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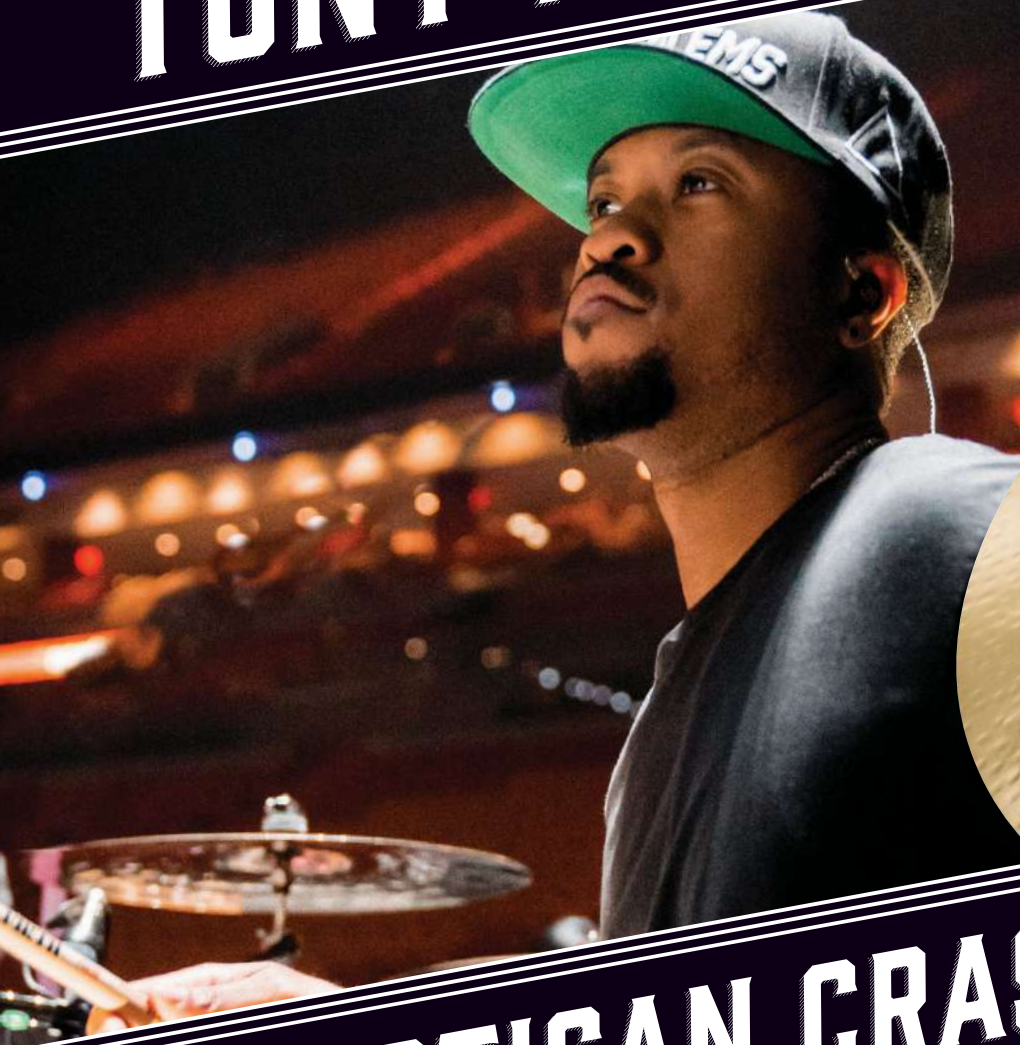
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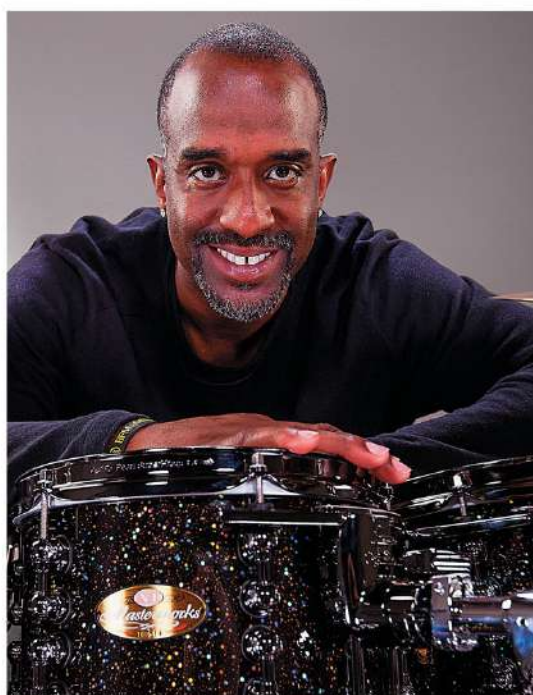
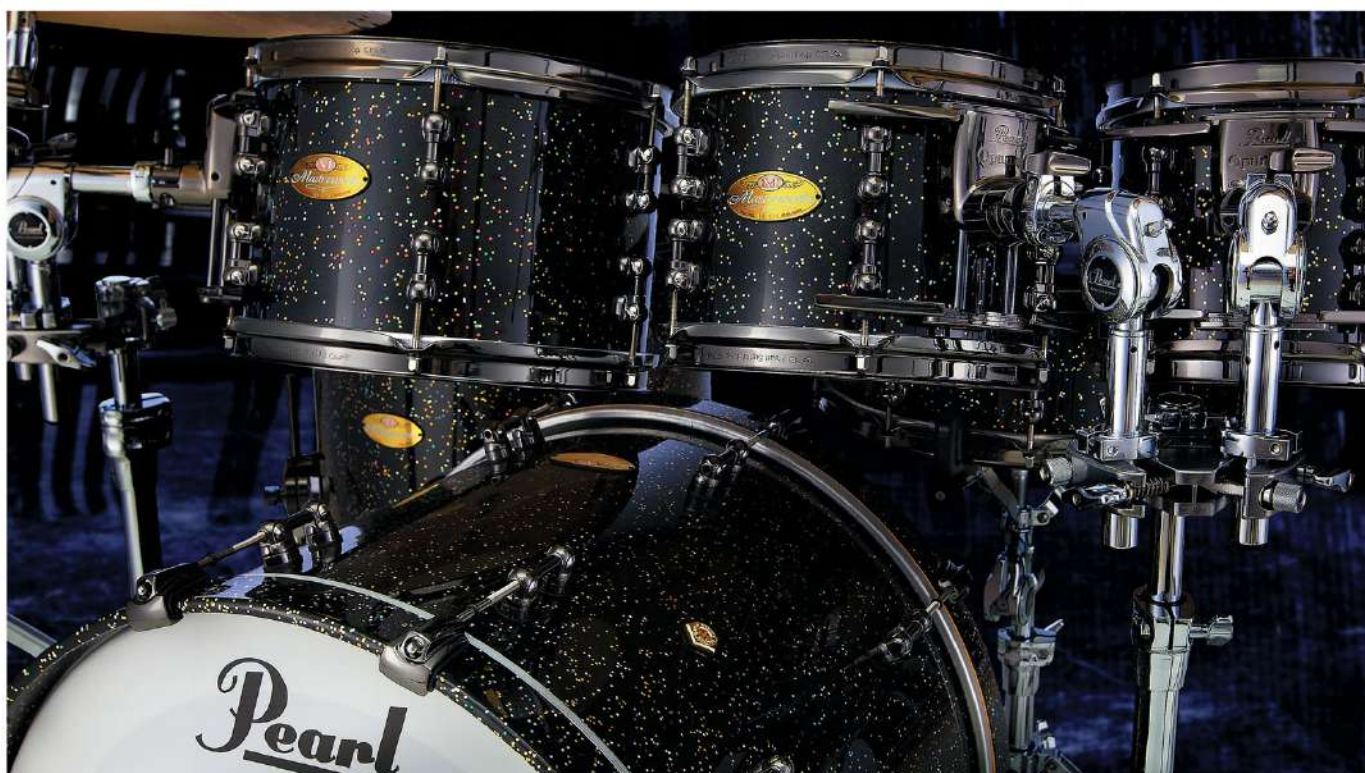
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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Words Count

As drummers we've long battled identity issues that never seem to go away, no matter how far we advance our art. For years the famed drummer Bill Bruford has pointed out a certain "pitched-instrument bias" on the part of the public, other instrumentalists, and even ourselves. Among the topics in his latest book, *Uncharted: Creativity and the Expert Drummer*, Bruford explores the phenomenon of drummers being disrespected "despite the fact," as he recently told me, "we all know a band is only as good as its drummer, etc.



"In all this," he added, "the language used to describe drummers and the language they use to describe themselves is pivotal."

Bruford was in fact prompted to write me following the publication of a piece in *Modern Drummer* in which we used certain verbs to describe playing the drumset that, he argues, support long-standing prejudices that harm our reputation on a macro scale. My immediate reaction to Bill was to say that I believed our readership was hip enough to not take offense at the occasional use of terms like *bash* or *slam*. But as I thought more about his contention, particularly in light of current events that have forced even the most open-minded of us to rethink how we speak about those with different backgrounds from ours, I began to reevaluate his comments.

Language is a powerful thing, more powerful, I believe, than many of us consider. Particularly as *Modern Drummer* has put more energy into our internet presence, I've struggled with how to react when social media followers choose to leave thoughtless or insulting comments about our posts or the drummers featured in them. I suppose it's debatable whether there's always been a percentage of people who care little about tempering their public commentary with a level of decency. But in the era of online, it sure seems like folks don't think much about the words they use anymore, even if they have a valid point to make.

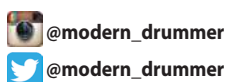
Don't get me wrong, I get as much of a kick as the next guy when airing personal grievances in a snarky online post. It's one of the reasons that I maintain separate private and public social media pages. I have no problem proclaiming that Senator What's His Name is nothing but a big poopie-head—when I know that the only people who see it either share my view or, if they don't, will put up with my comments because we're actual flesh-and-blood friends, and they know and accept my proclivities. If, on the other hand, I wanted to share my misgivings about the senator in a public forum, I'd choose my words much more carefully, and hopefully communicate a fair and nuanced assessment.

So back to this issue of how we drummers are spoken about. I'm going to bet that it hasn't been very long since you last had to grit your teeth while someone told a stale old "drummer joke." While this may not rank as an impeachable offense, it does, as Bruford says, suggest larger problems, namely that even after the remarkable intellectual, physical, and creative feats of musicians like Chris Dave, Vinnie Colaiuta, Antonio Sanchez, and, for sure, Bill Bruford himself, old biases and ignorant attitudes remain, and diminish our perceived value.

No doubt, we must be careful not to wholly avoid certain words at the expense of accurate reportage. Sometimes there's no getting around saying that a particular drummer is truly slamming, banging, or pounding the instrument. But perhaps it's more important than ever to try to use more precise language and not just the words that will garner the most likes on Facebook. Because if we don't treat ourselves like the true artists that we are, we have no right to expect anything different from others.

Adam Budofsky

Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director



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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Patrick Berkery, Stephen Bidwell, David Ciauro, Bob Girouard, Mike Haid, John Martinez, Rick Mattingly, Ben Meyer, Ken Micallef, Jeff Potter, Will Romano, Bernie Schallehn, Ilya Stenkovsky, Robin Tolleson, Lauren Vogel Weiss, Paul Wells.

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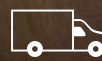
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How Do You Develop a Unique Voice on the Drums?



Setup: Billy Martin
Photo by Paul La Raia

Developing your own voice on the kit is a constant endeavor. Considering varied musical influences, teacher feedback, and an abundance of available educational material—among other factors—the question arises of how best to sit down in the shed and focus on your personal sound. We recently asked our readers and social media followers what they do to develop their own voice on the drums. Here are some of their responses.

The ultimate you'll ever be in anything is yourself, so the sooner you realize this, the less frightened you'll be with your own self. Setting up the drums with any combination of sounds you desire and playing in any manner is as easy as wearing any combination of clothes that appeals to you. The only hard part in the process of expressing yourself through an instrument and realizing your individuality is [focusing on] remembering yourself. We tend to forget to express ourselves because of all the dos and don'ts and the constant need to fulfill others' needs—although those factors are a major part of the business, where it's not all about you and your personal preferences.

But I believe you can get a much clearer picture of your signature identity through

deep and meditative solitary practice. Being able to stay in that zone while interacting with others is a whole different story, which you'll ultimately need to experience and practice to be able to sustain the joyous experience of being yourself. On a collective scale, when you're interacting with other musicians, the singular "you" will change to a plural "you," which is being expressed through a single song or piece. And that's the whole beauty of it: becoming one with yourself to become one with everyone and everything around you.

Arash Pajand Moghaddam

Listen to everything. You can never be exposed to too much. If you play rock, listen to jazz, funk, and metal. You might hear something that inspires a different feel or technique. Many people have told me that it was great hearing a rock drummer playing blast beats.

Cody West

Jam with every type of player possible, and don't get stuck in a hole by playing with the same people over and over. Experimentation and exploration fuel creativity, and creativity is the key ingredient to finding your own sound.

Spencer Westphalen

Listen, listen, listen. Then just be you. Never be afraid to try something, but always try to understand when it doesn't work and be willing to try something else until you find what does work.

Joshua Knoles

Practice and explore your own way, and your personality will shine through. If you're following someone else's footsteps verbatim, you'll always be compared to them. Take the extra steps when learning history, which is a necessary step. But don't repeat—progress!

Amrit Mahi

Listen to tons of music from all eras, and play a lot of drums in between exercises. It's also very important to be aware of what you play, how you play it, and why, so you can reflect and reinvent yourself. Record and criticize yourself post-practice or post-gig, and request and welcome criticism from others.

Daniel Yahalom

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

Dropped Beats

In the story on the Psychedelic Furs' Paul Garisto in the December issue of *Modern Drummer*, we incorrectly stated the years that he was initially in the band. Garisto joined the Furs in December of 1983, stayed until the beginning of 1988, and rejoined in 2009. He also didn't record "All That Money Wants," which was tracked by Vince Ely.

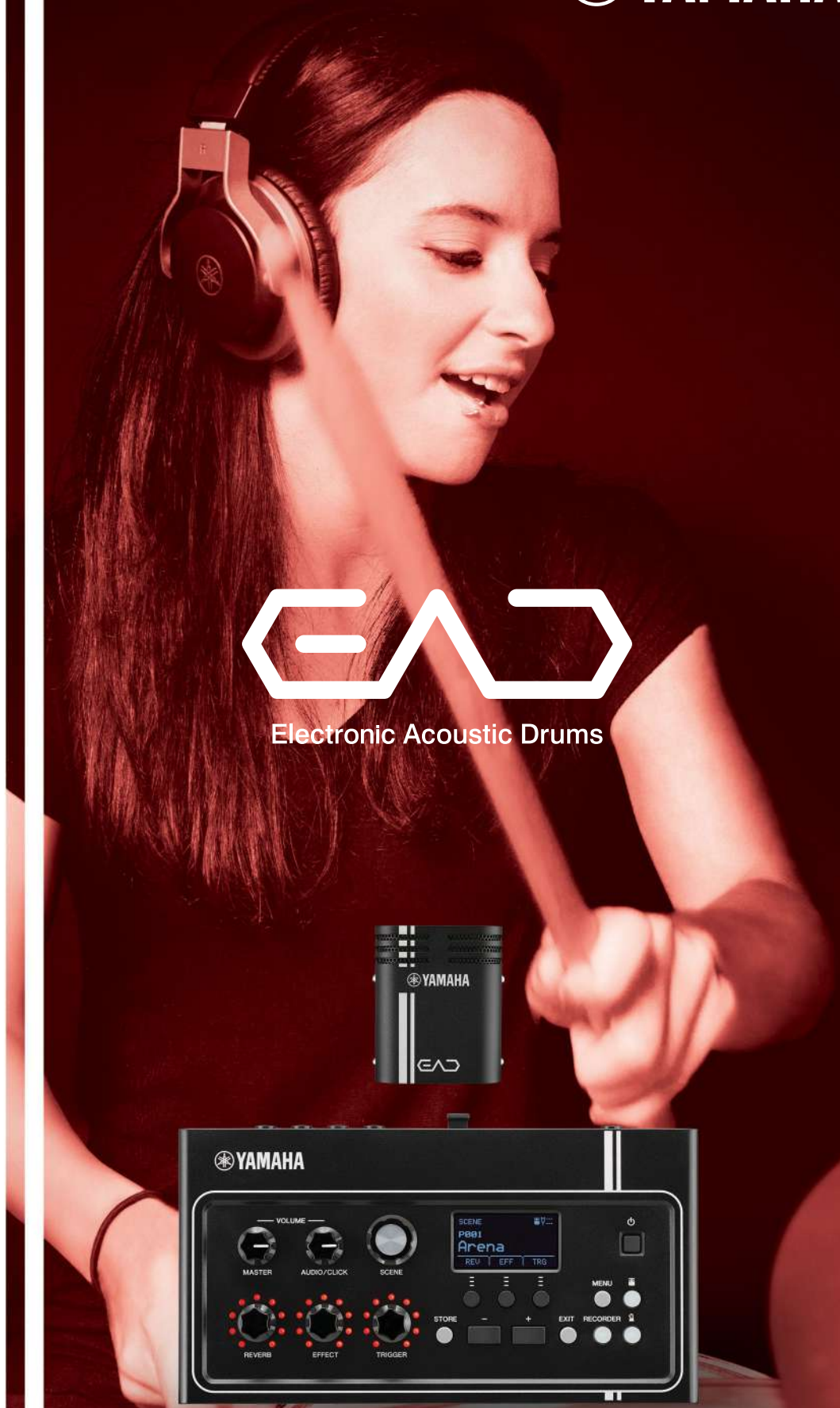


The photo that accompanied the story on Chad Sexton of 311 in the January 2018 issue of *MD* was in fact a shot of singer Nick Hexum, who performs a percussion jam with Sexton at the end of 311 concerts. Here is the photo that should have run.

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OUT NOW

Ian Chang on Son Lux's *Brighter Wounds*

A sharp drummer's forward-thinking electronic concepts and downright dirty acoustic grooves shine on the trio's latest release.



On February 9, the post-rock, electronic-infused genre blenders Son Lux released their fifth album, *Brighter Wounds*. Throughout the effort, vocalist and composer Ryan Lott's soft, gorgeous melodies grace dense electronic landscapes paved by Lott, guitarist Rafiq Bhatia, and drummer Ian Chang. Over the course of the album, Chang packs sample-driven songs with plenty of brilliant moments from behind the kit.

On "The Fool You Need," the drummer plays a wild and dirty kick-snare-hat feel that flirts with a straight-16th groove à la Nate Wood's playing on Kneebody's "No Thank You Mr. West" or Marcus Gilmore on Vijay Iyer's "Break Stuff." "The Fool You Need" was built around a beat that's quantized to septuplets with moments that snap to a regular 16th-note grid," Chang explains. "That might sound complicated, but it's entirely in 4/4 and has a strong backbeat, so the complexity of it is relatively subtle, which I love."

A rolling floor tom pattern simmers beneath "Surrounded," before the track concludes with a massive drum breakdown, a part that Chang says developed in the studio. "All the drumming on that song, including the breakdown," he explains, "is actually rearranged and stitched together from one drum improvisation tracked to a click. As much as I'd love to tell you that I played that breakdown exactly as it is on the recording, I won't lie. Ryan and Rafiq really produced the heck out of that part."

As opposed to what could be considered a conventional writing process, Son Lux begins by searching for interesting samples first. "To build a unique sonic palette for the album," Chang says, "we started by recording inspiring musicians. We're usually looking for sounds to sample or redesign, so the sessions consist of improvisations or directed experiments. This process really puts a focus on the sonic characteristic of what we're making. Ryan said it's like designing a house around a striking piece of furniture, rather than picking furniture to match the house."

On *Brighter Wounds*, and on his own solo EP, *Spiritual Leader*, Chang employs multiple techniques to replicate electronic sounds on an acoustic setup. "One trick that I use to get a fat 'splat' snare sound is to cut out the center of a drumhead and layer it on top of the drum," he says. "This dampens the head and lowers the fundamental pitch. Sometimes you can even make the drum resonate in a way that makes the snares rattle aggressively, emulating a gated white noise. I also like to scrape the snares to create a white noise, almost like a reversed snare. It's especially effective if you do this leading into an accented hit. I do this once on the Son Lux song 'Labor.' But it's all about exploring the language and timbres of electronic music through touch and playing."

Willie Rose

With Son Lux, Ian Chang plays C&C drums, Istanbul Agop cymbals, Sunhouse Sensory Percussion, and a Roland SPD-SX.

More New Releases

Lewis Porter Beauty & Mystery (Terri Lyne Carrington) /// **Professor and the Madman** Disintegrate Me (Rat Scabies) /// **The Doors** Live at the Isle of Wight 1970 (John Densmore) /// **Senses Fail** If There Is Light, It Will Find You (Chris Hornbrook) /// **Franz Ferdinand** Always Ascending (Paul Thomson) /// **Joan as Police Woman** Damned Devotion (Parker Kindred) /// **The Wombats** Beautiful People Will Ruin Your Life (Dan Haggis)

ON TOUR



David Phillips

Karl Brazil With James Blunt

The U.K. touring and studio vet flawlessly supports the pop singer-songwriter's flowing and dynamic set with ease on an international arena tour.

At a performance at Brooklyn's Barclays Center this past fall, Karl Brazil confidently slammed home the pop mainstay James Blunt's set while trading enthusiastic smiles with the close-knit backing band. Brazil maintained a serene yet jubilant demeanor while dressing Blunt's material with the powerful left-hand stickings and fills that define much of the drummer's aesthetic. As he continues on Blunt's worldwide trek through the majority of 2018, Brazil explains to *MD* how he developed his calm nature on stage over the past fifteen years in the singer's backing band.

"I think that mindset comes with experience," Brazil says. "We've done a lot of touring together, and even though James is a well-established artist, we share the same dressing room and tour bus. So we're very comfortable as friends and people, and everyone's confident at what they do. We also set up in a close space together, no matter how big the gig is. James doesn't have any drums in his wedges. He just has his vocals and guitar, because he's hearing enough acoustically on stage. So we're all listening to each other quite a lot."

