these "burdens" contribute to being more successful and performing well and decreasing my failure percentage. With proper preparation and a professional attitude, I can go into situations with confidence and play my absolute best.

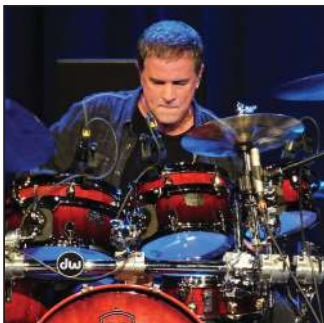
### The Return Customer

I've done records for younger pop artists who weren't raised doing live shows. My generation of players grew up playing gigs all the time. And they ran the gamut from small clubs to large arenas, with great and sometimes awful sound systems. But every one of them was a learning experience. I've had conversations with new artists as they've debated whether or not to take seasoned players on the road or pick up less experienced players that will work for a quarter of the wage. I always remind them that their audience is full of paying customers, and you need them to want to return. Take the financial risk and hire the best and most experienced players you can find. Some listened to my advice, but some didn't. Unfortunately, the ones who cut corners aren't around anymore.

I know I sound like a broken record, but you should *always* give more than what's expected of you. As a full-time musician, it's vital to my survival to keep people coming back. So take a second to take stock of who you've worked for and how well you've executed the gig. Are bandleaders calling you back? Is your fan base growing? In the music industry, where the number of quality jobs is very small, you can't afford a bad reputation.

The bottom line is there's little chance of being successful without taking some risks while maintaining a small percentage of failure. You want to be able to stretch the edges of your abilities, and developing professional work habits is what gives us the ability to live in that space. This is what Dave Brubeck is speaking about in his quote. We work in a performance industry. We can't approach our jobs with a "just enough" attitude, as some in the everyday working world do. We don't have the luxury of unlimited customers, and the competition is too high. There's no doubt that the ones who work the hardest are the ones who get the gigs. You may not see results instantly, but diligence will pay off. As a great jazz musician once told me, "You don't need to tell anybody how great you are. I'll let you know—your phone will ring."

**Russ Miller** has recorded and/or performed with Ray Charles, Cher, Nelly Furtado, and the Psychedelic Furs and has played on soundtracks for *The Boondock Saints*, *Rugrats Go Wild*, and *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, among others. For more information, visit [russmiller.com](http://russmiller.com).



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[simmonsdrums.net](http://simmonsdrums.net)



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



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



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

## Tama Star Solid Curly Maple Snare Drum

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- Scott Pellegrin



## RETAILER PROFILE

# Professional Drum Shop Hollywood, California

If the walls at the Professional Drum Shop could talk, they'd have some tales to tell. There's the time some new guy in town named Joe Porcaro needed five timpani ASAP—on credit; the afternoon in 2016 when Steven Tyler, Matt Chamberlain, and Jimmy Paxon were all in the store at the same time, beating on vintage 2002 Paiste cymbals (the Aerosmith lead singer eventually walked out with them); and plenty of surreal scenes in between. The store, which Bob Yeager opened on June 1, 1959, along with Chuck Molinari, has catered to beginners and A-listers alike, surviving changing tastes and recessions to remain one of the most beloved drum shops in the country. Yeager's stepsons Jerry and Stan Keyawa began working at the shop as kids in 1967, and took over in 1987 after their stepdad passed away. Since walls *can't* talk, Jerry gave us the story on Pro Drum Shop.

**My stepdad, Bob Yeager, was working with Remo Belli and Roy Harte at the Drum City around the corner.** In 1958, Remo put the drumhead on the market and left. And then Bob and Roy, who owned Drum City, got into a spat over business and our stepdad pretty much said, "I'm going to open up a drum shop and put you out of business." So right around the corner in 1959 this place opened up. We've been in the same spot the whole time. They'd just built the building, and we were the first ones in. The rent was \$150 a month for 4,000 square feet. It ain't \$150 bucks anymore. [laughs] We still rent it from the same family.

**We built that monster kit for Hal Blaine.** Howie Oliver, who was the manager at the time, started to build the set. Stan and I were pretty much the gophers—get the screwdriver, get this, get that. We ended up building just eight or nine more. Two for Hal, one for Ringo, Karen Carpenter got one.... When Hal was on *The Ed Sullivan Show* with all those tom-toms, that's when the drum



Brothers Stan (left) and Jerry Keyawa took over the Professional Drum Shop from their stepfather, Bob Yeager, after his death in 1987. "The last four or five years he was alive, he was the PR guy and we were really running the business," Jerry says. "He'd come in, take Louie Bellson out to lunch, then go get coffee with Earl Palmer. It was crazy. Then he'd come back, ring out, and say, 'I'm going home.'"

companies saw it and went, "Hey, we should make lots of drums and sell them." The following year, every [manufacturer] had one, so there was no need for us to make them anymore.