Brazil plays Gretsch drums, Sabian cymbals, LP percussion, and Roland electronic drums and uses Remo drumheads, Vic Firth sticks, and DW hardware.

When he's not with Blunt, Brazil keeps a busy schedule touring with the pop star Robbie Williams while filling in off days with session dates. "I finished Robbie Williams' stadium tour last year," Brazil says, "and that's all to a click, because we're synced up to pyrotechnics and backing tracks. So James' gig is very different. There's no in-ears or click tracks. It's very dynamic, and you can hear everything that's going on. But that's the great thing about the two main live gigs I do. Robbie's on a click, and even with that, the click moves. And when you play with James, it's a bit like swimming with goggles on underwater. When you take them off and come out of the water, it's like two different worlds. But I'm lucky enough to experience both of them."

While growing up in Birmingham, England, Brazil surrounded himself with many of the city's established musicians. Eventually, though, the drummer realized he needed to branch out. "I had to look out for auditions and things happening in London," he says. "The only thing that will get you out there is to play different gigs and throw yourself into auditions. And auditions are quite a tough process, especially if you put the effort in, travel there, and don't get the gig. When you come out, you feel a bit deflated. But you have to remember that if you don't get the gig, you've still met people and made your mark. If you weren't right for one reason, you might be right for something else. You don't know what you're giving them."

"There's no real golden strategy to getting gigs," Brazil adds. "I think if you're a good player, a half-decent person, and a professional, and you work hard at being good at what you do, everyone gets an opportunity. It's what you do with that opportunity from there on." **Willie Rose**

Also on the Road

Eric Kretz with Stone Temple Pilots /// **Chris Sharrock** with Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds /// **Joe Bergamini** with the Doo-Wop Project /// **Eloy Casagrande** with Sepultura /// **Zach Simmons** with Goatwhore /// **Chris Ulsh** with Power Trip /// **Brian Chippendale** with Lightning Bolt /// **Glen Sobel** with Alice Cooper

NEWS

Jazz Education Network Names Bobby Sanabria 2018 Recipient of LeJENDs of Latin Jazz Award

Bandleader, drummer/percussionist, educator, and seven-time Grammy nominee Bobby Sanabria has been named the 2018 recipient of the Jazz Education Network's LeJENDs of Latin Jazz award. The honor was presented to Sanabria by JEN president Caleb Chapman during the organization's ninth-annual conference in Dallas this past January. Established in 2014 by JEN's board of directors, the award is bestowed upon outstanding performers and educators who promote jazz in all formats, encourage and inspire musicians and teachers, and demonstrate a passion for jazz, among other criteria.

"I'm honored to have been chosen for this special recognition from my peers for my work as a musician, performer, educator, and representative of the Latin jazz community," Sanabria said in a statement. "Through these continued efforts, the genre's legacy will continue to be documented and recognized, and it will inspire today's and tomorrow's up-and-coming artists and educators."



Hal Blaine, Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, and Roger Taylor Among 2018 Recording Academy Lifetime Achievement Honorees

The Recording Academy recently announced its 2018 Special Merit Awards recipients. Among this year's Lifetime Achievement Award honorees are studio legend and Wrecking Crew drummer Hal Blaine, funk pioneer Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste of the Meters, and Roger Taylor of the iconic rock band Queen. A special presentation ceremony and concert celebrating the honorees will be held this coming spring.

"This year's Special Merit Award recipients are a prestigious group of diverse and influential creators who have crafted or contributed to some of the most distinctive recordings in music history," said Neil Portnow, president and CEO of the Recording Academy. "These

exceptionally inspiring figures are being honored as legendary performers, creative architects, and technical visionaries. Their outstanding accomplishments and passion for their craft have created a timeless legacy."

The Lifetime Achievement Award celebrates performers who have made outstanding contributions of artistic significance to the field of recording, and the Recording Academy's National Board of Trustees determines the honorees. Other recipients of this year's award include Neil Diamond, Emmylou Harris, Louis Jordan, and Tina Turner.

Florian Alexandru-Zorn Launches International Version of OnlineLessons.tv

Drummer, educator, and author Florian Alexandru-Zorn recently announced the launch of an English version of OnlineLessons.tv, a music education resource that the drummer founded in 2012. The site features more than a hundred teachers and dozens of courses from international drummers.

For €10 a month, students gain full access to the site's archive and at least two more courses per month from top international drummers such as Ray Luzier, Todd Sucherman, Jost Nickel, Will Kennedy, George Kollias, Dennis Chambers, John "JR" Robinson, Pete Lockett, Martin Verdonk, Hannes Grossmann, Keith Carlock, Ash Soan, Brian Frasier-Moore, Karl Brazil, and Alexandru-Zorn, among others. Alexandru-Zorn, who also teaches at the Popakademie Baden-Württemberg University in Mannheim, Germany, worked out each course in detail with the teaching artists. For more info, head to onlinelessons.tv.



Clem Burke (Blondie) has joined the **Protection Racket** family of artists.

Who's Playing What



Michael McIntosh (educator, clinician) has joined the **Promark** artist roster.

Sham Hinchev



Brad Wilk of Prophets of Rage

Touring with an act that's a household name comes with its perks, not the least of which is playing your own kit every night. Brad Wilk's needs on the road with Prophets of Rage—the supergroup composed of members of Rage Against the Machine, Public Enemy, and Cypress Hill—are decidedly simple, though the exact gear he'll use each night depends upon his mood.

"On the road," Wilk tells *MD* during Prophets' late-2017 run, "I use Gretsch drums, but I switch drums out. I use 22" and 24" kicks with both shorter and longer depths. I actually switch stuff out between three different kits, including a yellow Broadcaster kit with this super-low 24" kick that I like a lot. I used to do the same thing when Rage Against the Machine got back together. It's just about how I'm feeling. I'll usually have a kit to warm up with, and sometimes I'll switch out between them. I just like to mix it up. My rack toms vary between a 12" and a 13". My floor tom is a 16", and I've been using a Tama Bell Brass snare since around 2000—it's my go-to drum live."

Wilk's cymbals need to stand up to considerable abuse. "I'm using Paiste cymbals," Brad says, "and I'm working with them right now on a new ride and a couple of crash prototypes. I've been using those for about a year now. I was using 2002s, but since I play so hard live—I come down *really* hard on my crashes, especially the one that's on my left—I was constantly breaking cymbals. We were trying to find something that was closer to the Paiste Signature series, which they discontinued."

When asked which pieces of touring gear he finds absolutely

essential, Wilk answers simply, "A drum throne—I need a place to sit! I kind of vary my throne height, because if you don't, your back starts hurting. I used to sit super-low, then I went up kind of high, and now I'm back to the middle. I think it's good to keep movement in your setup. If you think of your body as a machine and you're making a groove in only one area for a long time, you're going to wear that out. If you move around a bit, it might give your body a little more longevity."

To help battle the unfortunate realities of drumming professionally for nearly thirty years, Wilk says, "There's nothing punk about this, but I really love having a yoga mat. If I can get a mat and do some serious stretching before a show, that can be life changing for me. It can make you really enjoy a show and not have to worry about aches and pains. I also have to have my James Brown CDs. I play along to James Brown before every show, ever since the Rage days. It's just something that I always have to have."

On the health front, Wilk contends with more than stiff joints and sore muscles. "I'm a type 1 diabetic," he shares, "so another thing that's essential to me is always having juice around. I just try to take care of myself [in general]. It can be really challenging being on the road and being diabetic."

Ben Meyer

In addition to his Gretsch drums and Paiste cymbals, Wilk uses DW pedals and hardware, Vic Firth sticks, and Remo heads.



Eitan Miskovich

Sabian

FRX Series Cymbals

Pro-quality, b20-bronze cymbals designed for lower-volume situations.



One of the greatest challenges for drummers working in smaller rooms and on quieter gigs is figuring out how to keep the volume under control while still delivering a powerful, intense performance. The cymbals are often the most difficult pieces of the kit to contain. Part of the burden falls on us; we need to develop a nimble and sensitive touch that can quickly switch from full strokes on the drums to light flicks on the cymbals. But the instruments themselves carry part of the blame.

Most cymbals are designed to project a full spectrum of frequencies that becomes more expansive and washy as the dynamics increase. The problem is that when playing in quieter situations, the cymbals often overpower the music or don't open up fully. Sabian has sought to solve that issue with the new FRX (Frequency Reduction) series cymbals, which feature bands of small holes that are strategically placed to remove overtones, soften the attack, and quicken the decay. We were sent a complete set of these unique specialty cymbals to review, which included 16", 17", and 18" crashes; 20" and 21" rides; and 14" hi-hats.

Crashes

All FRX cymbals have a traditional finish and feature AAX/HHX-style raw bells with finely lathed, subtly hammered bows. The 16", 17", and 18" crashes are paper-thin; they flex very easily with the hands. The 17" and 18" models have eight bands of small holes that start about

a third of the way up the bell and extend about 1.5" into the bow. The 16" has seven bands of holes spaced within a similar pattern.

When compared to similarly sized crashes without holes, the FRX models had a comparable bright-yet-warm tone with a quick, breathy attack and shimmery sustain. However, they felt a lot softer, they decayed a bit faster, and they were devoid of muddy midrange overtones. The holes in the bell gave it a softer, integrated tone.

In the studio, the FRX didn't sound radically different from other paper-thin crashes, other than having a more contained and focused tone. I did notice that there was less cymbal bleed into the drum and room mics, which allowed for a tighter and punchier mix.

When I used the FRX crashes with a band, the differences were much more significant. The attack was very soft, the decay was quick, and the perceived volume was much lower. Think of the difference between the sound of hitting a crash with no hearing protection versus the quieter and less harsh experience you have when wearing high-quality earplugs. These are some of the most ear-friendly crashes I've played that also produce a full, professional-grade sound.

Rides

The 20" and 21" FRX rides have eight bands of holes that extend 1.5" over the transition from the bell to the bow, and there's a second three-band ring of holes about 2" from the edge. These are a bit firmer than the crashes, but they still have some flex. Although



there's no indication of their weight class, I'd characterize them as medium-thin rides.

Compared to some lighter b20 rides I typically use when I want a warm but clean and shimmering sound, the FRX rides produced fewer low overtones, and the sustain—albeit smooth and balanced—decayed more rapidly. These are fairly washy rides, and the bell sounds are soft and controlled. But the wash shut down quickly as my playing dynamic decreased, producing a similar tight sustain to that of a flat ride.

Lighter strokes elicited clean and clear articulation, while harder strokes brought out some crash-like overtones. These rides have a volume ceiling, which makes them a great choice for quieter gigs where you want to be able to play at a comfortable level without feeling dynamically restrained.

Hi-Hats

The 14" FRX hi-hats are the least processed of the series. They feature a light top cymbal with a single band of holes at the base of the bell and a medium-weight bottom with no holes. These hi-hats are designed to deliver clean, crisp articulation. I felt they had an interesting mix of the breathy, warm tone of thin hi-hats and the chunky, tight attack of modern cymbals.

Played solo, the FRX hi-hats didn't sound too different from typical all-purpose models. Within the context of a band, the dynamic range was noticeably more compressed. Closed sounds were sharp yet slightly trashy, and open tones were bright but focused. They didn't roar too loudly when played partially open, and the foot chick was clear. Like the crashes, these FRX hi-hats reminded me of the slightly muted timbres you experience when wearing pro-quality headphones or earplugs.

If you notice people wincing every time you hit a crash, ride bell, or open hi-hat, you might want to give this new frequency-reduced FRX series a try. The cymbals sound clean, warm, and expressive, and they won't hurt anyone's ears when you really lay into them. That's a win-win in my book.

Michael Dawson



Canopus

6x10 and 10x14 Harvey Mason Signature Snares

A duo of top-shelf wood-shell drums to fill out the upper and lower registers of the sonic spectrum.

Canopus artist Harvey Mason is one of the most influential and in-demand drummers of the past fifty years. His early work with Herbie Hancock and the Headhunters set the template for crossover jazz/funk/fusion drumming, and his contemporary smooth-jazz quartet Fourplay has been one of the premier ensembles of the genre since its formation in 1991. Mason also boasts an extensive list of recording credits that range from orchestral music to hip-hop and rock. Canopus released the drummer's workhorse 5.5x14 walnut/birch drum back in 2015, and this year the company is expanding Mason's signature snare palette to include a tiny 6x10 stave walnut and a mammoth 10x14 ash/poplar. We were sent both to review, so let's check them out.

6x10 Stave Walnut

Mason's primary 5.5x14 signature snare was designed to deliver the dry, controlled sound the drummer often employs. That quick, focused tone is taken to another level with this 6x10 stave-walnut auxiliary snare. The shell is very thick (11.5mm), and the bearing edges are sharp. Combining those features with the small dimensions creates a tight, dense-sounding drum that personifies the word "pop." The darker character of the walnut adds to the drum's rich and musical tone. You can get a high-pitched electronica-type vibe by cranking the batter head, but I found that this drum had the most idiosyncratic voice when pitched in the low and medium registers. Tuned lower, there was an intriguing mix of chesty smack and laser-focused tone that sounded thick but didn't take up too much space in the mix. If you play a lot of hip-hop or



6x10



10x14

other genres that require a contained, sample-like snare tone that's simultaneously tight and deep, this drum is exemplary.

10x14 Ash/Poplar

On the opposite side of the spectrum sits Mason's 10x14 ash/poplar snare. This drum has a 5.5mm ply shell with round bearing edges, so it's designed to deliver warm, woody tones. It can be tuned low for supreme fatness or tightened higher for an old-school marching drum vibe. The snare response remained crisp and snappy at all tunings, and rimshots had a sharp, contemporary bite. Given its depth, I was surprised by how normal

this drum sounded when tuned medium and higher. But it was the 10x14's extended lower register that gave it an edge on almost any conventionally sized drum. When I tensioned the batter head just above slack and applied a 1" muffling gel, the extra-deep ash/poplar shell produced some of the fattest, doughiest backbeats I've ever heard. You won't need to rely on drum machine samples to achieve larger-than-life tones if you have this bad boy at your disposal.

Michael Dawson



Roland

SPD::ONE Electro, Percussion, and WAV Pads

Simple, single-trigger pads with just enough options to keep things interesting.

Roland established itself as the premier manufacturer of multipad electronics with the introduction of the Octapad Pad-8 MIDI controller in 1985. Additional products, like 2003's SPD-5 and 2011's souped-up SPD-SX sampling pads, gave drummers nearly limitless options for uploading and triggering original loops, one-shot samples, and playback tracks from pads and external triggers.

To serve those with simpler needs, limited space, and tighter budgets, the company recently developed the SPD::ONE series, which comprises four compact single-trigger pads with limited but purposeful functionality. The line includes the snare-centric Electro, the auxiliary instrument-focused Percussion, the bass drum and percussion-filled Kick, and the WAV, which has twelve empty memory locations that can each hold up to three layers of original 44.1k/16-bit audio files and an accompanying click track. The Electro, Percussion, and Kick pads list for \$249, while the WAV costs a bit more (\$299). We got our hands on the Electro, Percussion, and WAV to review.

Common Traits

All SPD::ONE pads have the same physical traits. They measure roughly 5.5"x6.5"x2.25", with a 4"x5" rubber playing surface and a control panel that includes four parameter-adjustment knobs.

The Electro and Percussion pads have knobs for changing sounds (1–12), tuning (+/- twelve semitones), effects (delay time or reverb amount), and master volume. Each preset includes two sounds, which are toggled via a small "Inst Variation" button located between the volume and effects knobs. The back panels of these two pads have a stereo headphone output, a mono master output, an on/off switch, and an AC power input (adapter not included).

The WAV pad has knobs for the memory slots (1–12), the headphone output, the mix balance between the click and playback WAV files, and the master volume. The small button on this pad is labeled "All Sound Off," and pressing it mutes whatever WAV files are playing at that moment. The back panel has stereo headphone and master outputs.

All three SPD::ONE pads can operate on battery power (four AA batteries are included), and they include a removable metal mounting bracket for affixing the pad to any straight rod up to .5". The side panel features sensitivity and threshold adjustment knobs and a micro-B USB input (cable not included).

Electro

The teal-cased Electro SPD::ONE is filled with mostly snare-type sounds. There are six different claps, eight snares, two rimclicks, two shakers, two hi-hats, and a pair of effects hits (sub bass and air horn). The twelfth slot is customizable, so you can drop in your own samples by connecting the pad to a computer via a micro-B USB cable. If you're looking to add some classic Roland electronic

snares, claps, and snaps to your acoustic kit, this is the one to get. The tuning feature allows you to manipulate the samples up to an octave higher or lower than the original sample. This provided plenty of options for making incremental changes or to pitch the samples super-high or low to achieve more extreme results. I also discovered some unique melodic capabilities by tweaking the tuning knob as I played the pad. The effects are fairly limited; turning the FX knob to the left adds reverb, and turning the knob right increases delay time and pitch modulation. You can't blend the reverb and delay, but the effects sounded nice and provided just enough ambience and texture to inspire some spacy, dub-type grooves.

Percussion

If you're looking to add more organic sounds to your setup, the SPD::ONE Percussion pad includes tambourine, jingle bells, shaker, guiro, cowbell, hi-hat, ride, crash, China, snare, rimclick, conga, bongo, timbale, vibraslap, windchimes, triangle, gong, and timpani samples. Like the Electro pad, the twelfth preset is user-defined, so you can import custom WAV files to that slot. The effects and tuning functions are the same as they are on the Electro model.

While I found the Electro pad to be more inspiring when playing groove-based music, the Percussion pad provides more versatility for situations requiring sound effects and auxiliary instruments. The tambourine, jingle bells, guiro, gong, triangle, windchimes, and vibraslap sound very realistic, while the drums and cymbals have a more one-dimensional flavor that works best when playing electronic-based pop and dance music. Again, I found some inspiring textures when I increased the effects level and improvised melodies using the tuning knob. The jingle bell and triangle presets were my favorite sounds to manipulate in this way.

WAV

If you need more flexibility beyond a single customizable preset, then the red-cased WAV pad could be a good option. There are twelve blank presets, and into each you can layer up to three separate audio files. Those three files can be configured to play every time the pad is struck or only when the pad is played within predetermined dynamic ranges. Depending on how the WAV files are named, the pad can treat them as continuous one-shots (i.e., repeated strikes layered on top of one another) or monophonic one-shots (where successive strikes mute the previously triggered samples). For longer phrases, such as backing tracks or drum loops, you can configure the files so that the initial strike starts the sample and a second strike stops it. (The WAV Pad contains the same 4GB internal memory as the SPD-SX.)

Within each of the twelve preset folders, which are accessed when you connect the pad to your computer, are two subfolders. The one labeled Master is where you drop the audio files you



Although not included in this review, the SPD::ONE Kick comes with twenty-two bass drum and percussion sounds, and it includes reverb and distortion effects. Original audio can be imported as well.

want to trigger. The folder labeled Click is where you can drop a WAV file of a click track that's time-aligned to the audio you want to trigger. The click track will start playback when the pad is struck, but it will only be sent to the headphones output. This is a great feature for drummers looking to lock in with ambient samples, abstract loops, or full backing tracks with periods of silence in

the audio. As long as your set list doesn't have more than twelve songs that require loops or backing tracks, you could likely use the super-simple SPD::ONE WAV for a playback rig rather than a more expensive and extensive laptop- or tablet-based system. I'll take it!
Michael Dawson

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Doc Sweeney Blue Tiger Drumset

Steam-bent ash shells with a striking finish to match their big, biting tones.

San Diego-based Doc Sweeney Drums was created by three lifelong friends—namesake Patrick J. Sweeney, graphic artist Jeff MacFarlane, and builder Steve Stecher—with a mission to handcraft one-of-a-kind instruments from the finest materials possible.

All Doc Sweeney drums are made from premium domestic or exotic timbers, with either stave or steam-bent shells. The shells are CNC-milled, and the lugs are a proprietary design utilizing aircraft-grade aluminum with stainless-steel tubes and fasteners. Custom inlays, wood or metal hoops, and nearly limitless hand-rubbed oil finishes are offered. The kit we have for review, the Blue Tiger, is made from steam-bent tiger ash and has a blue-dye finish with twelve coats of hand-rubbed oil.

The Specs

This visually stunning drumset includes a 16x22 bass drum, 9x13 and 16x16 toms, and a 6.5x14 snare. The steam-bent shells are .3125" thick with matching tiger ash reinforcement hoops. The bearing edges are cut to forty-five degrees with a rounded back cut. The darker blue bass drum hoops are made from curly maple.

For the hardware, Doc Sweeney included rigid S-Hoops on the toms and snare. These rims have a smooth, flat inward flange that thickens up the sound of rimshots and rimclicks and provides more tuning stability. Sweeney's lugs are made from 6061 aircraft-grade aluminum and feature 303 stainless-steel tubes and fasteners. The snare comes with a Trick GS007 three-position throw-off.

The drumheads are Aquarian. The snare had a Texture Coated Power Dot batter and Classic Clear bottom. The toms had Response 2 Coated batters and Classic Clear bottoms, and the bass drum featured a Super-Kick II batter and a custom-painted white front.

These are big, beefy drums with a considerable amount of heft. The build quality is exceptional, and the finish has a rich, watery appearance that accentuates the gorgeous grain of the ash.



The Sound

Whether tuned high, medium, or low, these drums produce huge, fat tones with a punchy attack, deep sustain, and smooth decay. The coated 2-ply batter heads and dense S-Hoops removed just enough high overtones from the toms to eliminate the need for muffling. The kick had plenty of punch, even with a solid front head. Again, no muffling was required, thanks to Sweeney's choice of a 2-ply, pre-muffled batter head.

The snare had exceptional sensitivity at all dynamics, as well as a thick, meaty attack. The



Power Dot focused the tone a bit while allowing some high overtones to ring through at tighter tunings. The only time I felt the need to muffle this drum was at very low tunings, but all that was required was a 1" gel to achieve a deep, focused punch.

Tuning these drums was a breeze. I simply tensioned the rods by feel evenly, and the tones were instantly pure



and balanced. Compared to similarly sized plywood drums, this Doc Sweeney kit had a more robust tone with much more volume potential. They didn't choke under high impact, yet they spoke with a full voice at low dynamics. Live drummers who need the most projection possible will love how easily these drums fill a room, while studio drummers and engineers will appreciate their mix-ready tones with a near-perfect balance of clean attack, rich tone,

and smooth decay.

This particular custom drumset lists for \$5,250. But check out docsweeneydrums.com for details on all the options for building your own dream kit. The website also features the latest one-off concoctions, which are on display in the flesh at the company's San Diego showroom, Doc's Drum Shop.

Michael Dawson



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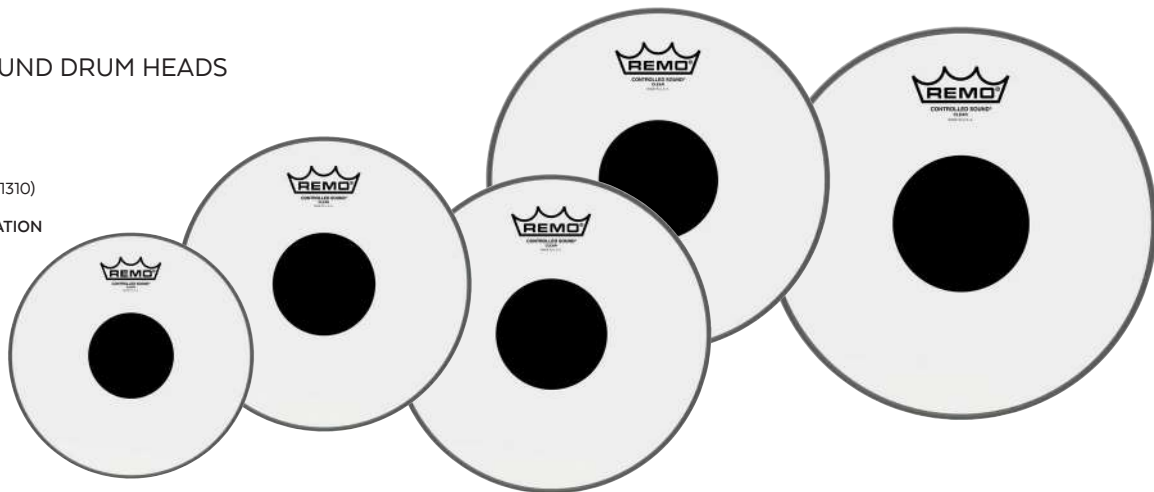


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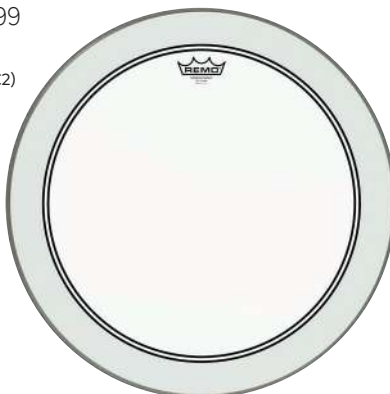
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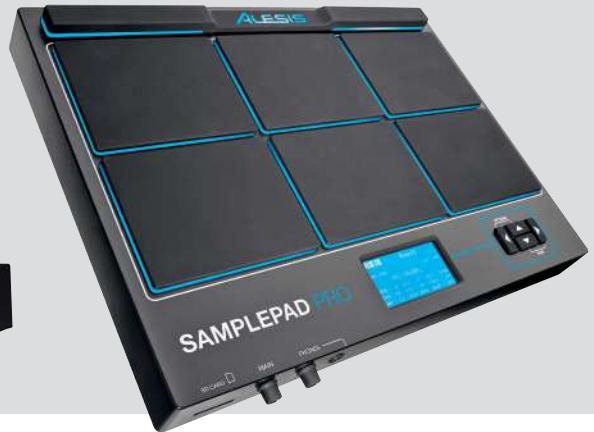
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Richard Danielson of Vintage Trouble

Adapting to Change

Since forming in Hollywood, California, in 2010, Vintage Trouble, featuring charismatic singer Ty Taylor, guitarist Nalle Colt, bassist Rick Barrio Dill, and drummer Richard Danielson, has released two albums—2011's *The Bomb Shelter Sessions* and 2015's *1 Hopeful Rd.*—and an EP, 2014's *The Swing House Acoustic Sessions*. The retro-leaning group is known for its dynamic, high-energy live shows, a reputation solidified during world tours opening for acts like Brian May, Bon Jovi, the Who, Dave Matthews Band, AC/DC, Lenny Kravitz, and the Rolling Stones. Further notoriety came via a 2014 Honda Civic TV commercial featuring the band performing its song "Today Is Pretty Great."

"The thing that connected me the most with Richard is how we both allow our bodies to be the voice for our music," Taylor tells *Modern Drummer*. "When you watch Richard play, you [know] that his music comes from a deep

place within his soul, and you see it extend through his limbs. His drumming is not just in his head. So listeners and viewers are well aware that this is a drummer who is a feeler first and a musician second. And I think that's the way it should be."

MD caught up with Danielson while the band was in the studio working on its third album, which was untitled as of press time. The drummer explains that the plan is to release a few songs a month until the full album is complete. Though in the past they were known for tracking live together in the studio, this time around the players challenged themselves by incorporating more modern recording techniques, in an effort to expand their sound. Later in our interview Danielson offers some honest assessments about how that worked out for him personally. But first we have him look back to the beginning of his drumming life and talk about his early influences.

by Billy Amendola

Richard: I've always struggled with the influence question, because it's all over the map for me. Rock was king when I was cutting my teeth—John Bonham, Alex Van Halen, Ginger Baker, and Keith Moon. But I also dug big band stuff like Louie Bellson and Gene Krupa. Steve Smith of Journey was one of the few guys who could swing jazz but then play rock with a heavy hand—and with the creativity of unique stickings. Gadd's stickings were cool too, and his pocket was insane.

Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl taught me to feel over the barline. And I went through a progressive phase—Neil Peart, of course. Alan White and Bill Bruford of Yes consumed me for a spell. I loved all sorts of music, so I'd pick up on drummers just by digging the bands they were in—for example, Nick Mason with Pink Floyd, Roger Taylor with Queen, Ringo with the Beatles, Charlie Watts with the Stones.

MD: Did you ever take drum lessons?

Richard: I was never a schooled player; I

didn't take lessons or study guys in depth. I could read from being in school band, though, and I'd pick up on stuff through the *Modern Drummer* magazine lessons—there were so many good ones—or an occasional book like Carmine Appice's *Realistic Rock*. But [mostly] I'd put on records and just lose myself in the music. That's what I was searching for more than the [academic] side of things. But now I feel I missed out on that, so I've actually started a stricter, more formal practice routine.

MD: How did you hook up with Vintage Trouble?

Richard: I'd taken some time off for quite a long spell after the Seattle invasion basically killed the L.A. scene overnight. I was doing okay with a band called the Poorboys. We sounded nothing like many of the L.A. bands at the time, so we didn't get washed away like the vast majority of them. But the record company seemed confused as to the direction of the music business at the time, and stopped showing us love.

Los Angeles, which was once the musical capital of the world, became stagnant in many ways. I'd put every ounce of energy into my craft, from the time I'd gotten my first set of drums, woodshedded, moved to L.A.—sleeping in my car at times—finding success, and then having bands fold in and out of record deals.

That was 1995. Skipping ahead to 2010, I'd been itching to get back to my instrument, and had been playing with various people in casual settings. I live in Laurel Canyon, which has a rich musical history, and I eventually clued in to some jam sessions there and met Ty Taylor. We were so clued in to each other; our energies aligned in a way that continues to fuel us today. A few months later when his band was disbanding and he was starting something fresh, he called me to see if I'd like to come down to the studio that evening and record a song.

The lesson for me is that I said yes. I could have said no for a number of reasons—



excuses like “I’m busy,” or whatever people say to get out of things when they’re being lazy or noncommittal. But because I said yes that day, I’ve had a great rebirth of my musical career. I’ve taken that lesson of “yes” with me. When you say no to things, all potential stops cold. But a yes can open one up to endless possibilities.

MD: Tell us about the recording process for your new album.

Richard: This one is a bit different in terms of how we’re doing it. We’re a band that’s always recorded live in the studio, doing full takes. So if someone made a mistake, the whole band would have to go back and play it again. It’s how a lot of our heroes recorded. We owned it and we lived by it. But in some ways we died by it. It painted us into a corner in terms of both editing and sonics. It was hard, if not impossible, to isolate and edit individual instruments, because there was a lot of bleed. But it was the charm of our early work. We toured for five years on our debut album, *The Bomb*

Shelter Sessions, so it was working. However, being a couple records in now, we’re changing it up—completely.

MD: How so?

Richard: First of all, we’re clicking *everything*, and this has been my biggest challenge. Not so much the technical side of it. I’ve actually come to enjoy playing to a click. But I’ve really had to adjust my attitude about it. It’s always been my feeling that a verse can sit a bit, a chorus can push, and an outro can get a little more excitable. I try to accomplish this within the parameters of the click, but then the producer will just quantize it all anyway. I’d sit in the back, and at first my spirit began to fade a bit. I’ve bitched and moaned plenty, believe me. But I’ve realized that I’m part of a team that’s working at creating a bigger picture. I have to respect that—and I do.

But, clicks aside, we’re also isolating the instruments now and recording them individually. This is allowing us to be more sonically appealing, and we’re able to

construct the songs rather than just hash them out in a fit of live abandon. I’ll admit that I do miss playing together, and the little magic moments that happen when guys are listening and reacting. But, again, we’re trying something that’s new for us as a band. And look, I understand that this is how the majority of music is recorded today—and has been for a long time. I’m just old-school.

I love this band. And I’m excited about the progress we’ve made. I hope our diehard fans allow us to change it up a bit, but in theory we should be gaining a bunch of new ones as well. I’m truly blessed to be able to play drums and experience the world in the way that Vintage Trouble has afforded me, and it’s a gift that gives daily. I’m living my one true dream, so I don’t take a single moment of it for granted.

Danielson plays Gretsch drums, Meinl cymbals, and LP percussion and uses Aquarian heads, Gibraltar hardware, and Vic Firth sticks.



ON TOPIC

Tim Alexander of Primus

On getting back behind the drums after suffering a heart attack.

It was a lot of just *Will I be able to do this?* The heart attack happened in July of 2014. We had shows booked for the next month and I couldn't do those, so Danny Carey stepped in. Then we had a tour set for October. I had basically August and September and part of October to recuperate and get ready for the tour. I was feeling a lot of pressure, and [there were] a lot of questions as to whether I could do it or not.

When they do the surgery, they cut through the chest bone and the ribs and open it up. When they're done, they bring them back together and wrap them with this wire. My surgeon said that he double-wrapped a bunch of my stuff so that if I'm playing drums, it wouldn't come apart. That was pretty freaky, to think, *What if I'm playing and I pull my chest bone apart?*

On suffering a second heart attack.

It wasn't like the first time. The first time I had really bad pains in my chest and then we rushed to the ER. The second time I was feeling something in my chest and we just wanted to be cautious and they found this enzyme the heart releases when there's something going on. We weren't thinking it was anything—just the pain. Then they found that enzyme in the blood. It shocked the hell out of me. I thought I was clear. It really freaked me out. I'm thinking, *Is this the end? Am I going to have to leave my family?* That's what was really freaking me out. I wasn't thinking about drumming.

On how he approaches drumming these days.

I'm pretty much normal now, just getting old. There are no major issues or problems. I'm working on playing the drums versus *pounding* them. I discovered how much I hit into the drum and through it—not finessing it. I'm trying to work on that now. And I'm finding that by doing that, I play better. I'm working on getting to the point of just playing the instrument and not pounding it.

On preparing for life after drumming.

How long is my body going to be able to play Primus music? You just don't know. I'm fifty-two now, and I feel the changes. That's a reason why I recently started my hard-cider company, Herb's Cider. It's available online. Right now I'm just considered a distributor. We have a company in Washington state making it for us. But I'm working toward the manufacturing part of it. Eventually I'll have a Herb's Cider cidery where you can come and try ciders and other drinks, and we'll have food trucks out front.

It's about looking at your life and your family almost like this platform, and you need all these supports underneath it. My life has always been music. It's not always available or enough to make things work, so I've been focusing on diversifying in a way.

On having to audition for Blue Man Group after establishing himself in Primus.

I think there was a bit of: *I have to audition? I'm Tim from Primus!* Especially when I found out that the drummers who created the music were fans of mine even before Blue Man Group existed. But they needed to see what my vibe is when I'm playing. It's one thing to see me in Primus. But what's the vibe when I'm playing *their* music? It's not just about being technically good. It's about what your feeling is when you're playing it. Are you into it, or do you look like you're bored or struggling through it? There's a lot to it. Because it's a very visual show, it's not about just the drums.

On coming and going from Primus.

I don't like doing that. It's only been twice. The first time it happened was 1995. We'd finished the *Tales From the Punchbowl* tours and we just weren't getting along. It just felt like I should go do something else. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I thought about not even playing drums—I wasn't really excited about it. When we reunited in 2003, I'd been doing Blue Man Group. We did a few years of doing *Sailing the Seas of Cheese* live and then we just took a break. Life happens, I guess, and a lot of things are going on—health things, emotional things.... [I've made] a lot of emotional decisions that probably weren't smart in terms of a career, but that's just how it went.

On meeting your heroes.

We opened for Rush when *Sailing the Seas of Cheese* was out. And they were a huge influence on us as kids. We were totally freaked out. They were super-nice. We'd hang out. We started inspiring them to jam backstage. We had a little practice drumkit and an amp, and we got them to come and jam with us—even Neil drumming on a cooler. That was pretty heavy. Neil was pretty cool, but then he'd have something on his mind and leave to go do it.

On a band like Primus becoming successful.

We always hoped it would be successful. But there was an aspect of surprise when it happened, because our music was so different from Nirvana or Soundgarden. They were the big things that were happening then. But it was interesting to see that we could fit in all these different places and succeed. We toured with a lot of different people—Rush, U2, Public Enemy and Anthrax, Fishbone, Lollapalooza with Alice in Chains and Tool and Rage Against the Machine.... And we're still out there doing it. It's pretty wild how we're still able to fit in.

Alexander plays Tama drums and Zildjian cymbals and uses Vater sticks and Aquarian heads.

**Interview by Patrick Berkery
Photos by Jessica Alexander**



Katy Perry's

Tony Royster Jr.

He grabbed headlines as one of the most talked-about drumming prodigies in the history of the instrument, playing alongside musical icons three times his age and establishing a reputation for blistering clinic appearances. In his first *MD* interview in years, the drummer, who's currently on an international tour with superstar Katy Perry, opens up about finding his unique place on the musical landscape, well outside of the box that some of his early chops-obsessed fans would prefer he stay in.

Tony Royster Jr. first graced the cover of *Modern Drummer* in January of 2000, at the age of fourteen. While sharing the spotlight with the iconic fusion and funk drummer Dennis Chambers, Royster was representing "the future of drumming." No pressure there, right?

Some people no doubt thought that the young phenom had it made at that point, but in the music industry there are no guarantees. It's not easy to stay on course in this business under normal circumstances, and with Royster there was the added weight of established leaders potentially shying away from hiring a player like him at the risk of their own skills and music being overshadowed by such a fresh and talented presence.

But Royster proved his doubters wrong. He streamlined his chops and utilized his skills on gigs with the likes of Jay Z, Joss Stone, and Joe Jonas, and now he helms the drum chair for superstar Katy Perry. He's appeared on AWOLNATION's debut album, *Megalithic Symphony*, on Joss Stone's *The Soul Sessions, Volume 2*, and on Residente's highly regarded self-titled album. And he's released three instructional videos: 1999's *Common Ground*, featuring Chambers and Billy Cobham, 2007's DW-produced *Pure Energy*, and 2009's *The Evolution Of...*, featuring original music from his band, ASAP.

Although he set up shop in Los Angeles a dozen years ago and has been rubbing elbows with instrumental and pop music elite for most of his life, Royster hasn't lost touch with the family, friends, and values he grew up with in Hinesville, Georgia. He watches what he eats and maintains body and mind with regular workouts at the gym. "I like anything that requires me to be competitive," he says, "but that at the same time [forces me to] use my brain. I love pool, bowling, basketball, and skating. I like going to the movies. I just like to be active. I especially like activities with groups, where we can vibe together and really enjoy each other."

These days Royster is also developing a clothing line, and he hopes to put serious time into his own music during a break in Perry's tour in 2018. "I haven't put out any type of music since my last DVD," he says, "and that needs to change. Hopefully I can involve some of the musicians and producers that I really enjoy working with."

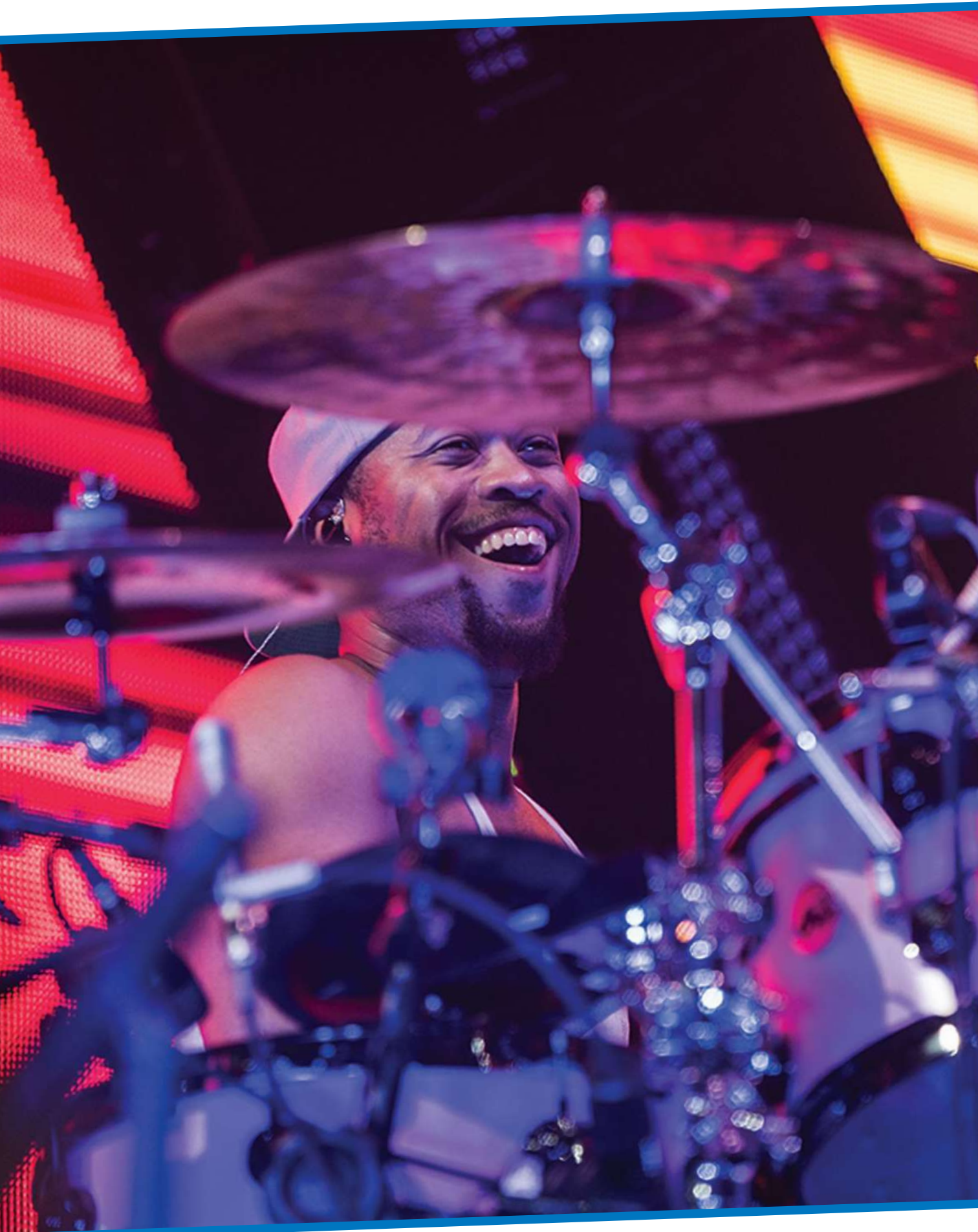
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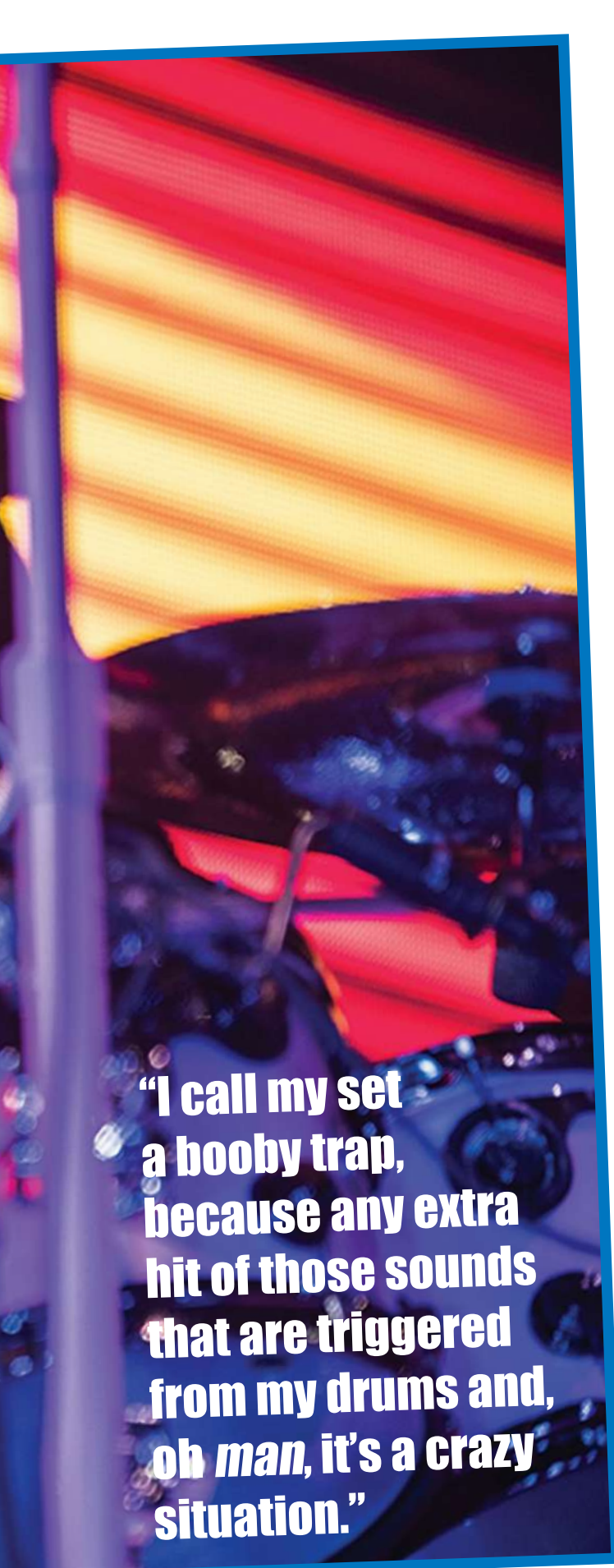
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PROBLEMS

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“I call my set a booby trap, because any extra hit of those sounds that are triggered from my drums and, oh man, it’s a crazy situation.”