**Bob was always so good about giving things to people on credit.** He'd just say, "Pay me when you can." But when the '80s rolled in, things got weird. Everyone was on cocaine, and drugs were running rampant. That's when Stan and I had to start repossessing our equipment. Bob had a Lincoln Continental with the suicide doors. We'd drive around in that with baseball bats, looking like gangsters. And we were going into studios getting our equipment back. We'd go in right in the middle of a take. It was pretty insane. But that's what you had to do. We had to pay our rent, and people weren't paying their bills.

**Simmons wanted us to be the exclusive seller on that first kit, the SDS 1.** But they wanted us to buy forty of those units. They were almost \$3,000 apiece—our cost. To buy forty of those, that could've bankrupted us if it didn't go well. So we declined. At that time, Guitar Center had twenty stores nationwide. They did it, and they put two kits in each store, and that thing took off. Everyone went electronic. Then Simmons wouldn't sell it to us, because they offered us the exclusive and we turned it down, understandably. About a year went by; they said we could buy them, so we bought three or four of those units. A month later they came out with the new model—half the cost and it does twice as much. We got thrown an anchor. We had to sell [the original sets]



From left: Professional Drum Shop founders Bob Yeager and Chuck Molinari, manager Howie Oliver, and staffer Bob Gibson, 1964



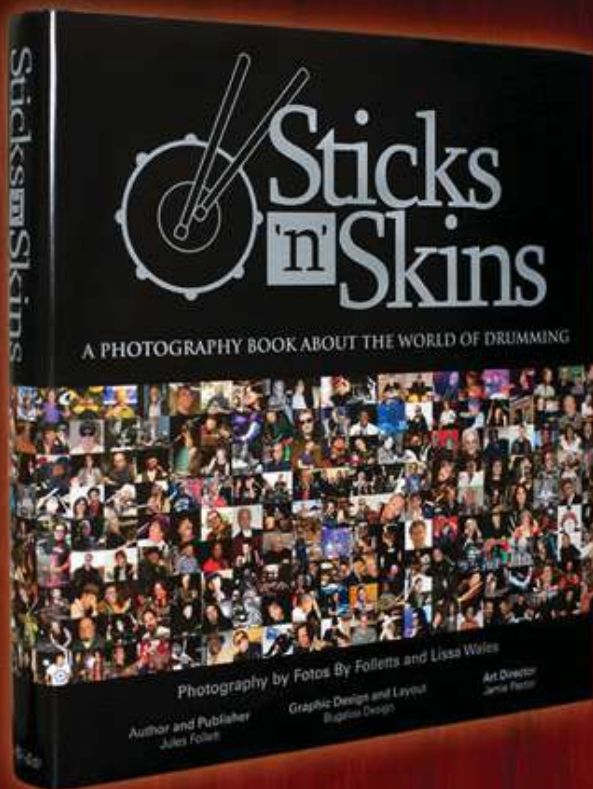
Bob Yeager, 1959: opening day

below cost. We said, "We're not going with electronics anymore. That's it." We haven't had an electronic kit in the store since.

**We cater to beginners to the pros.** We treat everyone the same. They're not getting shunned if they're not a big name. We're here to advise you. Everyone wants to know, "What's the best-sounding set of drums?" I always say, "The one with the best player behind it." I've seen Elvin Jones come in here on a piece of crap and sound amazing. I worry more about your playing than the equipment you're playing on. So many times parents come in and they're shocked by the cost. I say, "Just go this route for now with a budget kit, then go top of the line on the next round if they're still playing." I'll tell you who's got a better warranty, who's going to take care of you, who will not discontinue drums so quickly. We're personable and honest with the customers. We pour out the Kool-Aid and they come back. A lot of Kool-Aid went out, and it's worked.

Interview by Patrick Berkery





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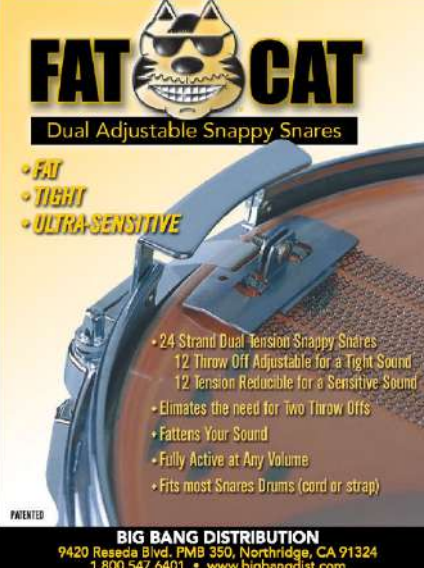