MD: It’s been great to see you build a serious career as a drummer after the notoriety you achieved as a young man.

Tony: I was blessed to have the opportunity to play with Dennis Chambers at an early age, and that was through connections with other people who had relationships with him. [Drummer/inventor] Bob Gatzen made all that happen. But I also had to make sure Bob knew that I was going to be a person in the industry that was going to continuously play and be focused on my craft.

At a young age like that you could easily get lost, you could easily divert from the task at hand, which for me was to be a professional drummer. I’m glad my father kept me on the right road in terms of doing that. A lot of people in the industry, including some who worked for manufacturers, didn’t think I would even last past fifteen or sixteen years old, so they didn’t put forth too much effort to support me. So it was great, but it was definitely not easy at all. You have to stay focused, and my father was always putting me in the right places at the right time in order for me to show everybody that I was here to stay in the industry.

MD: Did you feel the pressure at that age?

Tony: I just wanted to play and have a good time. I didn’t really get the pressure vibe, because I was still a kid, and at the time everybody was just excited about me being able to play. It wasn’t like I had anything to prove. I just happened to be a kid that had some talent. People were just blown away that I could play the way I could at my age. It was more pressure from my father to make sure that I kept my head on straight and stayed humble, but I wouldn’t really consider that pressure—he still allowed me to be a kid and do what I wanted to do. He just embedded in my brain to stay focused, and at the end of the day to just have fun.

MD: Where did your drive come from?

Tony: I think over time it was seeing what [my playing] did for people, how it made them feel. Also knowing that the drums is the driving force of basically everything you hear in music. Seeing people dancing or bobbing their heads or expressing themselves through my playing, that’s the thing that made me most excited. And also, if I was angry or happy about something, it was a great way to express myself, to release *anything* that I was feeling, which made me bring out different creative juices within myself. Music is a very powerful thing... just to be able to jam with your friends. You can also jam by yourself, go in a room and get it on. And as I was getting older, it became a great way for me to work out, go in there and sweat and play hard and just get it all out. Put everything on the table.

MD: You once said that for you it was all about singles, doubles, and paradiddles. Is that still true?

Tony: Those are most definitely my favorite rudiments. I can intertwine them in any way. They’re the very basic rudiments that a lot of people use, and they’ve always been my favorites.

MD: How many hours a day did you put in initially to build up your chops, and how many do you put in now?

Tony: Back then it varied a lot. My father still allowed me to be a kid, so sometimes I would practice for an hour, sometimes I would be super-happy and practice for two hours. Sometimes I just wanted to get something off my chest and I’d go and practice for forty-five minutes. It was never something that was set in stone. My father would always encourage me to practice more if I could, and for the most part I just did what I felt.

Now I practice most when I’m on the road. When I’m home I try to get in an hour and a half or two hours, just because my day is so busy with other things that I’m involved in. It varies, but the tour

life is basically my practice time. I'm pretty much playing every other night on tour, so besides warming up for the show or something like that, that's my practice.

MD: Do you have certain go-to warm-up exercises?

Tony: It's basically different singles exercises, doubles exercises, paradiddles, sometimes five-stroke rolls. But that's more to get my wrists and arms warm. When I get on the set I just want to be able to express myself without having any type of tension, and those exercises really help. I also do a lot of stretching before I play.

MD: Does getting loose help with your hand speed?

Tony: Yeah, most definitely. Stretching, and how you apply yourself to the warm-ups, is very important. If you're not putting forth the effort, then you can tell once you get on the set, and you can't do what you really want to. I usually warm up with marching sticks—which are heavier than the regular sticks that I play with—on a practice pad or pillow. Sometimes I go from a pillow to a practice pad, using the pillow because there's no rebound. You're forced to really use your arms and wrists, trying to open up and release, and that stretches out the muscles.

Then going to the pads is a completely different feel, and then going to the set I feel right. Usually it takes me about fifteen or twenty minutes to really get to where I need to be, and even then, once I get to the drums I can stretch in between whatever I'm doing if I still feel a little tight. Also, I still use the Moeller technique as a warm-up, and I like to drink a lot of water—that's very important.

MD: Explain how you find the right grip and balance with your sticks.

Tony: I've been doing it for such a long time that it's muscle memory now, but it's about finding that balance point where the stick bounces the most [off the drumhead].

MD: Your ability to subdivide grooves while playing at high speeds is impressive—you seem to have a great inner calm.

Tony: Growing up, I always wanted to push myself to do something different. I used to play with the radio. My father would put music on and I'd work on my internal metronome, which was very important to me at an early age. I would play to a song, cut the volume off mid-song and just keep playing, and turn the volume up to see where I was with the music, how far off I was. That was a great



Royster's Katy Perry Setup



Drums: DW Collector's series with maple shells

- A.** 6.5x14 maple snare
- B.** 6x13 Edge or maple snare
- C.** 7x8 tom
- D.** 8x10 tom
- E.** 9x12 tom
- F.** 14x16 floor tom
- G.** 16x20 gong drum
- H.** 18x22 bass drum

Heads: Remo, including Black Max batter on 6.5x14 snares, Coated Controlled Sound batter on 6x13 snare, Ebony Emperor tom batters, Ebony Powerstroke 3 gong drum batter, and clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1.** 15" HHX Click Hats
- 2.** 18" HHX Evolution crash
- 3.** 10" HHX splash
- 4.** 18" HHX O-Zone crash stacked on top of 17" AAX X-Treme China
- 5.** 19" Artisan crash
- 6.** 16" AA Sick Hat top stacked on top of 16" XSR Fast Stax
- 7.** 22" HHX Omni

Sticks: Vic Firth 55A sticks

Hardware: DW, including two 9000 series double bass pedals (one attached to a trigger), 9500 two-leg hi-hat stand (with short pole), two 9991 single

tom stands (for gong drum), four 9900 double tom stands (for toms and triggers), three 9300 snare stands, six 9700 straight/boom cymbal stands, and 9000 series throne base

Accessories: Porter & Davies BC2 Thumper throne, Vater white felt bass drum beater, three sandbags, small percussion table (no back), 8x8 black drum rug

Electronics: Roland RT-30K, RT-30H, KD-9, and PD-8 triggers; Radial JS-2 mic splitter

way to work on the inner metronome.

And so having that type of internal clock, when I was getting older and playing some music, I was able to subdivide and play different time signatures and be able to know where the 1 was. I felt the 1 inside, as opposed to counting. When you begin to count like that, you block off a certain part of your mind. I don't want to concentrate on counting subdivisions and time signatures. I want to be able to just feel them.

MD: Do you do anything to settle yourself before a show?

Tony: It really depends on what I'm doing, who I'm playing with. It's always good to be around other people. For example, my Katy Perry bandmates and I, we hang out, maybe have a couple drinks before the show, listen to music, vibe, dance—just to get our minds in that vibe of calmness, as you said. We don't even think about the show, to be honest. And now it's second nature. At this point we're on the train and the train is moving.

But me... just warming up, listening to other styles of music or whatever music I like to listen to, whether it be rap or R&B. And that's sometimes what I warm up to, doing exercises to music that I like. There's no crazy routine that I usually do, just whatever makes me happy at the time—hanging out with my friends, playing games, whatever.

MD: You've gone from playing fusion-type music with your ASAP band to gigs like Jay Z and Joe Jonas, and now Katy Perry. Is switching between genres a fun challenge for you?

Tony: It is fun for me, though I don't really consider it a challenge. I just appreciate the fact that at an early age my father introduced me to all styles of music, which made me very versatile in my playing. And I enjoy all styles of music. Doing a rap gig, a pop gig, a jazz gig, and being able to play fusion like that, it was just a great way for me to exercise what I learned as a kid, and I just love it. And to be able to do it at that level, it's even more fun for me.

MD: The pop stuff is obviously more regimented, but you have a great knack for making the music swing even with a click track.

Tony: Every situation is different, and every song that we're playing requires a different type of swing. Some songs require you to play right on the beat. For example, this pop stuff with Katy, I'm triggering 90 percent of it. They basically took every sound from her latest record, and I'm playing those. I have to play it just like the record, so I'm mostly playing the electronic pads. And some of



Tony Royster Jr.

that stuff is very on the beat, for the pop vibe. And then there are certain songs that do have a swing to them. My biggest thing is trying to match the record as much as possible, and the only thing that I do that might have a little bit of my own touch and flavor is when I fill or something like that. But for the most part, the actual beat, the actual drive, I want to do it exactly like the record.

MD: With Katy you're playing on songs that have been megahits for years.

Tony: Yeah, I can't really go off the grid too much, because she's used to something that she's been hearing for a long time. You can't just decide to do your own vibe to a song that she's had a hit with for six years. You have to just zone into that vibe and match what you think she wants to hear and how she feels when she performs these songs.

MD: There's lots of percussion sounds in Katy's live set. Are you triggering those too, like the handclaps in the breakdowns on "Tsunami"?

Tony: Pretty much anything that you hear, electronics or whatever, I'm triggering. There might be one or two minute percussion tracks, some sounds in there for texture purposes. But the main stuff that you hear that really stands out, I'm playing. I

call my set a booby trap, because any extra hit of those sounds that are triggered from my drums and, oh *man*, it's a crazy situation. And the sounds aren't like little snare drums. These are big-ass sounds from the record, like a big snare.

Most drummers aren't used to playing triggers, because they're so used to doing ghost notes, things of that nature. There's no ghost notes in this type of music. You do a ghost note, it can be the end of your career playing triggers. If I'm playing a very simple pattern that just requires four on the floor and 2 and 4 on the snare, I can do some intertwining percussion parts. It's a dope situation. It's kind of challenging at times, but I'd rather them be happy with me playing the music and sounding like the record. And when people ask what's staying in the box or what's staying in Pro Tools, I can tell them pretty much nothing. They can't believe it, especially when they come to the concerts. There's really no drum tracks left in the Pro Tools. So if I stop playing, you'll know for sure.

MD: Are you playing with a click in your ear?

Tony: Oh, yeah, absolutely. We've got breaks, pyro, dancers—so many different things going on with the show that if I didn't keep time with the click, it would

throw everything off. It all requires my not getting off time, rushing, or dragging. Any late hits that don't go with the pyro or visual, you can definitely tell. There's a *lot* that goes into the production, so you've got to be on point.

MD: There are videos that show you jamming with a click, playing ahead of, behind, and right on the beat. You seem to enjoy using it like another musician.

Tony: Yeah, it's good to be able to have that skill set ready for whatever situation. If there's a band that requires some dragging, you still have to have that click there so you have that foundation for the actual time. If you don't, then some people lose it completely, and then you end up dragging yourself back into last year. You also don't want to rush. So it was big for me to be able to practice that, to be able to play ahead of the beat and behind the beat and dead on with the beat to where you can't even hear the click anymore.

MD: On "Tsunami" there are those snare rolls—are those on your drums?

Tony: At the beginning of the song I'm playing the snare sounds on my pads, and then toward the end of the song I switch to my acoustic snare, but the same sound that I'm playing on the pad is triggered on

Be One of a Kind



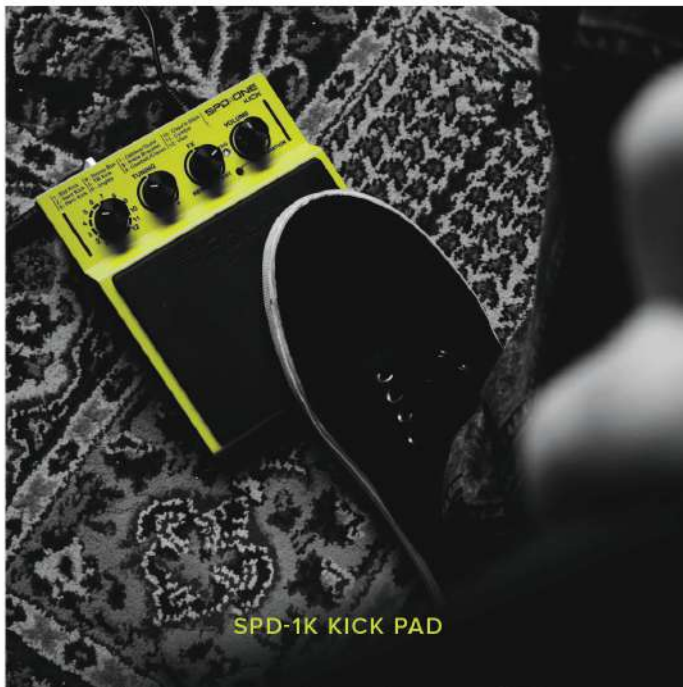
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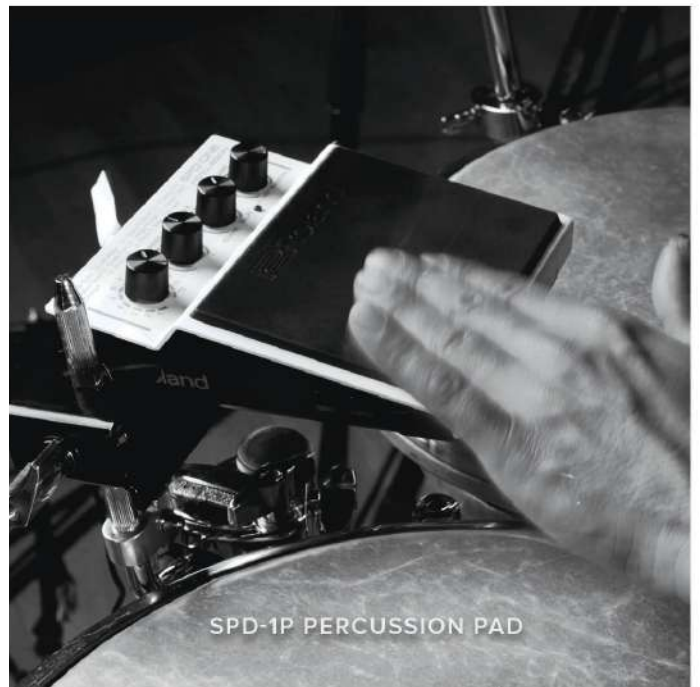


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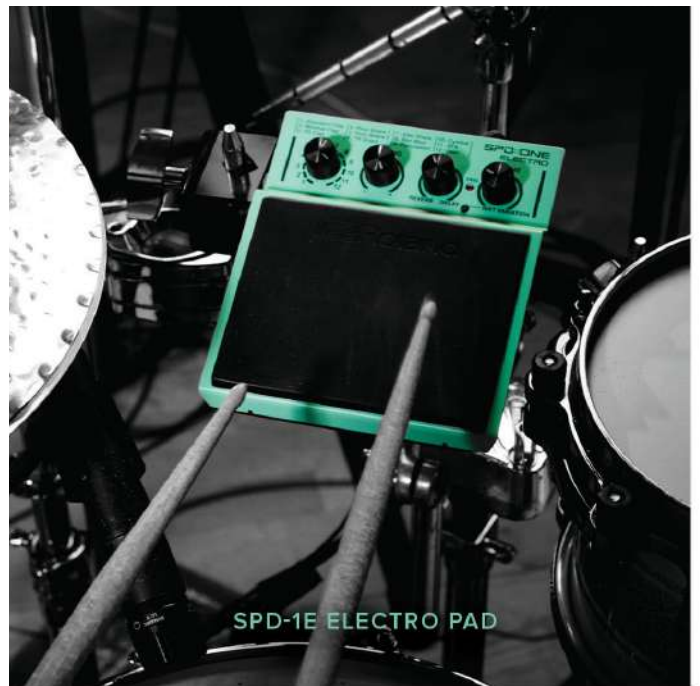
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Tony Royster Jr.



my snare. I'm not really changing it, I'm just adding the acoustic snare sound to the electronic sound to give it that other type of vibe. And if there are any extra snare rolls, that's me playing.

MD: You have a gong drum for this gig too.

Tony: I use that a lot, more than some of the other gigs I've done in the past. They have it EQ'd and sounding nice in the house, and they love it. It just adds that show vibe and that extra oomph when it comes to playing big arenas—it just fits well.

MD: Some people have questioned you for playing with Jay Z or Katy Perry, like you've somehow sold out or are wasting your talents. They don't seem to understand how important the feel is that you bring to those gigs.

Tony: Yeah, I mean it isn't about...first of all, you can't please everyone, and I got over that a long time ago. Second, the people that have come to see me play at clinics are super drum-heads, which is fine. But I have another level of thinking when it comes to playing, and my thoughts about the industry. When I hear a drummer like Abe Laboriel playing with Paul McCartney, he's playing straight grooves, without any crazy fills. I mean, he's not that type of drummer

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anyway, but nobody says anything like that to him, because he didn't grow up as a clinician drummer like myself. But last year he [did extremely well financially] playing with Paul McCartney. So it's more about setting a grounded foundation for your life, for your future, you know what I'm saying?

Playing with these types of artists, I have opportunities—to make memories, to build my résumé, and just to do different things. All that these [naysayers] are thinking about are my chops and all this stuff I do by myself at clinics. But they're not taking into consideration what I'm trying to do for my career, for my future, for my family. I've gotten so many great opportunities from playing with some of these artists, like Jay Z and Joe Jonas, and now playing with Katy Perry. Some of these gigs I got because they knew that I played with other artists, sometimes without even having to audition for them. People don't know what the actual work and logic behind it is.

So that's why I don't really care about what people say that's in the negative

realm. It is what it is. None of these guys are paying my bills. Nor are they making sure that I'm good for the future. They're going off on things that they see, and not having the opportunity to talk to me about why. They just assume. So it's cool, whatever. I'm going to continue to do what I do as a musician. I'm never going to lose the love of playing music. There are different phases in your life, and this is what's happening now.

MD: In pop music the drum parts can be a hook—like on that YouTube clip of you playing "New York" with Jay Z and Alicia Keys, and there's that place where you have to stop and just play the cymbal bell.

Tony: Absolutely. It really depends on the artist. In hip-hop the most challenging thing is not the grooves or the beats, it's the breaks and the lyrical content—knowing when to play and when not to play. When producers make these beats, they're not thinking about live musicians playing them, they're just throwing drops and stuff whenever they want to. So remembering all that stuff was the craziest thing about



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Tony Royster Jr.

playing hip-hop. It's similar with pop music. Pop is about making sure you know all the patterns, and being able to re-create that feel using whatever program they're using to make the beat. It's a nice situation, man.

MD: What's a rehearsal like with Katy Perry? It's easy to imagine it involving forty or fifty people.

Tony: The rehearsal I just finished, we were preparing for New Year's Eve. We're going to Dubai, so it's a slightly different show from our normal one, and we had to make sure that we had new transitions together, new outros to certain songs. But the normal rehearsal, it's actually not as many people as you'd think. We have a total of four dancers, and we have five band members—two keyboard players, bass, guitar, and me—plus two vocalists. That's basically all we need.

There's also a guy that's under the stage, and he basically runs the entire show, like, *everything*. All my pads and triggers are being controlled by him, and it's automated as well. I have the pads up there, but I don't have any FX modules or any type of switcher or anything. Everything is being handled by him, and he has like eight computers that he runs the show with, so it's kind of crazy.

So if I'm playing a song, you have a verse, a chorus, a bridge, and on some songs a producer will use particular drum sounds for the verse but different ones for the chorus. So I'll be playing the verse, and as soon as it goes into the chorus, the

drum sounds will change. So basically all I've got to do is make sure I remember the patterns, and where I placed the sounds at on the pads. That was the biggest part of the rehearsal for the tour, remembering where the hell I placed them for each song. [laughs]

MD: And you're triggering some sounds from your acoustic drums too.

Tony: Yes. I believe we're using MainStage software in order to do everything—I have four auxiliary Roland pads on my left-hand side and one on my right side, and my three snares and kick drum have triggers. It's an hour-and-a-half show, and I'm triggering electronics on every song. It becomes about muscle memory more than anything.

MD: Have you worked in a situation like this before?

Tony: This is the first time. Usually what happens is, the guy that's running Pro Tools will get all the samples from the producer or whoever. They'll cut up all the sounds, or he'll do it himself, and then he gives me or my drum tech the sounds, and we have the program that we just connect to the computer and it pops right up. And it's easy: You take the sounds out of the bank and you just drag it to whatever pad you want on the SPD-SX, get out the USB, and it's right there ready to go.

I used to use two SPD-SXs, one for my kick drum and one for my snare, so the front-of-house man could EQ and mix it properly without having to try to do all that on the same pad. It's good to have the kick

separately, and your snare on one pad. But I don't have to deal with that anymore. I did it with Jay Z, which was fine. It wasn't hard at all. I switched all the pads and everything for each song. For this gig I don't have to do anything but play.

MD: You've also worked with Joss Stone, in a more old-school soul music setting.