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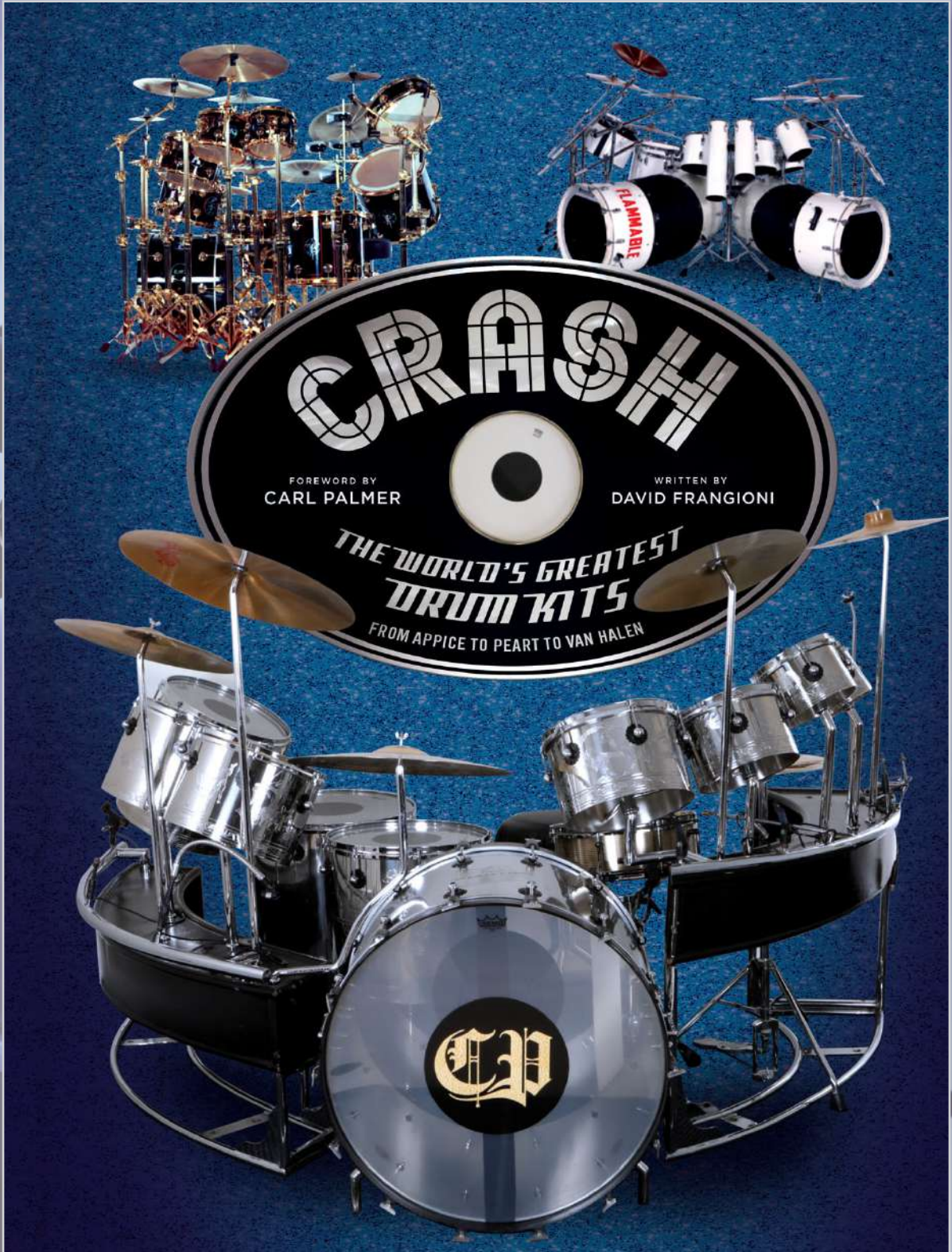
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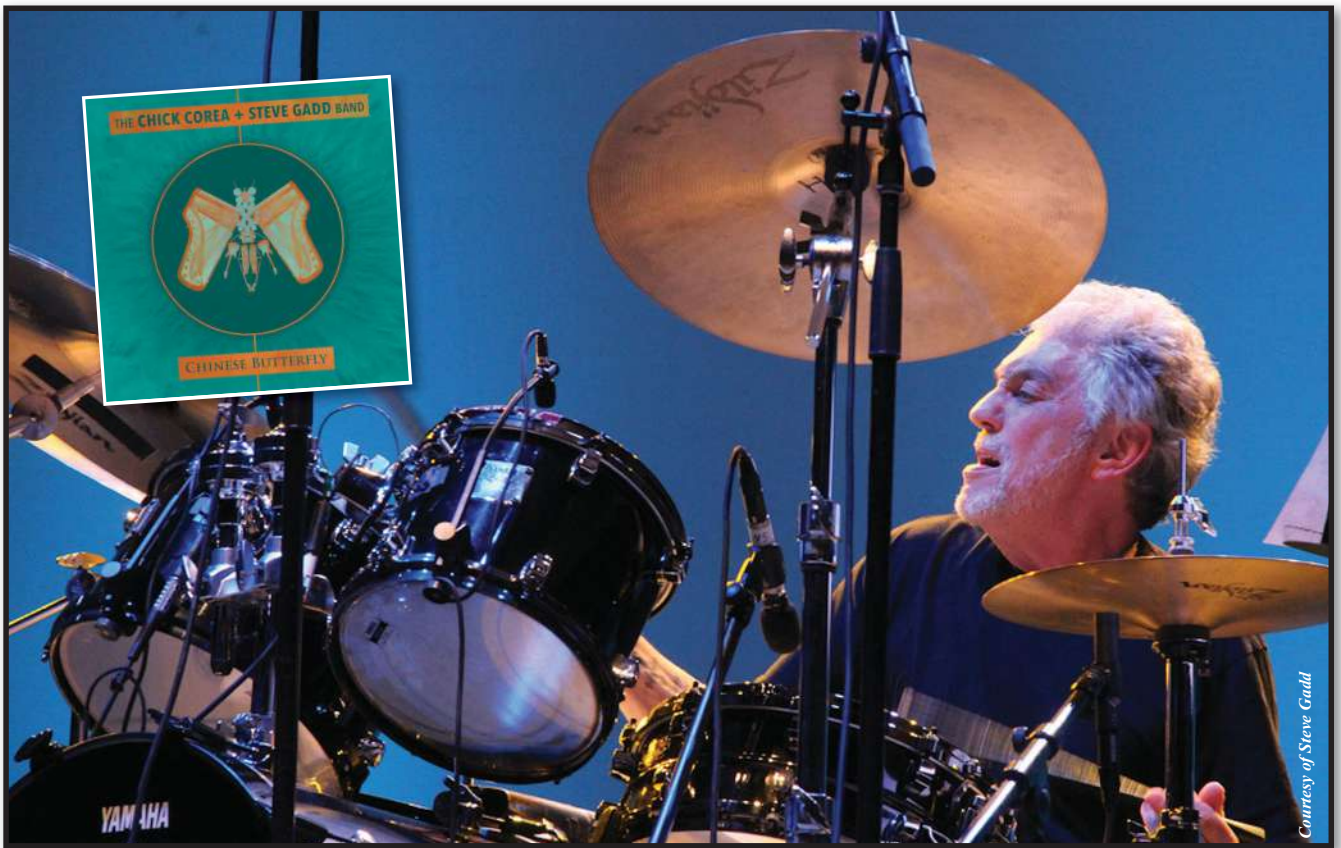
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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS



### The Chick Corea & Steve Gadd Band *Chinese Butterfly*

Two iconic instrumentalists reunite, striding further.

In a highly anticipated reunion, keyboardist Chick Corea and **STEVE GADD** co-lead a top-flight band in a mix of electric and acoustic jazz excursions with echoes of their mid-'70s brotherhood. Corea crafted most of the double disc's original compositions with Gadd in mind, making it a dynamic showcase for the myriad things the master groover does oh so well. There's pocket funk ("Chick's Chums"), swinging interaction ("Like I Was Sayin'"), percolating Afro-inflected grooves ("Wake-Up Call"), Latin colorings ("A Spanish Song"), and imaginative kit orchestrations ("Chinese Butterfly"). And, of course,

we're treated to several killer drum solos over vamps. Sidemen Steve Wilson (sax/flute), Lionel Loueke (guitar/vocals), Carlitos Del Puerto (bass), and Luisito Quintero (percussion) are consummate throughout.

Disc two, featuring three long-form numbers, is where the heat maxes. A remake of Corea's classic "Return to Forever" is a highlight. The Gadd/Quintero team approaches it with more "danceable" pattern-groove muscle than heard on the (also fabulous) original. When they kick into Afro-Latin territory, spurring on Wilson's soprano solo, it's utterly volcanic. Another must-have in the prolific Gadd canon. (Concord Jazz) **Jeff Potter**

### Arturo O'Farrill and Chucho Valdés *Familia: Tribute to Bebo + Chico*

Rhythm reigns in this heartfelt multigenerational celebration of family and musical heritage.

Familia indeed. Two titans of Afro-Cuban jazz, pianist/composers Arturo O'Farrill and Chucho Valdés, join forces to honor their late fathers, Chico O'Farrill and Bebo Valdés, both pioneers of that musical heritage. Even better, they've brought their talented offspring along: pianist Leyanis Valdés, drummer **JESSIE VALDÉS**, trumpeter Adam O'Farrill, and drummer **ZACK O'FARRILL**. The compositions draw from all three generations. Disc one features Arturo's fabulous



Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, bolstered by the dual pianists. Resident ALJO drummer **VINCE CHERICO** presides with finesse, kicking off the set with a percolating Haitian merengue groove. Disc two highlights the younger generation in smaller band settings. Both drummers turn in inspired performances. Zack delivers edgy, multilayered propulsion on his harmonically adventurous composition "Gonki Gonki," while Jessie's drum solo expertly builds urgent waves on his lovely tune "Recuerdo." Their probing jazz/Latin explorations honor both tradition and the progressive. The future is secure. (Motéma) **Jeff Potter**



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## Critique

### Good Tiger *We Will All Be Gone*

The transatlantic progressive quintet flexes considerable songwriting muscle on its highly anticipated second album.