Tony: I toured with her for a little while, and then I did her entire *Soul Sessions, Volume 2* album, at Blackbird Studio in Nashville. She's one of my favorite artists to work with, because she's just so down to earth, and so grieved about the BS that's going on in the world. She just wants positive energy around her, and she's one of the easiest people to work with, on and off stage. She's very go-with-the-flow, she's all about nature and all that stuff, and she has a beautiful, powerful voice. And her music definitely represents *soul*, and just being able to be free and express yourself. I had a great time touring and doing shows with her.

MD: Your attitude is inspiring, to play each different gig the best you can for what it is.

Tony: Yeah, you have to put forth the best effort, man, and play every time like it's your last. That's the only way for people to feel and see the passion, and to get the most out of people's reactions too. People want to be able to have a good time and be able to feel the music. No one wants to see somebody that doesn't look like they're having fun. It's all about connecting. Once you connect, man, the limits, there are none.



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Part 2

Last October we presented fifty albums that show how incredibly far jazz drumming has come since it first appeared on record a century ago. This month we bring you twenty-five more titles as we work toward a clean hundred.

The first installment of this series included a healthy dose of classic acoustic recordings from the '50s and '60s. This time we lean a little harder into iconic '70s fusion releases. We also shine the spotlight on lesser-known but still significant players from before that tumultuous era, as well as on a selection of modern movers and shakers.

As in our initial feature, here we tap the vast knowledge of the drummer/historians Kenny Washington and Paul Wells, as well as veteran *Modern Drummer* writers. We also include contributions from some of our knowledgeable readers, who left comments about their favorite jazz drumming recordings on our social media pages.

1. Original Dixieland Jazz Band 1917-36 (Tony Sbarbaro)

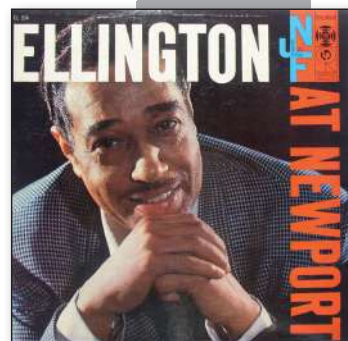
The New Orleans ensemble the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was the first group of its kind to be documented on record, making study of the drumming on tracks like "Livery Stable Blues" and "Original Dixieland One-Step" very interesting indeed. "People like me spend lots of money to find records where you can hear [early drummers] like Zutty Singleton and Baby Dodds," Kenny Washington says. "You couldn't play drums loudly in the studio, because the technology at the time wasn't what it is today. Drummers had to mind their Ps and Qs, because if you hit too hard that needle would go through the glass." "The drums are actually pretty clear on 'Original Dixieland One-Step,'" Paul Wells adds. "It's basically parade drumming. Tony Sbarbaro switches between snare and woodblocks. What you hear drummers doing later in the '20s became the press-roll style. But before that drummers like Tony Sbarbaro are doing almost continuous 8th notes."

2. Duke Ellington At Newport (Sam Woodyard, 1956)

"Early into his long tenure with the Duke Ellington Orchestra," longtime *Modern Drummer* contributor Jeff Potter says, "Sam Woodyard mega-swung the band throughout a legendary 1956 Newport Jazz Festival performance that yielded their biggest-selling LP and rejuvenated Duke's career. On the legendary track 'Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue,' Woodyard kicks the band for fourteen minutes, including Paul Gonsalves' famed twenty-seven-chorus tenor solo, whipping the audience into an audible frenzy. Eschewing complexity, Woodyard fat-swung his ride, leaned into a cross-stick backbeat, and dropped accents from his double bass drums, creating a throbbing swing with a blues heart. Later expanded editions of the disc include his solo feature, 'Skin Deep,' during which his thundering toms/double bass combinations forecast rock arena power solos of the future. But solos aside, the drummer's unflashy swinging time feel is where he truly lived. For that, Duke loved him madly."

3. Osie Johnson *Osie's Oasis* (Osie Johnson, 1957)

"Osie's one of the most recorded drummers in the history of jazz," Kenny Washington says. "And he did things other than straight jazz. He's in between swing and bebop, but he could do it all. And he was a great reader. Osie, Hank Jones,



Milt Hinton, and Barry Galbraith were known as the rhythm section. They'd do three or four sessions a day. Most drummers don't know about him, but he's got a very distinctive sound. He used the same cymbals on everything. He was a composer and did some dates as a vocalist as well. When he died, Ed Shaughnessy and Grady Tate took a lot of his dates."

4. Charles Mingus *Mingus Ah Um* (Dannie Richmond, 1959)

The liner notes to this classic album quote the leader as saying that if drummer Dannie Richmond weren't available for a recording, he'd rather have no drummer at all. Such was the level of musical intimacy between the famed bassist and his drummer, who came into the Mingus group not long after beginning to play the instrument in earnest. (He'd begun his musical career on tenor sax.) The leadoff track of *Ah Um*, "Better Git It in Your Soul," is a perfect example of Richmond's many talents; the famous 6/8 raver, inspired by gospel music, features a trio of sophisticated and joyous twelve-bar drum features.

5. Max Roach *Percussion Bitter Sweet* (Max Roach, 1961)

"From the get-go," Jeff Potter once wrote in *Modern Drummer*, "the message is clear: Hang on, there's no looking back—the '60s have arrived. This 1961 Impulse Records session is explosive, iconoclastic, and seminally political, radiating both rage and transcendent elation. Those who still thought of Max as a bopper awoke to find the master penning and playing tunes on the cutting edge."

6. Thelonious Monk *It's Monk's Time* (Ben Riley, 1964)

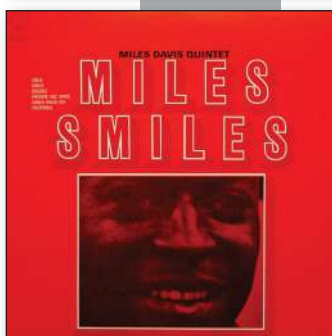
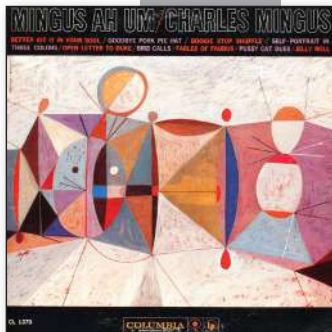
Beginning in the mid-'50s, Ben Riley appeared on recordings with many jazz greats, including Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, Ahmad Jamal, Eric Dolphy, Woody Herman, and Nina Simone. But the drummer, who died last year, will always be remembered first for his 1964–67 stint with jazz iconoclast Thelonious Monk. Of the handful of Monk albums released by Columbia records in 1964, *It's Monk's Time* is among the best.

7. Yusef Lateef *Live at Pep's* (James Black, 1964)

MD contributor Martin Patmos calls James Black "an overlooked player who brings a unique energy to this date." In a December 1982 feature, the famed New Orleans drummer was asked whether he felt that having knowledge of melody and harmony helped his drumming. "It helps you out a great deal," he said. "It gives you [ideas for] different colorations that the drums can play. We all know that music is three things: rhythm, harmony, and melody. Just to know the rhythm would mean you'd be an incomplete musician."

8. Miles Davis Quintet *Miles Smiles* (Tony Williams, 1967)

"On *Miles Smiles*," *MD* reader Max Fruchtman says, "Tony Williams takes all of the bebop vocabulary and transforms it into very powerful expression that fuels the band's improvisations. This is also when he started perfecting his idea of playing quarter notes on the hi-hat and beautifully bashing the hell out of the drums, which taught listeners that there are no limits to what can be done with a small drumset." Reader Chris Davidson adds that he appreciates "the way Tony and [bassist] Ron Carter were intertwining and shape shifting like weirdos—glorious weirdos."



9. The Don Ellis Orchestra *Live in 3-2/3/4 Time* (Steve Bohannon, 1967)

Martin Patmos is enamored by the way Steve Bohannon drives Don Ellis's unique big band through absolutely bizarre time signatures that remain completely swinging and listenable. "Power, finesse, and a stunning rhythmic ability are all at this guy's fingertips," Patmos says. This album was recorded at the Pacific Jazz Festival and Shelly's Manne Hole, and it gives a clear indication of just how complex and border-pushing the music was for its era. The title, incidentally, refers to the time signature of the track "Upstart," which would be more commonly referred to as 11/8.

10. Count Basie and His Orchestra *Basie Straight Ahead* (Harold Jones, 1968)

"The Basie association was very important to my career," Harold Jones told *Modern Drummer* in April of 1994. "The band was my university. The musicians were great. Alumni like Jo Jones frequently came around and gave advice. You discovered new things almost every night. And Basie quietly passed on important information with just a few words. He taught me about time, economy, how to react to music. He showed me how to really play well in a big band." *Basie Straight Ahead* is the first Basie album to feature compositions and arrangements by Sam Nestico, who would remain a central figure in the famed pianist's career until his passing in 1984. "Nestico was a big asset," Jones said. "His melodic, rhythmic charts had the simplicity that Basie liked. Anything he wrote allowed the band to breathe and swing. I loved to play Sammy's things because they're natural, easy to feel, and don't lock you in."

11. Idris Muhammad *Black Rhythm Revolution!* (Idris Muhammad, 1970)

Muhammad, aka Leo Morris, supplied the airy soul to many renowned '60s and '70s albums from the likes of Hank Crawford, Grant Green, and Gene Ammons. "The drummer's churning mojo groove," *MD* scribe Ken Micallef says, "is superbly present on this, his debut album. You also might want to check out his playing on Lou Donaldson's *Alligator Boogaloo* from 1967 and John Scofield's 1995 release, *Groove Elation*."

12. Chick Corea and Return to Forever *Light as a Feather* (Airtro Moreira, 1973)

"Jazz fans initially knew Airtro Moreira as the flamboyant percussionist with the original Weather Report and Miles Davis's band," Jeff Potter says, "but pianist Chick Corea's quintet Return to Forever showcased his drumkit playing with stunning and highly influential results. Airtro's nimble, independent-limbed drumming combined jazz interplay with influences from his native Brazil, creating an urgent slipstream with Stanley Clarke's percussive upright bass lines." The landmark *Light as a Feather*, Return to Forever's second album, yielded the standards "Spain" and "Captain Marvel."

13. Billy Cobham *Spectrum* (Billy Cobham, 1973)

"The Mahavishnu Orchestra put Billy Cobham on the map," regular *MD* scribe Ilya Stemkovsky says, "but his solo debut is the fusion bomb, featuring excellent guitar from Tommy Bolin and virtuoso kit work from the leader. Technical wizardry that still made your head bob put Cobham at the top of the heap of '70s masters." To hear more Cobham, you'd do well to check out Miles Davis's *Jack Johnson* (1971), the Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds of Fire* (1973), and McCoy Tyner's *Fly With the Wind* (1976).

14. Herbie Hancock *Head Hunters*
(Harvey Mason, 1973)

"Herbie Hancock's post-Miles Davis adventures grew more electric and funky with time," Ilya Stemkovsky says, "culminating in this monumental groove summit, which showcases Harvey Mason's super-deep pocket, killer fills, and extra-saucy rhythmic mind meld with bassist Paul Jackson." Mason played on countless other releases straddling jazz, funk, and R&B, such as Grover Washington Jr.'s *Mister Magic* (1974) and George Benson's *Weekend in L.A.* (1978).

15. Hubert Laws *In the Beginning*
(Steve Gadd, 1974)

"Steve Gadd ushered in a new era of jazz drumming in the early '70s," *MD* contributor Mike Haid says, "with his thick, close-miked drum sound, dense double-stroke technique, and Latin-based grooves, which he seamlessly incorporated into every musical genre. This milestone CTI release covers all the bases, with straight-ahead jazz, Latin, blues, and a five-plus-minute flute/drum duet between Gadd and Laws on 'Airegin,' showcasing Steve's relentless signature samba. His musicality, innovation, and precision shine brightly on this gem."

16. Weather Report *Heavy Weather*
(Alex Acuña, 1977)

"Every Weather Report release was a drumming event," Jeff Potter says. "But the band hit a new stride with its catalog's best-seller, *Heavy Weather*. Along with the ascendancy of bassist Jaco Pastorius, the group's arrangements were tighter and more polished than ever. Acuña was the ideal man for the moment. Drawing on his vast knowledge of world grooves and a feel for jazz and funk, he framed the tunes with just the right balance of tight, hard-hitting energy, and breathing, open interplay. Along with percussionist Manolo Badrena, Acuña drove tunes such as 'Havona' and the hit 'Birdland' to ecstatic heights."

17. Chick Corea Elektric Band *The Chick Corea Elektric Band* (Dave Weckl, 1986)

"This is the record that brought Dave Weckl international acclaim," Paul Wells says. "He was twenty-five or twenty-six at the time, and it's unbelievable how good he is at that young an age. Weckl figured out how to have a completely new voice in fusion drumming, which was pretty established at that point." Related studies: Chick Corea's *Akoustic Band* (1989).

18. Chick Corea Akoustic Band *Live From the Blue Note Tokyo* (Vinnie Colaiuta, 1996)

Speaking of Akoustic Corea... "Vinnie Colaiuta plays with such a beautiful swing on this album," reader Will Beavis says. "High energy, great flow, momentum, touch, plus great interactions with the rest of the band. Whenever I think I'm getting somewhere with my own playing, listening to this album is always a rude awakening in terms of how far off I am." To hear more primo Colaiuta, check out Allan Holdsworth's *Secrets* (1989).

19. Chick Corea New Trio *Past, Present & Futures* (Jeff Ballard, 2001)

As we come to our fourth Chick Corea album in this month's list, it's worth recalling that the pioneering keyboardist and composer is a pretty heavy drummer himself. (Check out the Wayne Shorter albums *Super Nova* and *Moto Grosso Feio*, or the track "Confirmation" from his own *Three Quartets* album.) So maybe it's no surprise that he'd continue to be working with a growing list of top-notch drummers in the new millennium. Paul Wells points to this release featuring drummer Jeff Ballard. "Alongside a young virtuoso bassist Avishai Cohen, Ballard floats like a butterfly throughout this lovely trio date, commanding the proceedings with subtle brushes and melodic interplay. But he also throws counterpunches with thunderous rolls and cymbal drive when the music needs it. Top-shelf listening from each player here.

20. The Bad Plus *These Are the Vistas*
(Dave King, 2003)

"The Bad Plus does nothing halfway," Michael Parillo wrote in the October 2012 issue of *Modern Drummer*. "And that goes double for Dave King. In the Bad Plus and his many other projects, King displays an absolutely fierce sense of commitment—to the endless possibilities of a simple drumset, to an idea that crops up in real time, to putting the group before the individual, to the search for a distinctive voice, to creative music in general!" "These Are the Vistas," reader Noah Wilson adds, "is a ridiculously great example of frenetic avant-jazz steeped in pop sensibility for a really listenable vibe."

21. Dafnis Prieto *Absolute Quintet*
(Dafnis Prieto, 2006)

"Relocating to New York from Cuba in 1999, Dafnis Prieto quickly staked ground as a hot drummer to watch," Jeff Potter says. "On his second disc, which won a Grammy in the Latin Jazz Album category, Prieto made it clear that he intended to push Latin-infused jazz in progressive directions, both as a drummer and composer. With an unusual format of drums, keys, reeds, violin, and cello, this release vaporized borders with its mix of Afro-Cuban, jazz, classical, funk, and more. The opening track, 'The Coolest,' exemplifies Prieto's ease with complex yet fluid grooves and challenging rhythmic subdivisions. And his solo interjections at the tune's finale are a head-spinning delight."

22. Susie Ibarra *Drum Sketches* (Susie Ibarra, 2007)

"A multidisciplinary percussionist, drummer, and composer," Ken Micallef says, "Susie Ibarra often presents her performances in solo settings, within theater/sound installation pieces, and among the music of indigenous cultures. But she's also recorded epic albums with William Parker, Denis Charles, John Zorn, David S. Ware, and Matthew Shipp, which feature her textural, colorful, and thoroughly hypnotic jazz drumming. This solo album is an ideal source to behold many of her charms."

23. Charles Lloyd Quartet *Rabo de Nube*
(Eric Harland, 2008)

In his *Modern Drummer* review of *Rabo de Nube*, Martin Patmos said, "This concert recording is among saxophonist Charles Lloyd's best. The quartet here, with pianist Jason Moran, bassist Rueben Rogers, and drummer Eric Harland, plays in ways that inspire and challenge, bringing Lloyd's music to many places. Harland's drumming is phenomenal, as on 'Prometheus,' where he propels the group with skittish timekeeping, provides color, and turns in a stunning solo. Elsewhere, whether with an easy swing, brushes that shade, or a subtle world-beat pulse, Harland's drumming consistently lifts the music."

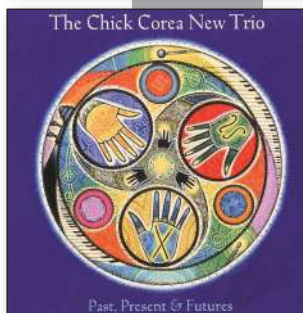
24. Manu Katché *Third Round* (Manu Katché, 2010)

"This is melodic, warm, and touching music," reader Fabian Schindler says. "Manu Katché's drumming is unique—the way he paints music with his cymbals and approaches his drumming from a percussionist's perspective is refreshing, and quite a contrast to that of bebop masters like Max Roach or Art Blakey. Katché always has a special groove deep down in his heart."

25. Antonio Sanchez *Bad Hombre*
(Antonio Sanchez, 2017)

Bad Hombre is a drumset-meets-electronics venture that Antonio Sanchez singlehandedly created in his home studio. "One of the most fun parts for me was getting out of my comfort zone," Sanchez told *MD* last year, "being this completely different kind of drummer, producer, and musician. In *Birdman* [the feature film for which Sanchez created a unique drum-centric score], it was great to hear the drums up front, with some pads in the background and atmospheric sounds. I wanted to try my

hand at doing my version of that, but go all the way. I envisioned the drums being at the forefront, but with something that hadn't been done before: I wanted to juxtapose really acoustic-sounding drums with an all-electronic background. I didn't want it to be just vamps, I didn't want it to be tunes; I wanted it to be waves of energy, soundscapes."



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GRIZZLY BEAR'S CHRIS BEAR

It turns out that any name similarities between Grizzly Bear and its drummer are purely coincidental. Musically, the seamless match is more like fate.

Amid the relentlessly creative song-oriented drumming on Grizzly Bear's 2017 album, *Painted Ruins*, the track "Aquarian" stands out as particularly percolating. It's got the flowing, forward-motion feel of paradiddle-based phrases dancing by in spiraling patterns that might bring to mind a slower, more organic version of drum 'n' bass. I imagined Chris Bear sitting at his kit and figuring things out precisely, finding exactly where, and where not, to place the little rhythmic curlicues that animate the beat. I sure was wrong about that.

"There are songs like 'Aquarian' that come a little bit more from an improvised jazz background, where it's sort of turning around on itself all the time," explains Bear, who as a student moved from the suburbs of Chicago to study jazz improv at the New School in New York City. "Live, I'm really just playing it differently every time, because I can't necessarily re-create what the record was. Even the multiple takes we did were all a little bit different." The album's following track, "Cut-Out," Bear says, stems from a similar approach.

It turns out that years of playing jazz and other improvised music is one of the things that makes Bear such an effective drummer for his group's unique type of dreamy pop, which has never sounded more adventurous than on *Painted Ruins*. He clearly knows how to open himself up to channel any idea that comes to mind and shape it into something distinctive that works for the songs. Bear, of course, is eloquent in the language of rock as well, fully understanding the power of the backbeat and how to elicit the warm, deep drum tones that provide the perfect underpinning to Grizzly Bear's quietly ambitious music.

On stage at New York City's Brooklyn Steel last November, Bear was a focal point for the sold-out audience. Set up at stage left, with singer/guitarist Daniel Rossen, singer Ed Droste, and bassist Chris Taylor to his right, and touring keyboardist Aaron Arntz to the rear, Bear drew lots of attention simply by being a swinging, crashing, loose-limbed drummer; in a band that is not necessarily known for its spirit of improvisation in performance, he reproduced his album parts faithfully but also brought the feeling of spontaneity and fun. As he rode on his 1938 Radio King snare with his right hand while coming down on 2 and 4 from high above with his left, he was welcoming the audience into the world of Grizzly Bear with every stroke.

For Chris's overdue first feature in *MD*, we chatted during Grizzly Bear's fall tour behind *Painted Ruins*, as the band was making the long drive to Austin from Washington, D.C., with a stopover in Nashville.

**Story By Michael Parillo
Photos by John Fell**



MD: I saw the first of your three nights in Brooklyn. Do you normally change your set lists a bit each night?

Chris: Yeah, especially when we were there for three nights, we were trying to switch it up, which is not always easy for us. We sort of fall into a zone that works. But once you have five albums, it's a lot to try to cram something in from every record and not be doing a three-hour marathon.

There's definitely some chunks that work

well together, and different things we've kind of worked out—transitions between songs, just to keep the flow and create an immersive live experience.

MD: In the second song, "Losing All Sense," I heard what seemed like a drum sequence before you came in on the kit. Do you run those types of things on stage?

Chris: Yeah, I've got control of all that stuff. We're not deeply playing with tracks at all, so I don't really need a computer. I just have

the SPD-SX. In that song, it's this old organ drum machine that we used as part of the percussion on the record, so I'm cueing that. And some other sounds every now and then, but it's more like playing those pads as if they're single-shot sounds or one-bar sounds, rather than: "All right, here's the background that's going to run through the entire tune." I'm trying to think of the SPD as more like another auxiliary percussion device.



Tools of the Trade

Chris Bear plays a C&C kit, plus an 8"-deep 1938 Slingerland Radio King snare. His cymbals are by Istanbul Agop. "It's always a tricky balance," Bear says, "for me to find something that has that washy, trashy sound but that's going to cut in a bigger room, or in an open-air situation it's going to have that breath to it, and wash, and not enter into full dry-ping territory."

Bear's electronics include a Roland SPD-SX and several guitar effects pedals. "The whole pedal world, at this point it's used less than it used to be. The delay and pitch shifter are what I'm running the floor tom through; sometimes I'll trigger a delay to create a thicker pattern, and sometimes I'll kick the mic up and use it as an ambient mic and build loops with that. I used to use it more for making actual loops on the floor tom that I would then play along with."