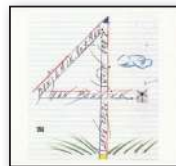
*We Will All Be Gone* beautifully captures YouTube sensation turned legitimate genre-defining force **ALEX RÜDINGER's** rock-solid performance across ten dense tracks. Ably coproduced by GetGood Drums creator Adam "Nolly" Getgood and Australian progressive go-to Forrester Savell (Karnivool, Skyharbor, Dead Letter Circus), the album showcases vocalist Elliot Coleman's now completely clean contributions as well as the instrumental mastery that fans have come to expect from the band. Rüdinger's blazing hi-hat groove in the verse of opener "The Devil Thinks I'm Sinking," muscular tom pattern and signature triplet fills on "Float On," and passionate bashing on closer "I'll Finish This Book Later" shine through on this decidedly song-oriented collection. (Blacklight Media) **Ben Meyer**



### Quartet NL *Herman Beets Bennink Jacobs*

Pushing the envelope with serious fun.

At first glance this would appear to be another jazz quartet album. But any time the Dutch drummer **HAN BENNINK** shows up, the resulting music has an immediacy and sense of play that few other projects can match. Still active in his seventies, Bennink is a legend in the free-jazz world, noted for creativity and a sense of fun both on and off the kit. First formed in 2013, the group here is special as it draws on two musical generations, with elders Bennink and bassist Ruud Jacobs meeting pianist Peter Beets and saxophonist Benjamin Herman. Tackling compositions of another Dutch icon, Misha Mengelberg, the group embraces past and present, playing in a fresh, adventurous way. A blending of both straight and avant-garde jazz approaches ensues, with great results. Bennink plays straight brush time on the opening tune, with lots of drive and momentum, and then edges things out just so slightly, before pulling back in. Bennink is a master at setting things slightly off-kilter and creating cubist abstraction while staying within the lines. Once again, he proves himself a propulsive, adventurous drummer whose playing is musical, immediate, and sincere. (ICP) **Martin Patmos**

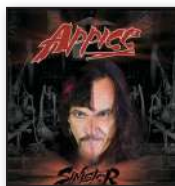


## TAKING THE REINS

### Appice *Sinister*

Pronounce the last name however you like; Carmine and Vinny Appice are rock drumming legends with a who's who list of credentials spanning half a century.

On *Sinister*, brothers Carmine (age seventy-one) and Vinny (sixty) Appice finally join forces, in an '80s-style melodic power-metal format featuring a host of guests from both of their distinguished careers. The kits are panned left and right, and if you're familiar with both drummers, it's easy to hear the stylistic differences and trademark licks that define them. The excellent drum mix blends the pair's heavy-pocket grooves seamlessly to create a unique double drumming DNA showcasing the classic Appice family feel. Carmine adds lead vocals to "You Got Me Running," the two battle it out on "Drum Wars," and the lyrically biographical "Bros in Drums" details how Vinny followed in his big brother's footsteps. A very cool "Sabbath Mash" mashup closes this family affair and reaffirms the Appice legacy in rock history. (SPV/Steamhammer) **Mike Haid**



### Mark Heaney *Fortunes*

The former Gang of Four/Shining drummer stretches beyond traditional rock song structures and explores the outer limits of ambient music, digital programming, and percussive sampling.

The tunes on display in this solo set derive their dynamic power from the interesting interplay that Mark Heaney achieves between simpler sampled parts and more technically impressive live playing. "Signs," for instance, features dueling manic grooves full of off-kilter accents and heavy synth movement. Though Heaney's production credits mention that live drums for the album were recorded with three microphones in practice facilities, the sounds on display are crisp and organic, alternating between heavily compressed drum and bass patterns and warmer, open rock beats. While the album occasionally slips into grating experimental territory ("Priestess of Delphi"), these moments are a small price to pay for the more dynamic exercises that dominate. (markheaney.bandcamp.com)

**Keaton Lamle**



## Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

**Buddy Rich** The Channel One Set, The Lost Tapes /// **Adam Rudolph** Morphic Resonances /// **Vinnie Sperrazza** Hide Ye Idols /// **Barry Altschul & the 3Dom Factor** Live in Kraków /// **Bakini (Michael Spiro/Joe Galvin)** En el Nuevo Mundo /// **Jamison Ross** All for One /// **Jimmy Chamberlin** Complex The Parable /// **Ilios Steryannis** Bethany Project

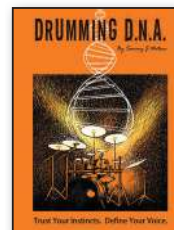
## MULTIMEDIA

### Drumming D.N.A. by Sammy J. Watson

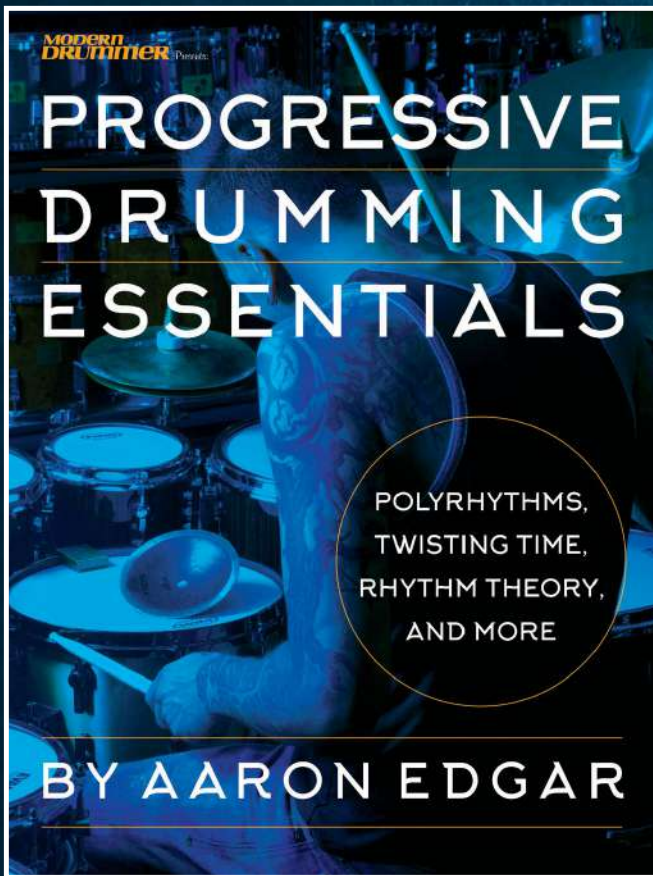
A diverse collection of exercises and beats to help you break free from the same old.

Former Apex Theory drummer and instructor Sammy J. Watson's new book contains the tag line "organic recipes for realizing rhythm," and Watson manages to go beyond the normal meat and potatoes to highlight interesting patterns for students to play. Watson divides the book into four sections: applying snare exercises to the kit as grooves and fills; odd groupings; double drumming with two kits to improve double bass playing; and odds and ends including Apex Theory transcriptions.

This stuff is all over the place in a good way, not focusing on any one thing and instead featuring challenging material that Watson finds worthy and fun. There are tricky nine-stroke stickings inspired by Dave Weckl (The Weck 9's) and cool alternate ideas for James Brown beats (J.B. Grooves), so leave your limiting genre preconceptions at the door, because you'll be dabbling in many styles. The eclectic nature of the different notation means you can pop in for whatever you want to work on, and students can gain further appreciation for Watson's inventive work with Apex Theory if they wish. Audio examples and play-along tracks are available from the author's website. (Hard copy \$19.99, PDF/e-book \$9.99, sammyjdrums.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



# Play More PROG



### SECTION 1: FUNDAMENTALS

#### PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ODD TIME SIGNATURES

Before we can attempt odd time signatures, we need to understand the basic concept of a time signature. A time signature is a symbol that indicates the number of beats in a measure and the note value that represents one beat. The most common time signature is 4/4, which means four beats per measure, with a quarter note equaling one beat.

#### QUARTER-NOTE METERS

The most common odd meters are 3/4, 5/4, and 7/4. These meters are often used in progressive rock and jazz. The 3/4 meter is often used for a waltz-like feel, while 5/4 and 7/4 are often used for a more complex, driving feel.

#### 8th-NOTE METERS

8th-note meters are often used in progressive rock and jazz. The most common 8th-note meters are 3/8, 5/8, and 7/8. These meters are often used for a more complex, driving feel.

#### 12/8 TIME

12/8 time is often used in progressive rock and jazz. It is a duple meter with a triplet feel. The most common 12/8 meters are 3/8, 5/8, and 7/8.

#### 15th-NOTE METERS

15th-note meters are often used in progressive rock and jazz. The most common 15th-note meters are 3/16, 5/16, and 7/16. These meters are often used for a more complex, driving feel.

### SECTION 6: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON POLYRHYTHMS

#### PART 1: TWO OVER THREE

Two over three is a common polyrhythm in progressive rock and jazz. It consists of two measures of 2/4 time over three measures of 3/4 time. This creates a complex, driving feel.

#### 3 OVER 4

Three over four is another common polyrhythm in progressive rock and jazz. It consists of three measures of 3/4 time over four measures of 4/4 time. This creates a complex, driving feel.

#### 5 OVER 8

Five over eight is a more complex polyrhythm in progressive rock and jazz. It consists of five measures of 5/8 time over eight measures of 8/8 time. This creates a complex, driving feel.

**Progressive Drumming Essentials** is an expanded collection of articles originally written for *Modern Drummer* magazine. The book progresses from the fundamentals of odd time signatures all the way up to super-advanced concepts like implied metric modulation and displaced polyrhythms. For the most adventurous modern drummers out there, this is a must-have!

Order your copy now at [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com)

## The 2017 Hollywood Custom and Vintage Drum Show

Drum enthusiasts from around the globe convened at the Glendale Civic Auditorium in Glendale, California, this past October 7 to check out informative clinics and a plethora of new and vintage drumming gear. The stellar performance lineup included Jason McGerr (Death Cab for Cutie), Jason Sutter (Cher, Dee Snider), Clayton Cameron (Count Basie Orchestra), Virgil Donati (Planet X, solo), and Thomas Lang (Paul Gilbert, educator).