And that funny little cymbal fixed to the bass drum? "Daniel [Rossen] got that thing years ago at a yard sale or something. I think it was on an old marching bass drum, clamped to the top, like you'd imagine a cartoon monkey playing. [laughs] We ended up using it on the end of 'Two Weeks.' It's mostly there just for that use. I mean, it is literally a piece of trash."



Some of the stuff is melodic too. Sometimes it'll be a keyboard stab, if Aaron in the back doesn't have enough hands to take care of it but we want that sound to be there.

MD: Your parts on *Painted Ruins* sound like a leap forward for you. Are the beats generally more worked out than on your previous album, *Shields*?

Chris: In some cases, yes. Of course, a song like "Mourning Sound," that's just sort of plowing away. But then there's tunes where I tried to work something out. Like "Neighbors" and "Sky Took Hold" went through a lot of iterations, and in some cases I tried to go against my first inclination. I'd put that down, and then we were like: *What if we really try to think about this in a different way?* So in those instances it was figuring out how to do something that didn't feel unnatural to me but that maybe was not my first thought.

MD: It's cool to hear you say the beat on "Aquarian" was influenced by jazz improvisation. I might not have guessed that.

Chris: I actually don't even know how to describe that beat. [laughs] We were just tossing ideas around, in the very, very early stages. All of us were living in different places, so I went up to see Daniel for a couple days and we were working on things. Before I left, he said, "Let's set up a couple mics and you just play for a while, at a few different tempos. So when I'm working on stuff, maybe I can use one of those as a jumping-off point."

I laid a bunch of things down, kind of all over the place, and he grabbed like four bars within that to put these chordal ideas over. We sat on it for a really long time, and once we finally got to making the record, it grew into something that took more of a shape. But it always had the beat sort of looping around on itself, not really a solid backbeat but creating this swirling rhythm that isn't completely grounded but is sort of playing off the guitar hits.

MD: At first, "Four Cypresses" made me think of Steve Gadd on "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover"...

Chris: [laughs] Right...

MD: ...but at the show it felt more like Afrobeat. And since then I've been hearing little bits of that Afrobeat vibe in your playing.

Chris: I'm hugely into that stuff. The internet has exposed so much amazing music from all over Africa. Afrobeat and highlife...and, like, West African disco from the '70s! It's just insane and amazing. Just this wealth of music that's out there, it's really inspiring.



MD: How did you track the album? Did you all play together?

Chris: I probably did two rounds of drums on almost the whole record. We were working in upstate New York first, so we put down most of the drums there. Most of it was tracked with just me playing,



Chris Bear

sometimes with Daniel playing guitar as a guide. There was not a lot of separation, and it's a huge hall, so there would have been too much bleed to try to do something live.

But for a lot of it we knew we wanted a smaller, tighter room sound—still feel the space of it, but not a huge grand-hall feeling. So we ended up tracking in L.A., at a studio that has the ability to do it to tape, which is always awesome for drums. At that point a lot of the tune was already there, in terms of vocals, guitar, bass, and keys. So it was kind of like re-playing to something that had been played around a previous version of what I had done. [laughs] But it didn't get too hairy.

MD: How do you feel about tracking alone? Is it harder to get inspired when you're playing by yourself?

Chris: Not really. A lot of the time, the three of us—me, Dan, and Chris—will be playing through the tune and working out smaller details, like what we want it to feel like, and then we'll go right into tracking the drums. So it still feels fresh, and it's still on my mind, that feeling. I think we were trying to get a little more of a live feeling, so we would try and play through it in some instances before tracking.

Going through a few rounds, I can start to tell when I'm frying out from doing the

Bear's Influences

"From very early on, my dad was a big Zeppelin-head, so obviously the one and only Bonzo was played a lot, for sure. He's a master. Early, that made me really excited about wanting to dive into learning.

"My father is a bass player, so there was music around all the time. It was all over the place. I remember him playing this Coltrane record, *Infinity*, that was really free and crazy, and as a kid I thought, *Whoa, this is insane*. And it wasn't even really the drums but just the overall feeling of being transported into music that I was excited about.

"I started playing in different kinds of bands pretty early on. Definitely very into the whole grunge world when I was in junior high. And I was sucked into the music program at school. I was in marching band and jazz band and orchestra and sort of did it all. It became my focus. I started gravitating more toward jazz, and that's what brought me to New York.

"Tony Williams has always been a massive influence. That sort of cusp period before Miles was going fully electric but still was kind of coming out of the hard-bop world, I think Tony Williams' playing on that stuff is super-inspiring, because it doesn't quite fall into any genre that I feel is definable. His playing on *Filles de Kilimanjaro* is one of my favorites. It's supportive but it also has moments of totally taking the lead and directing what the whole thing feels like.

"Jaki Liebezzeit of Can, rest in peace. That playing has always been super-inspiring—rhythms that have ties to African music and more funk stuff, but coming from this very motorik, sort of German rock thing. And just so melodic in a way. I really love that stuff.

"Growing up outside Chicago, I was also listening to that whole Thrill Jockey world of music, like Tortoise and Isotope 217. There was such an awesome scene of intertwined projects. I related to it in that it was a lot of things—there was an improvised music element to it; there was this Krautrock influence, more sort of funk; and then just the experimental side. All three of those drummers from Tortoise have always been really inspiring, and getting to see them play live was amazing.

"I've also been obsessed for a while with Brazilian music and that whole rhythmic feel. Specifically I've been getting into Marcos Valle records. Three or four have been rereleased in the last few years. It's cool—you see him going from being more of a traditional bossa nova kind of dude to experimenting with more psychedelic stuff and then eventually getting into some really weird disco phases in the '80s, but I still like that stuff too."

solo-tracking thing. At that point you just say, "Okay, let's move on," or "Let's step out for a second and come in fresh."

MD: Grizzly Bear is sometimes described as "electronic pop," which seems to lean a little heavily on the electronic aspect. But

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there are times where I'm not sure whether I'm hearing an acoustic part or maybe a sequence. On *Painted Ruins* it's almost all acoustic drums, right?

Chris: Yeah, totally—there's acoustic drums on everything. "Mourning Sound" has a little drum sample that comes in halfway through, and there's a couple of little electronic sizzle sounds that appear in there. And then "Losing All Sense" has that old organ drum machine that starts it off. But other than that it's all acoustic drums.

I don't really have a qualm with using electronics. But "Losing All Sense," cueing up that old organ drum machine thing, somehow it doesn't feel the same as just cueing up a beat on an MPC or something. [laughs] It's coming from this weird old instrument that people used to play along to, integrating it into the part and interacting with it.

MD: Was there anything that you were working on drumming-wise between the last two albums? Several years passed.

Chris: On *Shields*, that was when we started touring with Aaron, which was great. He's sort of a fellow ex-jazzier [laughs], and similarly he had kind of fallen out of trying to be a part of that world. Competitive isn't the word, but it's like there's room for only so many people to be doing stuff, and I didn't like the way that felt, I guess. So after we started the *Shields* tour, me and Aaron and our buddy Ben [Campbell] started doing more improvised trio stuff. And that was really fun, to get back into playing improvised music and not necessarily needing it to be jazz, or anything. It was just like: "Let's play music." A lot of it was pretty free and would lean in a bunch of different directions. It got me back into being excited by that kind of playing.

So when I would sit down to play, that kind of playing would just come out. We weren't really playing "swinging" jazz necessarily; it was a more angular and straight-8th kind of feel. So I wasn't consciously working on anything in particular, but doing more playing like that, I think, helped open it up to some of the things that happened on this record.

MD: Did that trio project have a name?

Chris: Yeah, we were calling it Assembly. I'd like to do more. We're just figuring out how to do it.

MD: In *Grizzly Bear*, do you guys like wildly different kinds of music? You obviously have stuff you can agree on.

Chris: Yeah, it definitely varies. I remember the early days, when we were touring in the van, having to find common ground that was okay to listen to and wasn't gonna drive

someone nuts. But I think that's the exact thing that helps make what we do a little bit different—we definitely have some overlap but also have some things that we're into that isn't necessarily in the wheelhouse of everybody else's taste. Being able to distill some elements from our various different tastes and put that into what the whole package is, I think, makes for whatever our sound ends up being.

MD: I've read articles that point to an uncertainty about the future of the band, but you guys seemed really connected on stage.

Chris: Yeah, totally. We've never had a super-militant schedule, and I think that allows us to be a little more adventurous or let some ideas develop. Sometimes the time is just to give ourselves space to breathe or come at making a record with a new perspective. We're always slowly passing demos around in the off period. This time that happened to be longer. But a lot of it, too, was just life stuff—people getting married, I had a kid; that all takes time. But yeah, I think and hope that we'll continue doing what we're doing.



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Lia Braswell

OF A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS

The Heart of the Matter

Some musicians are too cool for school. They're unfazed by auditions, uninterested in getting close to new bandmates. They may never miss a beat, but you don't get the feeling that they're ever going to *bleed* for the music either. If it all goes south...no biggie, there's always the next group.

Lia Braswell is not that musician. From an early age the drummer has put her passions and pain into her music, allowing circumstances both within and outside of her control to feed her hungry heart. Like most successful artists, Braswell doesn't ignore the messy storylines of life or hide from her own sensitivities. She lays them right out on the table, pushes to form deep musical and personal alliances, and leans forward into the unknown with the goal of creating something new and exciting.

Two years ago Braswell, who'd come to many drum

fans' attention with Le Butcherettes, the group fronted by vocalist Teri Gender Bender and featuring Mars Volta/At the Drive-In founder Omar Rodríguez-López on bass, began working with the popular Brooklyn-based psych-rock band A Place to Bury Strangers. Since then, Lia, guitarist/singer Oliver Ackermann, and bassist/singer Dion Lunadon have spent much time on stage and in the studio developing the music featured on their brand-new album, *Pinned*. It's a stirring collection. Braswell brings a new sort of groove and grit to the band's cavernous yet intimate songs, offering alternately trancey and dancing performances that recall the transfixing beats of Can's Jaki Liebeckzeit and Joy Division/New Order drummer Stephen Morris.

We met Lia at a Williamsburg cafe to learn more about her evolving relationship with A Place to Bury Strangers, and about the life experiences that inform her work.

Lia: I was born in Van Nuys, California. My mom married an engineer in Amsterdam and they moved to California and then divorced. But before they did, he built a small studio in our garage. My mom married my dad seven years later. But that studio was such a haven for my brothers and I growing up. My older brother would host parties and jam sessions. The first time I appreciated live music was in that room with him and his friends. I remember it being really loud and vibrating all around my body and thinking, *Now that's a nice feeling to have—what WAS that?*

When I was five my brother developed cancer, and he struggled with it for three years before he passed. That was a big reason my mother would allow us to have gatherings as much as possible. He wanted to be surrounded by music and family and creating. It was humbling to see.

I started to really enjoy playing after my brother's passing. His friends would still come over. I was a little shy at first to play, but they'd say, "You know us, we're family—just play!" So we would jam. It taught me how to play with older people, and that it doesn't matter how old or talented you are—you can get together with people and build something from scratch.

In my last year of high school I started my first originals band, Ostrich Eyes, and after graduation I started a band with the girl who played bass in that band, Nikki [Godinez], called Peter Pants. All we wanted to do was play the Smell in L.A., this really cool DIY all-ages place. A lot of teenagers would go there who weren't into what their more mainstream classmates were into. I homed in on something I wanted to do, which was play music with this energy going on.

That's why I'm so happy to play in A Place to Bury Strangers. Their approach to music is exactly what I was interested in from the start. In a way it's a continuation of my coping mechanism for losing my brother, articulating it and helping other people use their anger or loss and creating something meaningful out of it.

MD: Listening to *Pinned* makes me feel like the players are completely committed to leading listeners to a specific emotional place.

Lia: I'm feeling it as well. Especially the first song, "Never Coming Back." That song changed a bit. When we recorded it, Oliver incorporated elements of his demo and the way we were playing it live. In the demo there was no ride cymbal in the beginning parts, and when I was playing it live there was ride the whole time. We started thinking, *This needs more layers. Let's make it feel like it's not heavy all the time.* I was playing with this dynamic where it would go from the softest I could play to the hardest.

When I'm playing this song, I channel my brother and the fact that I know that he's never coming back, and I have to sing that over and over to really push out how that makes me feel. The process that I approach music with now isn't so much a technical thing—even though that's where I came from—but a deeply emotional one. That's so important to me.

Story By Adam Budofsky

Photos by John Fell



Tools of the Trade

Braswell plays a C&C kit with an off-peach wrap, featuring 15x16 and 15x18 floor toms and a 12x24 kick drum, along with a vintage Ludwig rack tom with red sparkle wrap converted to a snare. She plays Dream cymbals (14" hi-hats, 18" crash, 22" ride), her hardware includes a DW 3000 or 5000 bass drum pedal and lightweight stands, and her sticks are Vic Firth 5A American Classics.

I just did a tour with the singer Mirah, who I've been playing with on and off for the past year or so. She's got some beautiful and sincere lyrics, which come from different approaches to activism and trying to understand the world a bit better, and that's something I can connect with. So when I was learning her songs, just as much as I was learning the parts, I was trying to engage what she wants to evoke in the song. With *A Place to Bury Strangers* it's more active—we're just kind of going with how we feel in the moment, though we want it to be really intense all the time. And that's really thrilling to me, because it's catharsis.

MD: What was the recording process for *Pinned*?

Lia: Oliver wrote demos for the songs, so I based a lot of my playing on what I'd heard on them, which were drum machine beats. I just tried to make them my own while sorting out what he was going for.

"Never Coming Back" was one of the songs where I feel I had more of a variety of things that I had composed for it, because I wanted to put in the wave.... With Peter Pants and

Ostrich Eyes, I would try to do the most difficult and intricate drumbeats that I could. But I think the most important contributions I made to *Pinned* are dynamics and figuring out what I can do to make the songs flow.

At the time we were building a studio, which we wanted to make extremely soundproof. We didn't really have the space ready to record in time, though, so we went to a place called Spaceman Sound and did the skeletons of everything there—bass, drums, vocals, guitar—all live, with effects as well. Some of the songs have overdubbed guitars or vocals. But we tried to keep it as live as possible and not add nuances to it that we're not playing live.

MD: The drums sound different on each song.

Lia: It was hard for me to figure out what I wanted the drums to sound like. Oliver and Dion are helping me, teaching me almost an engineer's approach, a mathematical approach, with effects pedals. Oliver builds circuit boards; that's his day job as the owner of Death by Audio pedals.

MD: Talk about the song "Look Me in the Eye."

Lia: If we were feeling tired, we'd play that song to pick back up. It's really fast, and then at the third verse I jump into 16th notes. That was hard to play at first, because I'm playing fast kick as well. But I was like, *I want to get better at this so I can feel the energy and the impact that it has.*

MD: What were some of the other challenges during the recording?

Lia: Making sure that I was comfortable playing with and without a metronome. We tried both ways for pretty much all the songs to see how it was flowing the most. Some songs we don't like to play with a metronome, because it should feel live and have a natural flow.

MD: When you listen to the album now, do you hear how your contributions move the music in a certain direction?

Lia: Absolutely. It's exciting, but it's also intimidating, because I enjoy and admire all of the drummers who came before me. I incorporate their approaches into the live shows, but I feel this album isn't so—and I hate to use this word—but it isn't so "masculine." I mean, I'm a rock drummer in

terms of categories, and live this band is loud and totally outrageous and abrasive and intense, and I like that and put that into the momentum of how I'm feeling during the shows. But I'm also an artistic drummer, and on the record I'm not just pushing myself to be the loudest and most aggressive drummer ever, and I think the guys appreciate that.

This past year and a half hasn't been easy, though. At first I was like, *Whoa, you're throwing so many musical curveballs at me.* Now I appreciate everything that they were throwing at me. But there were nights when we would practice and I would go home crying and thinking, *I'm not good enough for this or We're not connecting very well.* Not in a personality sense, but just because it was so shaky. I was scarred by things that happened in other bands where my energy was welcomed but then put in the background. I was like, *I'm in a band that's been together for ten years, and all of a sudden they want me to give my opinion or my taste to it?* That's scary. Plus there's the age difference—they're in their forties and I was twenty-four when I started with them. But I talked to them openly about it. I'd be like, "I'm sorry I'm being so awful, guys!" And they were like, "Lia, you don't have to be sorry—we'll work on this." They're very empathetic, nurturing, and motivating.

MD: Tell me more about the live show.

Lia: One of the things that we incorporate is this wood cart that has a monitor in it, a drum machine, a couple effects pedals, and a portable multi-track recorder. We're writing and mixing songs on the fly, and we have a microphone, so at any time one of us can start singing and go into the crowd dancing. It's really beautiful, because we're engaging with the crowd, making them part of the show.

MD: How did you meet the band?

Lia: Two years ago I left a band that I was living with and pushing everything for, Le Butcherettes. It wasn't a healthy environment. I sold all my stuff, including my car, and flew to Europe and hung out there for a little while. I spent time with my family, wrote some music. I sort of lost faith in joining bands and even playing drums in general. I wanted to quit, to just stop trying to impress people.

But I needed to figure out where to go next, so I came to New York, where I found all these different outlets to continue playing and writing my own stuff. There was one band that Dion was friends with, and they needed a drummer for a couple shows. Dion was at one of the shows and thought it was cool, so he got my email and asked

if I wanted to play a couple shows in Texas. I learned about seventeen songs and we practiced a couple times. In the meantime I was starting to gain momentum with this band TR/ST in L.A., and I got asked to tour with the band Jerry Paper, but right before that was supposed to happen were these three gigs with A Place to Bury Strangers.

I was thinking, *I really love these guys. I love the energy so much.* And right before we went on stage for our third gig, Oliver was like, "If you want to keep playing with us nerds, you're welcome to," and I was, "Absolutely, a hundred percent!" The moment I met them and listened to the songs and sort of understood what it was, it was immediate. And on top of that, Oliver and Dion opened up this space for me to sing, which I'd been wanting to do with Le Butcherettes.

This whole experience has provided

such a profound understanding of where I want to direct my instincts. It's motivating to me that during every show there's a point where everything drops out and I bring my autoharp up and just improvise a song. That's the kind of stuff that I do in my bedroom, but when I'm with people, so much crazy stuff comes out. I'm like, *How am I hitting this note right now?* [laughs] I'm utterly grateful for that opportunity.

MD: Talk about the pedalboard on top of your bass drum.

Lia: The two main pedals are a reverb and one of Oliver's pedals called the Echo Master. I use it on my vocals, but I'm learning how to make it embrace the sound of the drums as well. So I have a mic that's attached to a gooseneck, and I usually keep it pointed down to my knees so that I'm capturing everything. Then there are songs where I'll lay it on the snare or floor tom so that I

Recordings

Le Butcherettes *Cry Is for the Flies* /// **Gothic Tropic** *"Underwater Games"* /// **Peter Pants** *"Streets or No Streets"* /// **Ostrich Eyes** *"Omen"* /// **Lalande** *"Guide"* /// **Only You** *"Applying Myself"* /// **Teamgeist** *"Millie's"*



Lia Braswell

can have a huge delay or reverb pushing through. Or I'll have it just on the cymbals. One of our amps has an octave changer, so when I put it on the ride, it makes this badass low rumble.

MD: You recently had a couple lessons with the noted jazz and world-music drummer Susie Ibarra.

Lia: This was when I started to play with Mirah. I wanted to learn how to play for someone who comes from a very quiet angle. Susie helped me with control, and with restructuring how I do rudiments so that I'm using my feet to balance everything. We also got into tuning a bit. I just saw her playing at Pioneer Works, and the sound of her drums was so wild and powerful and descriptive of what she wanted to evoke in the music. We talked about the circle of fifths and tuning the toms to thirds. She told me to ask the people that I'm playing with what key they're singing or playing guitar in the most.

MD: Talk about your solo work.

Lia: I've been writing songs for years, and I've been singing for almost as long as I've been playing drums. I recorded an EP, and a song came out of it that I was really proud of. A couple friends of mine started sending it out to people, and the day after I quit Le Butcherettes I got an email from one of them, who said that a label was interested and wanted to have a meeting with me. So I flew to L.A. to have a meeting with this person, and he turned out to be a predator.

MD: Oh, my goodness, that's horrible from so many angles.

Lia: Yeah, and it was one of my favorite labels. And now I'm looked at as that person

Lia on Her Influences

Muppet Show/Fraggle Rock theme songs "These two shows were the highlights of my childhood, and I always had the theme songs stuck in my head. I would transcribe them on the kit and sing along."

Ani DiFranco "Little Plastic Castle" "One of the first concerts I ever attended was an Ani show. I can't remember where exactly, but my parents loved her, so they would always blast this album in our Toyota 4Runner. My dad would mimic her drummer at the time, Andy, and say, 'He can hit!'"

Hanson "MMMBop" "The very first concert I ever went to was Hanson at the Hollywood Bowl. It was the first time I saw kids playing instruments on a big stage, and on top of that switching

instruments with each other. It blew me away! I had high hopes for starting a band with my brothers and doing the same thing."

No Doubt *Tragic Kingdom* "This is one of the only albums that I can sing and play to—quite sloppily—the whole way through. It was my key influence in middle school, and I played along to it until my high school graduation."

Be Your Own Pet *Be Your Own Pet* "This was my punk breakthrough inspiration. Before them, I was stuck in the pop culture of the masses, but this album got me to make my way out of the trends and into Iggy and the Stooges, Bad Brains, the Clash, Ted Leo and the Pharmacists, and local Nashville/L.A.-scene bands."

Mahavishnu Orchestra *Birds of Fire* "I got into Mahavishnu Orchestra in high school, which inspired me to start playing around with my style and polyrhythms a whole lot more."

The Slits *Cut* "As soon as I heard this album, I thought I had found the gold I've always been waiting for. Budgie's beats brought a new style to my horizon."

Kate Bush *The Dreaming* "I got into Kate Bush later in life, but everything changed as soon as I heard this album. I was confused at how much it resonated with me, because it's unlike anything else I was listening to. But somehow the theatrics and elements of the music heightened my attention to recorded performance."

who was the first one to call out someone who sexually harassed a potential artist for the label. I'm embarrassed, humiliated, and really sad that that came on to me, after sharing something that was so important and significant to what I wanted to do as an artist.

So I sort of took a break from it for a while. I tried to process it. But I write nonstop, and I've finally started getting back to believing in myself.

MD: So, what are you trying to achieve musically with your solo material?

Lia: I want to find my truth through it. I want to invoke a message. I want to be able to feel so alive and present with what I'm singing about and playing. Especially since I've become more comfortable improvising in a band setting, I'm feeling stronger in my abilities to reveal the most honest part of me.



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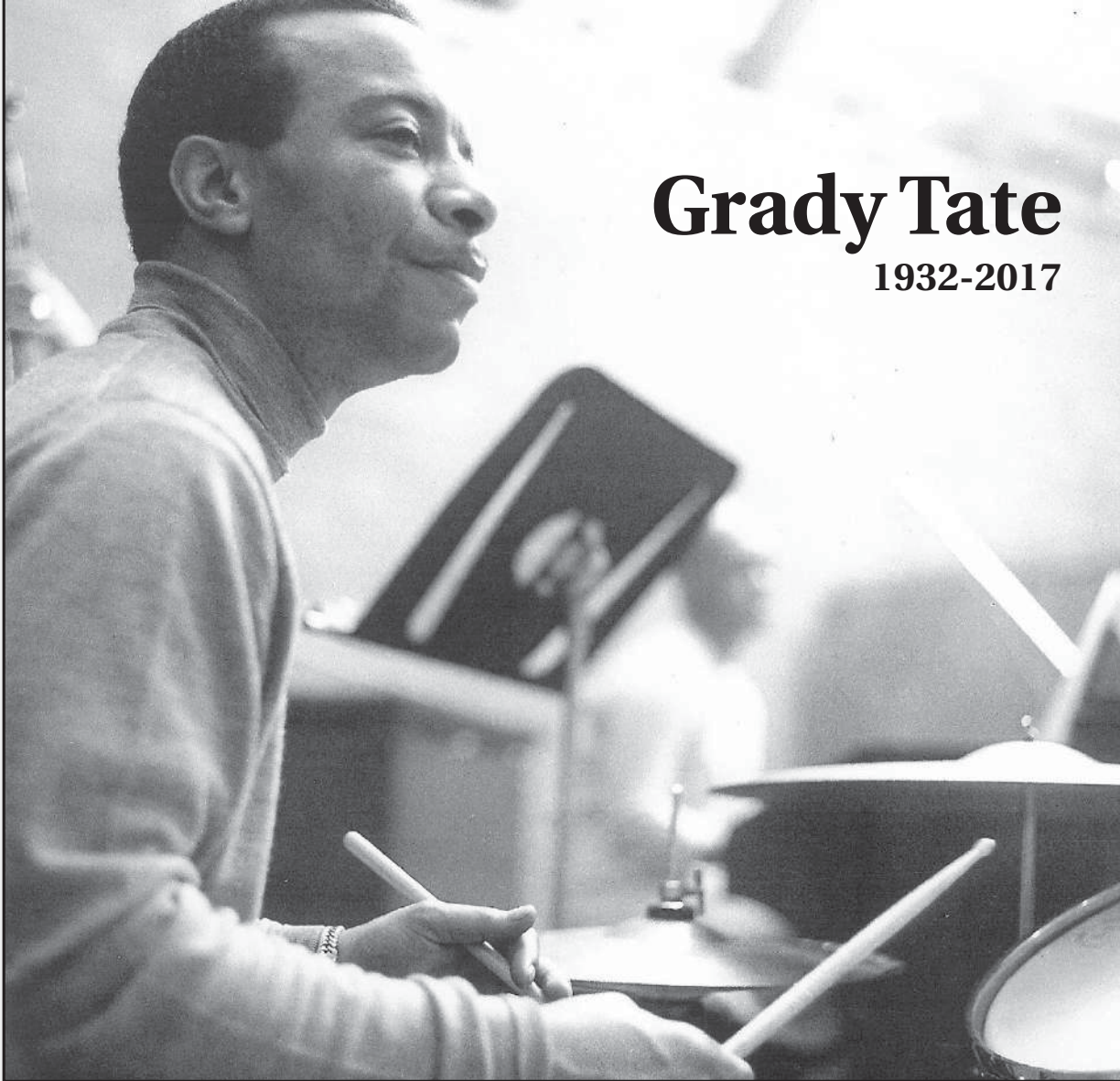
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Grady Tate

1932-2017

Master drummer Grady Tate, whose sixty-year career featured work in nearly every prominent genre, died last October 8 in New York City. The drummer's peer Roy Haynes' style was often characterized as snap, crackle, and pop; Tate's would be referred to as clean, crisp, and tasteful.

Tate was born in Durham, North Carolina, in 1932, and his love of music began when he saw his first show—which also turned out to be his first public performance. The youngster was in the audience with his parents when the MC asked if anyone in the crowd wanted to perform. Tate promptly ran onto the stage. Later he fondly recalled receiving a crate of RC Cola for his rendition of a song called "The One Rose," and he always considered that to be his first payment for a performance.

Singing was Tate's first love—he'd go on to record several CDs as a singer, and he sang and drummed on the TV series *Schoolhouse Rock!* But as a youngster, after his voice changed, he focused on the drumset. His voice would return later as a warm baritone that would inform his drum sound and approach. Tate would perfect his craft through college and in the U.S. Air Force.

The big break came when Tate sat in with jazz organist "Wild" Bill Davis, who was so impressed that he called the next day to offer the drummer a gig. That put Tate on a road that eventually led to his becoming one of the most recorded drummers in history.

What made Tate special? He simply played who he was—an attractive guy brimming with confidence, direct in his dealings

with people, articulate, intensely musical, and a bit of a rascal. All of these characteristics informed his masterful groove.

Tate's recording credits number more than a thousand, yet it's not the quantity that counts, but the quality—along with the vast array of styles that he traversed. The New York recording scene from the '50s through the '80s was smoking, and it demanded drummers of vast ability to play the music of some of the best composers and arrangers in town. Quincy Jones, Milt Jackson, Oliver Nelson, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, and Paul Simon make up a small percentage of the top artists with whom Tate worked. Composer Angelo Badalamenti of TV's *Twin Peaks* even provided a spot in the show's soundtrack for a Tate brush solo called "Grady Groove," a rare tribute to a session musician.

Tate preferred playing jazz, but thanks to his adaptability and his association with Quincy Jones, he began branching out, accepting dates in other genres. He not only survived but flourished during the changes that came with the '60s, and he continued nonstop through the first decade of the twenty-first century.

There's an old axiom in music that whatever gig you play, you should always bring something to the table. Grady Tate never failed to bring something special to every date he played, and music is the better for his presence.

Tate is survived by his wife, Vivian, and son, Grady Tate Jr.

Mike DeSimone





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B. 8" prototype tom

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E. 14x14 floor tom

F. 14x16 floor tom

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Not shown: 6x14 Reference Series snare (spare)

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5. 19" A Custom crash

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Not shown: 18" Oriental China Trash

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Electronics: Roland SPD-SX multipad

"I've been with Pearl since 1997," says Noah "Wuv" Bernardo. "This was my first acrylic kit, so I didn't know how it was going to sound. But in the venues we're playing, once we miked them up, I knew they'd be awesome."

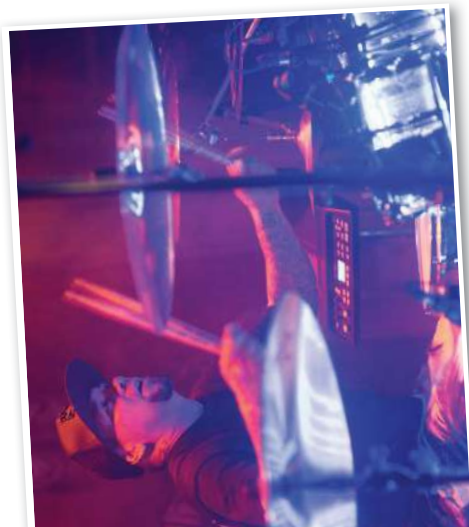
"I was always a wood guy," Wuv continues. "I started switching things up, using maple toms and a mahogany kick for a deeper sound. The first acrylic kit I played was Ray Luzier's, when we toured with Korn in Europe. I didn't bring anything because Ray said to just use his drums, and it was awesome. I've since been playing this acrylic kit for the last year."

We asked Wuv about how he likes to hear his drums. "The acrylic kits are higher pitched, which is cool because our guitarist and bass player's tones are low and heavy; I always needed to use smaller drums to cut through," he says. "Then when I went to the acrylic kit, my sound cut even more, which I like."

Regarding his snare sound, Wuv says, "I want a full sound that's not too marching snare-ish, it's at a medium tension, but it has some crack. The bottom is hand-tightened as much as I can, and then followed by

a half turn with the drum key. It's not so tight that the snare wires don't resonate. I play a lot of ghost notes, even in the heavy music we play."

When asked about how other drummers could develop their own style, Bernardo says, "Do your thing. I never learned technique; I just let my band naturally guide me in the way I play drums. I think that's the best way to learn. Bless you if you go to school and learn technique or read music. But sometimes when I see people that get their technique together first, they're so trained that their style doesn't come with it. They can't think outside the technical. Other people's advice may be the opposite of mine, but I got into bands and playing drums because it's fun. So have fun!"





6

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2

Reading Syncopated Rhythms

Getting Familiar With Offbeats

by Joel Rothman

Syncopation describes stressed or accented offbeats, which are typically heard in jazz and Latin music. In terms of how it's notated, syncopation in duple time signatures is often produced when quarter notes, which normally fall on a downbeat, fall on the upbeat or offbeat 8th note. Let's explore this further before studying an etude that will help you become familiar with reading syncopated rhythms.

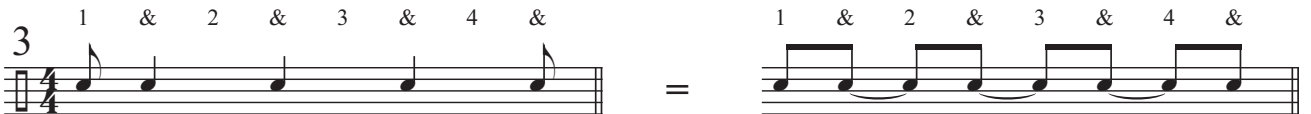
Here's an example of six basic syncopated rhythmic patterns with quarter notes and 8th notes in 2/4.



You may also encounter consecutive quarter notes on the upbeat in longer phrases, such as in a measure of 4/4.



When it comes to percussive notation, it could be argued that notating consecutive quarter notes on the upbeat is incorrect. In 4/4, each half of the bar should be clearly divided, and consecutive offbeat quarter notes obscure both halves of the measure, as demonstrated in the following example.



The rhythm sounds exactly the same in both of the previous measures, but in the second bar you can clearly see each half of the measure.

A contradicting argument could be made that consecutive offbeat quarter notes allow for fewer notes to be written in order to produce the same rhythm. Considering the previous example, you only have to read five notes in the first bar as opposed to eight tied 8th notes in the second. The less-crowded measure could enable drummers to read the pattern faster.

To become familiar with reading offbeat rhythms, practice the following etude, which demonstrates various syncopated patterns within a musical format.

Moderately Fast





cresc. -----

f

ff

Joel Rothman is the author of nearly one hundred drum and percussion books, which sell worldwide through his company, JR Publications. For more information, visit joelrothman.com.



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Playing on the Upbeat

Twenty Funky Phrases and Variations

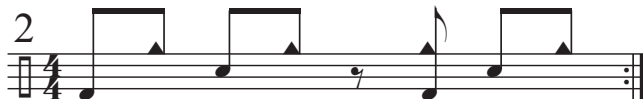
by Powell Randolph



In this lesson we'll explore grooves in which the ride hand plays a cowbell on offbeat 8th notes. Exercise 1 demonstrates a basic quarter-note kick and snare pattern while the cowbell fills in the holes on the upbeats. This creates a linear feel where no part overlaps.



Now let's try some bass drum variations. Be careful not to rush the 8th-note rests in Exercises 2 and 3.



This next example can be a little tricky. Beats 1 and 3 have an 8th-note rest, and the bass drum and snare are played simultaneously on the backbeat. The resulting groove has a bit of a reggae feel.



These next examples incorporate 16th-note variations around the offbeats.



As the 16th notes get busier, be sure to pay attention to the accents on the snare, and play the unaccented notes as quiet/low ghost strokes.



Here's an Afro-Cuban songo groove with an accented cowbell on each quarter note.



Now displace the song pattern by starting it on its last two 16th notes, which moves the cowbell to the offbeats.



Powell Randolph is a drum teacher at Alpha Music in Virginia Beach and plays rock shows with orchestras around North America for Windburn Music Productions. He can be reached through powellrandolph.com.



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Uptempo Studies

Part 1: Whole Notes and Half Notes

by Steve Fidyk

In this series, we'll focus on exercises that develop flexibility and endurance when playing fast tempos (300 bpm and up). To efficiently play at these speeds, it's essential to stay relaxed. To gain the confidence and language necessary to handle such speeds, it helps to work toward specific goal tempos systematically and gradually.

As you begin practicing the comping exercises below, find a tempo at which you can complete each example without stopping or getting fatigued. I recommend keeping a practice log of the tempo and the amount of time you can sustain it. As your endurance improves, increase the tempo by five bpm, and see how long you can hold that speed in a relaxed and legato manner.

As you bump up the tempo, you may begin to feel tension in your body. When that happens, stop and take a break to relax before diving back in.

The Sweet Spot

Try to find the sweet spot on your ride cymbal where the stick has the most rebound. Playing on the thicker area of the cymbal can make it easier for the stick to rebound, which saves energy. Some drummers also prefer using nylon-tipped sticks to help improve articulation when playing fast. This is due to the fact that nylon rebounds faster off cymbals than wood does.

Mental and Physical Fatigue

Working on the following endurance exercises can help you overcome physical fatigue. To help eliminate tightness within your ride cymbal sound, try using more forearm motion to create leverage. Also, to combat mental fatigue, breathe deeply as you play.

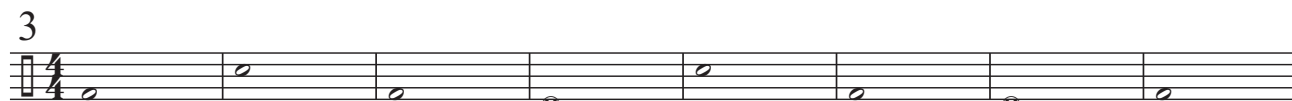
Practice the following comping patterns with the standard ride pattern notated in Exercise 1.



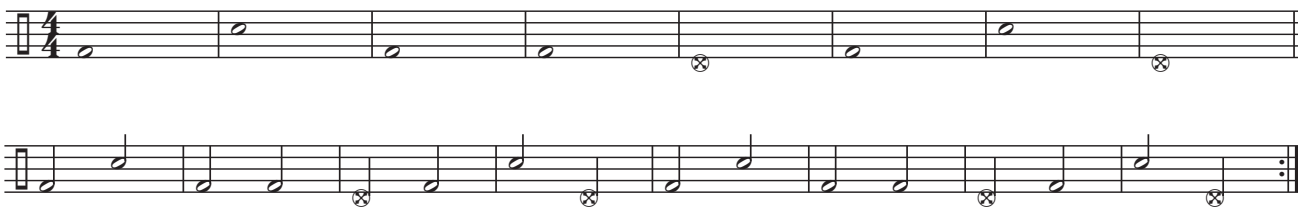
You can also practice each whole- and half-note example with these additional ride variations.



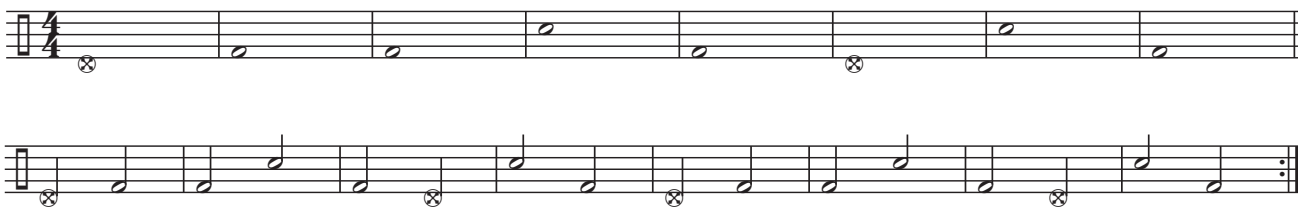
Here are the whole- and half-note comping exercises.



5



6



7



Stay focused and relaxed as you practice. Also be sure to stretch your wrist, forearm, and finger muscles before playing these to prepare your mental and physical reflexes.

Next time we'll explore examples that incorporate dotted half notes and dotted quarter notes.

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



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Organic Odd-Time Patterns

A Smooth Method for Uncommon Phrases

by Aaron Edgar

There are many ways we can approach writing patterns in odd time signatures. On one hand, we can write unique, choppy feels that match the given meter. This is a common go-to technique for many progressive bands, including my own group, Third Ion. On the other hand, we can write feels that smooth out the time signature. We'll focus on that method in this month's lesson.

To even out an odd time signature, I like to simulate a common backbeat. To start, divide the measure in half, and use the partials that comprise one half of the measure as the spacing between two snare accents within the entire bar. For example, if you're playing in 11/8, you can space two snare accents out by eleven 16th notes, as demonstrated in our first example. Experimenting with where that first backbeat lands can yield many interesting variations.

Exercise 1 places the first backbeat on the fourth 8th note in a measure of 11/8 and the second backbeat on the "&" of beat 9.



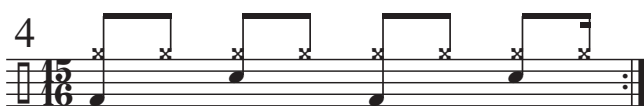
Exercise 2 explores this same idea with the snare starting on the third 8th note. With one exception, the bass drum is phrased using groups of three 16th notes to help smooth out the rhythm. We'll explore that phrasing later in this lesson.



Exercise 3 places the first backbeat on the "&" of beat 3 and employs a funky ride and hi-hat pattern to create a consistent, driving flow. This type of groove can sound hypnotic when played dynamically. Try to achieve a smooth feel, à la modern jazz great Brian Blade.



Let's explore this idea within 15/16 and 21/16 by utilizing three-note groupings of 16th notes. Exercise 4 demonstrates a choppy 15/16 groove with an 8th-note hi-hat pattern, and Exercise 5 spaces the kick, snare, and hi-hat over a three-note 16th-based grouping. Exercise 5 also creates an illusion of playing in 5/8, which feels significantly less jagged than most 15/16 patterns.



Exercises 6 and 7 demonstrate a similar idea in 21/16. In Exercise 7, we end up with a groove that sounds like it's in 7/8.



Playing odd rhythms as we did in Exercises 5 and 7 can create an implied metric modulation. Exercises 8 and 9 place these modulated rhythms on the ride over the basic kick and snare patterns from Exercises 4 and 6 (with some slight embellishments). Moving the 16th-note groupings to the ride helps the patterns flow more.



Moving the ride pattern away from beat 1 can also add to the revolving flow of these new feels. Exercise 10 starts the ride on the third 16th note of a bar of 15/16. Once your ride hand is comfortable, try accenting every second note on the bell. This pattern takes two bars to resolve and helps smooth out the rhythm.



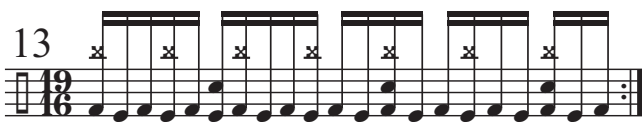
The next example demonstrates this type of feel with an embellished pattern that breaks away from the 16th-note subdivision. We'll start the three-note grouping on the second note of the 15/16 measure. The bass drum notes notated with a triangle are to be played on a higher-tuned auxiliary kick. If you don't have an extra bass drum, play those notes on a floor tom with your left hand.



You can explore the concepts in this lesson with any grouping of notes that contrasts with the pulse. If you want to create a feel with a five-note pattern, simply pick a time signature divisible by five. Exercise 12 demonstrates this in 25/16, which is one 16th note longer than a bar of 6/4. The five-note grouping is voiced on the ride bell.



Exercise 13 demonstrates a bar of 19/16 with solid double bass in mixed subdivisions of quintuplets and 16ths. The right hand plays a stack on every third partial of the measure while the snare rounds out the pattern. The leading foot switches on the repeat.



This last example demonstrates a 15/16 groove in which the three-note rhythm doesn't resolve perfectly. The leading foot switches on the repeat.



Practice these exercises until you can play them on autopilot. Every odd time signature is learnable. The more comfortable you become with them, the easier it will be to make them sound natural.

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 information, visit moderndrummer.com.