Packed vendor booths featured drums from Acoutin Custom, Anderson International Trading, Barton, Billy Blast, Complido Custom, Dunnett, Doc Sweeney, DW, Fever, George Way, Gretsch, Jenkins-Martin, Ludwig, Mayer Bros., Pork Pie, Q Drums, RBH, Sako, SJC, Superdrum, and Yamaha, among others. Promark, Vater, Vic Firth, Evans, Remo, Beato, and Low Boy displayed their newest heads, sticks, and accessories. Cymbal vendors included Sabian, Zildjian, Paiste, Istanbul Mehmet, and Meinl. The drum repair and rental company BoneYard Drums was on hand. And the music instrument retailers Guitar Center, Lone Star Percussion, and the Professional Drum Shop offered show-exclusive deals.

Jason McGerr took the stage behind a sleek Satin Flame Gretsch kit and presented an encouraging and supportive clinic. McGerr demonstrated a few Death Cab for Cutie tracks and explained his trademark shuffle beat from the band's song "Grapevine Fires," in which he plays hi-hat upbeats with his foot on the "a" of beats 2 and 4. The clinic focused on playing solid and consistent time, and at one point McGerr invited a drummer from the audience to play along with him onstage.

Jason Sutter flawlessly slammed through tracks by Cher, Chris Cornell, and Foreigner on his stunning Ludwig and Dunnett titanium kit. And while Sutter has certainly made a name for himself as a prolific rock drummer, he surprised many by demonstrating impressive brush and rudimental skills on a vintage 1920s Ludwig brass snare.



McGerr



Cameron



Sutter



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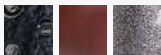
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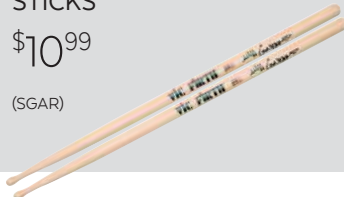


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## Backbeats



During an inspiring clinic, Clayton Cameron shared some of his innovative brush rudiments, including the parasliddle, flexadiddle, friddle, and parafriddle. Cameron also taught a bit of drum history on a gorgeous Ludwig kit by demonstrating Warren “Baby” Dodds’ “shimmy” beat—accented press rolls on beats 2 and 4 with a four-on-the-floor bass drum pattern.

Virgil Donati and Thomas Lang capped off the show with a duet on two beautiful red DW kits. Known for their immense chops, both drummers mesmerized the crowd with flurries of hand and foot work, intricate ostinatos, and complex independence. Their

co-composed duet, which they played to a backing track, was well coordinated, and it could be argued that it alone was worth the price of admission.

After the show, producer, sponsor, and emcee Kerry Crutchfield reflected on the event. “I had so many people come up to me and tell me that this was the best show ever,” Crutchfield told *MD*. “We had a great selection of exhibitors—several for the first time. A very cool mix of highly talented drummers was on the stage throughout the day. I can’t wait for next October!”

**Story and photos by Bob Campbell**





# Enter to Win This Alesis Strike Pro Eleven-Piece Electronic Drumkit!



The prize features an eleven-piece state-of-the-art electronic drumkit with a 14" dual-zone snare, four dual-zone toms (8", 10", 12", and 14"), a 14" kick, a 16" three-zone ride, three dual-zone 14" crashes (with choke feature), and a 12" moveable hi-hat. All of the cymbals have a hammered look. The Strike Performance module has a 4.3" color screen and comes with 110 drumkits, 1,600 multi-layer instruments,

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**Enter today at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)**

Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com) between the dates below and look for the Alesis Strike Series Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS DECEMBER 1, 2017, AND ENDS FEBRUARY 28, 2018. 4. Prize Drawing: Winners will be selected by random drawing on March 6, 2017. Winners will be notified by phone or email on or about March 8, 2018. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Alesis, inMusic Brands, Inc., and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada; Florida; New York; and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Prizes: 1st Prize – One (1) winner will receive a Alesis Strike Series electronic drumkit as described above. Approximate retail value of contest is \$2,400. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004, 973-239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Alesis Strike/Official Rules/Winners List, 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004.

**KIT  
OF  
THE  
MONTH**

# A Slingerland Unmasked



**After purchasing and restoring** the 1950s Slingerland bass drum pictured in this month's featured kit, Marc Membreno was overtaken by the urge to flesh out the setup with other vintage Slingerland tubs. "I started with a 1958 blue sparkle bass drum," the Los Altos, California, drummer explains. "After removing the original wrap, crushed glass went everywhere! But after seeing the beautiful ribbon-striped mahogany outer ply underneath, I decided to build a set around the piece." Membreno refinished the kick by sanding it before applying sanding sealer and wipe-on satin polyurethane.

Once he tracked down a 1960s 13" rack tom and a '70s 16" floor tom, Membreno removed the wraps and went to work. "The smaller tom was also built with a ribbon mahogany outer ply, and I finished it using the same process as the bass drum," he says. "I couldn't find

a floor tom with the same finish, so I bought a ribbon mahogany sheet and laminated it to the stripped shell using hide glue. Then I sanded, stained, and finished it with polyurethane. It's not an exact match, but it's pretty close." Membreno also stripped the original black maple bass drum hoops, sanded and varnished them, and glued in a stained strip of mahogany in the hoops' inlays. A new set of DW clamp-on spurs replaced the bass drum's original ones.

"The vintage rounded-over bearing edges produce a huge, warm sound," Membreno says. "It's not too punchy, but there's a nice, low fundamental tone, with a slowly decaying resonance. Taking the wrap off the 3-ply mahogany/poplar/mahogany shells might have also enhanced the warm tone. They have that great vintage Slingerland sound!"

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

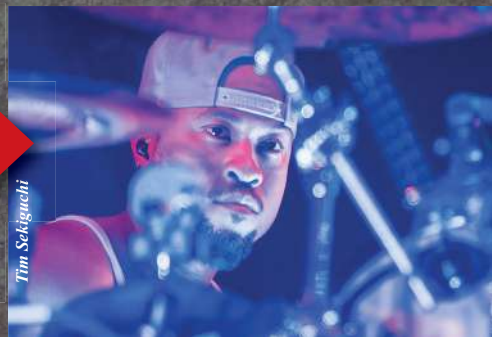


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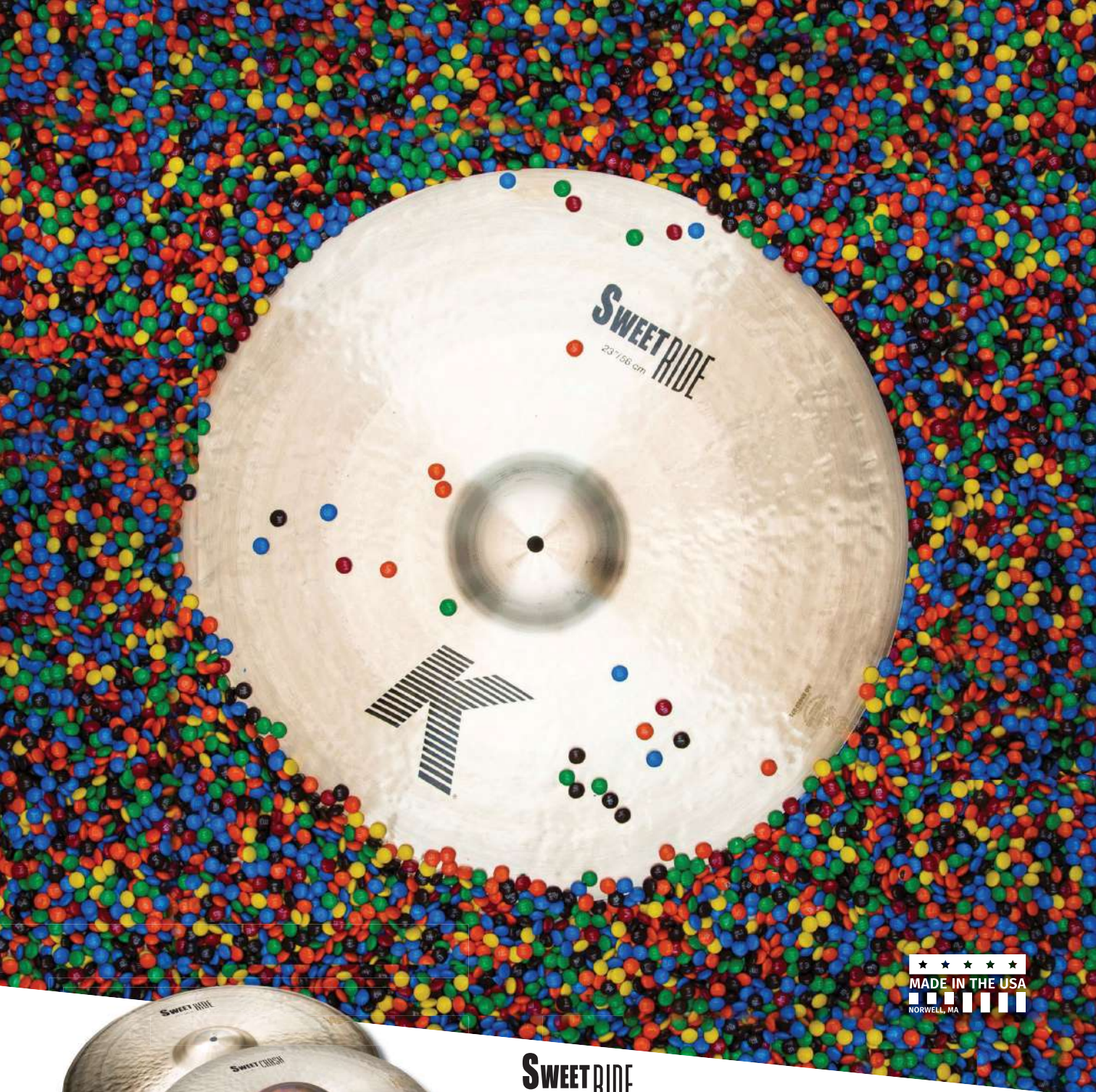
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