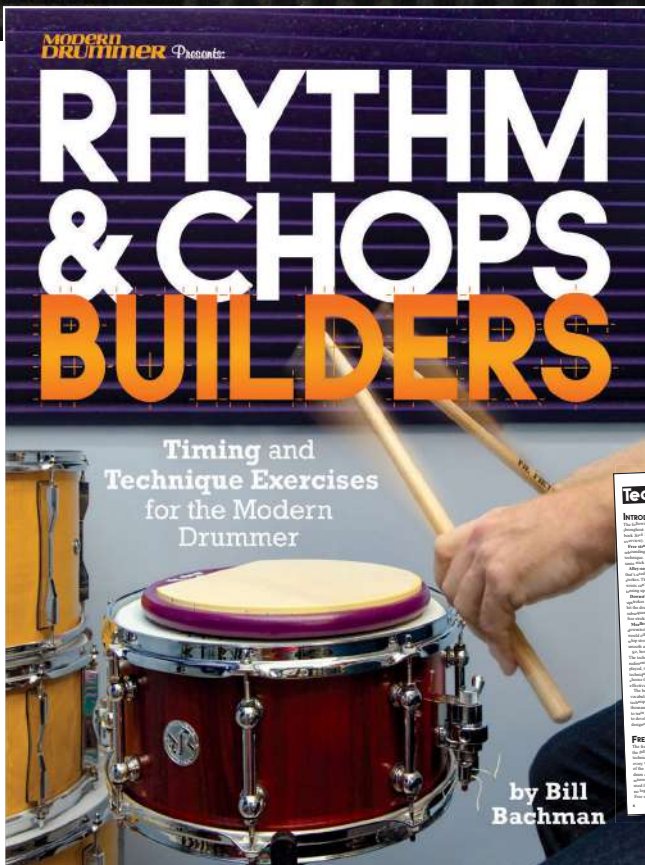
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Mind Matters

The Power of “No”

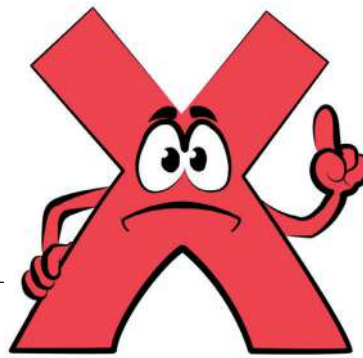
by Bernie Schallehn

Q: My lead guitarist is finding fault with the drum parts I write. When we first attempt a new tune, he often rolls his eyes, makes a face, and stops the song. He'll either start offering suggestions or ask to get behind the kit and play it the “right” way. (He knows a few basic beats and fills.) Everyone in the room gets tense, and I usually cave in and play the song the way he wants it performed. I don't ever disagree with what he wants. I hate acting this way, but I tend to avoid confrontation at any cost.

A: You're avoiding confrontation and paying a high price. You're compromising yourself as a drummer and as a member of this band. You're engaging in what I'd call “consensual bullying.” And—worst of all—you're allowing this guy to slash deep cuts into your self-esteem.

“No! Don't put your fingers near the wall socket!” “No! You've already had enough sweets for today!” “No! You can't ride your bike without a helmet!” As a child, you probably heard those types of messages from your parents or caregivers thousands of times. Although they were meant to safeguard or protect you in some way, the directive also attached a strong negative connotation to the word “no.”

Additionally, many of us were taught never to say “no” to an authority figure. Saying “no” would've been a sign of disrespect, or we might have been labeled oppositional or defiant if we refused to comply with a request or command. Life was much easier,



and we were looked upon as being “good” if we were compliant.

Before we go any further, it's important to state that there should be only one drummer in this band—you. Before you can initiate change in how you interact with your guitarist, you have to start with a firm conviction that when you walk into your rehearsal space and settle behind the kit, *you* are the drummer in the room.

There is tremendous power in the word “no.” When a well-known session drummer was starting to become the “first call” guy in his town, he felt tremendously overwhelmed. His initial way of coping was to go out every night and hide in a bar. Although he wasn't home, voicemails offering work continued to stack up. He was at a crossroads. He'd worked hard to build a good reputation, but now he wasn't able to fulfill all of the requests. He played on as many recordings as he could, but he was exhausted and would continue to disappear to a bar to hide from his success. It didn't take long before producers and artists started to become angry with him. He'd garnered an unfounded reputation for being arrogant and aloof.

But that wasn't the case. He just hadn't set any boundaries on his time. When he finally realized that there are only twenty-four hours in a day, he took action. He began to turn down some of the work that was offered to him. Sure, some of the producers and artists got angry, but at least he was dealing with the situation honestly. It was simply impossible for him to fulfill every request. He was now setting boundaries, and he had learned to say “no.” His life became less chaotic, and he had more control of his professional life.

Your Action Plan

Before your next rehearsal, look into a mirror and tell yourself, “I'm the drummer. I know what I think works best for the songs. It's okay for me to say, ‘no,’ and I will if I need to.” Remind yourself that by continuing to concede to every demand, you're allowing your self-esteem and creativity to be drained.

The next time the guitarist starts picking apart your playing in front of the band, remind him that you're the drummer and you feel that you know what works best for the song. If he tries to commandeer the drum throne, hold your ground and tell him you're no longer open to his suggestions.

Possible Outcomes

Don't expect to feel comfortable during any part of this initial interaction. You're standing up for yourself, setting a new boundary, and carving out your rightful place in the band.

I don't know what will happen next. If he tries to enlist support from your bandmates for his suggestions, counter by asking the others, “Am I not the drummer here?” The power of the group can be used to help shut down the bullying behavior. If the others side with him, then you misjudged their respect of your skills. Move on, and find another band.



Bernie Schallehn holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.



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Musician Pete Townshend
Rolling Stone Magazine
July, 1989.

Photo by Chauky Davis

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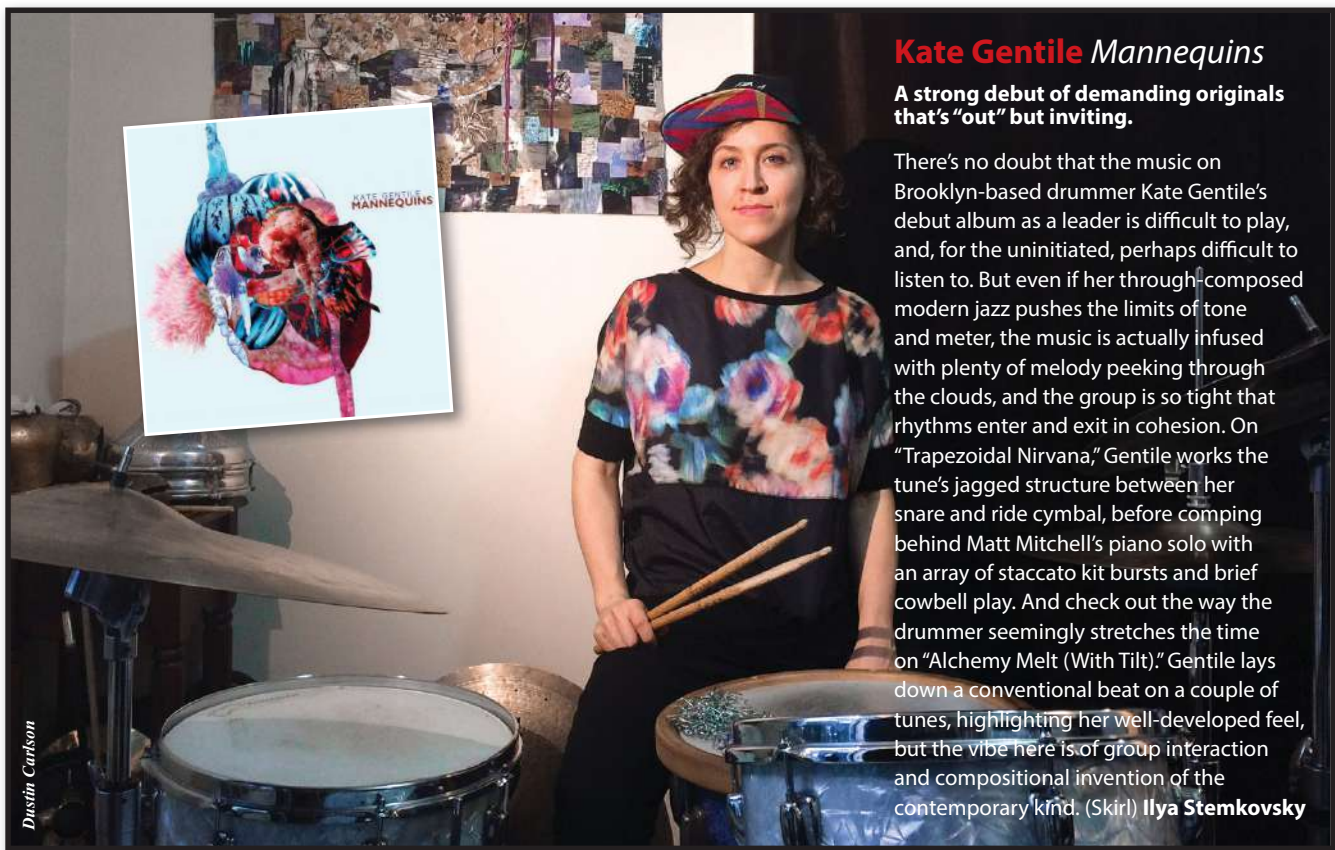
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Kate Gentile *Mannequins*

A strong debut of demanding originals that's "out" but inviting.

There's no doubt that the music on Brooklyn-based drummer Kate Gentile's debut album as a leader is difficult to play, and, for the uninitiated, perhaps difficult to listen to. But even if her through-composed modern jazz pushes the limits of tone and meter, the music is actually infused with plenty of melody peeking through the clouds, and the group is so tight that rhythms enter and exit in cohesion. On "Trapezoidal Nirvana," Gentile works the tune's jagged structure between her snare and ride cymbal, before comping behind Matt Mitchell's piano solo with an array of staccato kit bursts and brief cowbell play. And check out the way the drummer seemingly stretches the time on "Alchemy Melt (With Tilt)." Gentile lays down a conventional beat on a couple of tunes, highlighting her well-developed feel, but the vibe here is of group interaction and compositional invention of the contemporary kind. (Skirl) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Dustin Carlson

Jamison Ross *All for One*

A rising multi-talent shines again.

Jamison Ross won a record contract when he wowed judges at the 2012 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz drum competition. But he had more surprises in store. His 2015 debut, *Jamison*, not only showcased ace drumming but impressive vocal talents as well, resulting in a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album. While this follow-up spotlights vocals even more, Ross's drumming is still key. This groover knows when to subtly support and when to let it rip. Lifted by Ross's tight working band, the mix of covers and originals draws from wide influences, spanning Fats Waller to '60s/'70s R&B to modern jazz, often served with plenty of New Orleans seasoning and a modern perspective. The ballad "Don't Go to Strangers" is a soulful vocal highpoint pulsed by ultra-minimal brushes. In contrast, Ross swings hard on "Everybody's Cryin' Mercy" and mightily funks it up on "Call Me." What's his next direction? Wherever he pleases.

(Concord Jazz) **Jeff Potter**



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Paa Kow *Cookpot*

It's easy to get hooked by this fusion of highlife, funk, and jazz.

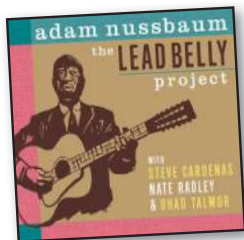
The Ghana-born, Colorado-based drummer Paa Kow possesses a great feel, evidenced in the slinkiness of album opener "The Way I Feel," with bold fills added from a range of percussion sources. He has a very playful side as well, breaking into a 2-and-4 backbeat over a 6/8 just for fun, tossing in a nifty two-bar bass drum fill on "Meetu Ehum," and heating up the polyrhythms at the end of "Cookpot." "I Made a Mistake" and "Go With It" are as funky and brain-twisting as some of Herbie Hancock's late-1970s brew. And there are several jaw-dropping "No they didn't!" moments here featuring Paa Kow's precise and beautifully intentioned playing, sly and subtle ensemble shadings, rhythmic conversations with bassist Tom Ogunribido, and musical accents setting up the amazing horn play. (byallmeansband.com) **Robin Tolleson**



Adam Nussbaum *The Leadbelly Project*

Performing the songs of the legendary folk singer Leadbelly with a quartet of drums, saxophone, and two guitars creates a joyous sound that is as pleasurable as it is cleansing.

A Leadbelly fan as a child, Adam Nussbaum wisely omits bass guitar on his new recording as a leader, lending the music an elastic buoyancy while also allowing his drums to shine, a revelation free from lower-frequencies. Anyone over the age of forty will know these Americana standards, including "Black Betty," a 1977 hit single (with revised lyrics) by the New York City rockers Ram Jam. Each song, from "Bottle Up and Go" to "Green Corn," floats and unfurls, radiating the elation of improvisation with melody at its core. Nussbaum masterly prods and pokes the performers, with sticks and with brushes, his big swing beat a consistent delight. (Sunnyside) **Ken Micallef**



Matt Cameron *Cavedweller*

Ripping a page from the Soundgarden playbook, the band's drummer returns—with a twist.

Enamored of the drumming and music of David Bowie's final album, *Blackstar*, Pearl Jam/Soundgarden drummer Matt Cameron hired **MARK GUILIANA** to bring his always-something-special to this collection of hard rock melodies and turbulent beats, while Cameron handles vocals and everything else. Playing off Cameron's Ableton Live demos complete with programmed drums, Guiliana plays it deep, fat, and groove-hard.

Guiliana gives Cameron's salty rock misses a tendon-deep massage. Cameron's songs, which have always provided Soundgarden albums with special oddball ballast, deserve closer focus. Opener "Time Can't Wait" recalls classic grunge-era Soundgarden, all raving guitars, raunchy middle section, and catchy chorus. The tuneful "All at Once" could be a Foo Fighters outtake, while "Blind" riffs on some Alice in Chains-meets-George Harrison fantasy rock fest. *Cavedweller* closes with the heavy, thudding "Unnecessary," its odd-meter beat balanced by oily guitars and Cameron's glam-rock vocals. With the passing of Soundgarden vocalist Chris Cornell, Matt Cameron still carries a torch. Beautifully. (Migraine Music) **Ken Micallef**

Go to modern drummer.com to read Cameron's thoughts on the album.



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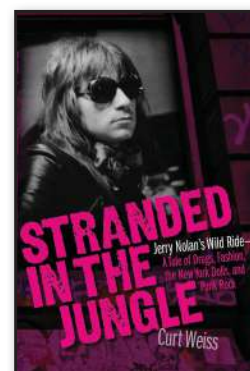
Stranded in the Jungle: Jerry Nolan's Wild Ride by Curt Weiss

The sad takeaway from this meticulously researched biography of the New York Dolls' larger-than-life drummer is the depth of the subject's abject pain.

Despite his many problems, Jerry Nolan thumped with just enough panache and swing to transcend his self-abuse, and his performances on the New York Dolls' classic self-titled debut and the Heartbreakers' *L.A.M.F.* take these albums into rightfully legendary territory. Songs like the Heartbreakers' "Baby Talk" and the Dolls' "Trash" are heightened by Nolan's breakneck pacing and crystalline simplicity.

Author Curt Weiss's strength is his unflinching eye toward the real Nolan. The drummer comes off as a deeply flawed, difficult, even toxic person, and we see his musical brilliance arrive despite his unrepentant addiction to drugs and conniving disregard for basic human decency. Weiss reveals a profoundly insecure, irredeemable individual who was also the best rock and punk drummer in New York City at the time. Nolan, Dolls/Heartbreakers guitarist Johnny Thunders, and the rest were true musical outcasts—people who would betray their ardent fans and caretakers for drugs, and whose transcendent moments arrived when they needed to generate money for the next fix. Perhaps it's a dubious legacy, but Weiss's tale is harrowingly essential. Weiss is a drummer as well, so there's lots of attention to the technical elements of Nolan's studio performances, which elevates this book beyond the ordinary. (Backbeat Books, \$24.99)

John Colpitts



The Grateful Dead's *Europe '72*

The Grateful Dead's traveling party on 1972's European tour numbered fifty strong, and they took advantage of every opportunity to pull off prankster hijinx in the stodgy Old World. There are stories about band members racing cars through Parisian traffic while flying on LSD, roadies staging a baseball game in the lobby of a stuffy German hotel, and general Bozo debauchery beyond one's most far-out psychedelic fantasies. It's unlikely a band has had a wilder time on tour.

It's also unlikely that any other tour's shows have been as meticulously documented. "Everyone and their girlfriends," as the band put it, went along. Therefore, releasing a live album became the only way they could turn a profit. Enter Warner Bros., the band's label, which paid for the Dead to travel with two eight-channel, two-inch tape machines and an engineering crew to record every one of the twenty-two shows. The band compiled the finest of those recordings, and that collection became *Europe '72*. It ranks among the Dead's best releases, as it features definitive versions of a number of then-new tunes—"Jack Straw," "He's Gone," "Ramble on Rose," and "Tennessee Jed"—alongside the classics. Yet it also captures so much more than best-of moments; it's something of a time capsule.

Europe '72 is a snapshot of the Dead at what many believe was its musical peak, before fatal drugs took hold, tight and hungry to explore spiritual spaces within music. It's the final release to feature every founding member. And it's the first time in four years that Bill Kreutzmann served as the band's sole drummer; Mickey Hart, after playing a legendary 1971 run with the band at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, New York, stayed off the bandstand for the next three years.

When most people think of live Grateful Dead shows, it's the "floating bass drums," gongs, and tribal toms suspended from racks that literally set the backdrop. Kreutzmann and Hart are arguably the most well-known drum duo in rock music, and their sound was one of the band's defining elements. So it's somewhat ironic that the Dead's best-selling concert recording—its lone live album to go platinum, in fact—features only one drummer. Ironic, but maybe not accidental. One of the keys to *Europe '72*'s critical, commercial, and emotional success is the space that Hart's absence creates; with a full drumset now absent from the sonic spectrum, it's easier to hear the incredible musicianship on display night after night.

It's suddenly clear why so many guitarists have praised Bob Weir's inventiveness and fluency as a rhythm man. Weir's comping



is more in step with McCoy Tyner's than Ron Wood's; it's clear, melodic, and rhythmically creative without becoming clunky. (That's no accident, either—the band has talked extensively about listening to John Coltrane's classic quartet.) All throughout *Europe '72* Weir feeds Kreutzmann idea after idea that they chew on and spit back out reshaped. The two also know when to lay back, like in "Truckin'," where they trade triplet jabs and cruise on a glassy shuffle for more than ten minutes.

The band's feel on the whole of *Europe '72* is more pendular. You can hear it in the two-step sway of tunes like "He's Gone" and "China Cat Sunflower." That probably has a lot to do with the pared-back drums. With Kreutzmann and Hart, the drums' feel approximates something circular, perpetual even. Each player's grooves tumble over the other's and eventually meet in places that somehow feel both spontaneous and preordained.

Yet Hart's absence doesn't keep Kreutzmann from realizing that snowballing, four-over-six feel that became the Dead's signature rhythmic concept. And Kreutzmann's approach isn't just to play more. To mimic the call-and-response phrases he created with Hart, Kreutzmann scatters the backbeats across multiple bars and beats. That allows him to hint at a number of rhythmic detours he could take but ultimately doesn't. Instead, he reins in the displaced backbeats to form loping phrases that resolve after a few bars. (See

"Jack Straw" 3:52, 140 bpm



BILLY KREUTZMAN
(Grateful Dead)
AVEDIS ZILDJIAN CYMBAL SET-UP
A. 14" Rock Hi-Hats
B. 18" Crash (Medium Thin)
C. 21" Rock
D. 16" Crash Ride



Drums of '72

It's surprisingly difficult to find definitive information about the gear Bill Kreutzmann used at specific shows on the 1972 European tour. Judging from grainy photos and YouTube videos of the shows, internet forums, and a healthy amount of squinting, it looks like a Franken-kit. The footage from the performance on Germany's *Beat-Club* TV program on April 21, 1972—during which most of the band was tripping—has great production, though it's not clear enough to see detailed badges or lugs. It looks like he's using a Ludwig kick drum (14x22), Gretsch toms (8x12 and 9x13, and a 16x16 floor), and a Rogers Dynasonic snare. Some have said that he used a five-piece Sonor rosewood kit on the tour; that's not what it looks like in most footage, but it's hard to say for sure. "Cymbal Set-Ups of Famous Drummers," a promo guide printed by Zildjian, likely in the mid-'70s, lists Kreutzmann's cymbals as Avedis Zildjians: 14" Rock hi-hats, 18" crash on the left side, 21" Rock in the ride position, and 16" crash/ride on the right. (Though in *Europe '72* footage, that right crash/ride looks more like an 18" or 20".) Crispy is the first word that comes to mind to describe the overall drum sound. The toms are powerful but melodic, since Kreutzmann tuned them more like a jazz drummer might. And his ride cymbal has a crystalline articulation that calls to mind K Constantinoples.

"Epilogue" 0:30, 186 bpm

"Jack Straw" musical example.) It lets Kreutzmann create tension and drama within what is essentially a pocket groove, elevating his playing beyond keeping time. When we expect him to zig he zags, and it plunges us into territory that feels unfamiliar. His phrases then illuminate many different paths, and he finds a way to bring the groove home.

Hearing him on his own, there's no way to deny just what a ripping drummer Kreutzmann could be. In "Epilogue," an instrumental rager that sprouts from the end of "Truckin'," he settles into a contrapuntal groove that pits steady, delicate 8ths on the ride against a melody between the snare, second rack tom, and kick. Every now and again he slips in subtle reminders of the "Truckin'" groove—that sharp, metrically modulated shuffle, or the winding snare and ride sextuplets that open the track—just to remind us where the beat originated. (See "Epilogue" musical example.)

It doesn't take long for that "Epilogue" groove to dissolve into "Prelude," another improvised instrumental dreamscape. The tune's space develops into a fury, motivated by a so-fast-it's-

straight swing that Kreutzmann punctuates with snare pops and kick drum bombs. It's reminiscent of the fireworks he set off while tripping in a German hotel, and in those phrases he illustrates the way that the rhythms on the bandstand imitate the rhythms of life on the road. (Like Weir, Kreutzmann was listening to a lot of Coltrane.)

The moment of magic in "Prelude"—really the album's defining moment, where the band makes it clear how much intent goes into the jams—occurs near the five-minute mark, when, somehow, the players begin to find their legs and slam into the original tempo and key of "Truckin'." These rhythmic and harmonic gestures are backward glances that serve as a reminder of the way the band began eighteen minutes earlier. It's a wink that allows you to understand that it's pretty much all the same song—it's just been given the Dead treatment: dissected, inspected, inverted, tossed around, and zipped back up in front of you.

Keith Carne



Yamaha Drums Fiftieth-Anniversary Celebration

The renowned manufacturer takes over Hollywood with a day of performances, gear demos, and honorary guests.

This past September, Yamaha Drums celebrated its fiftieth year with a daylong event at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, California. The day included presentations that reflected back on the company's most significant innovations over the years, such as its debut D20 drumset, the Hexrack hardware system, ball-style tom mounts, the locking hi-hat clutch, the YESS (Yamaha Enhanced Sustain System) suspension mount, and the Air-Seal drum-shell construction system that utilizes staggered diagonal seams.

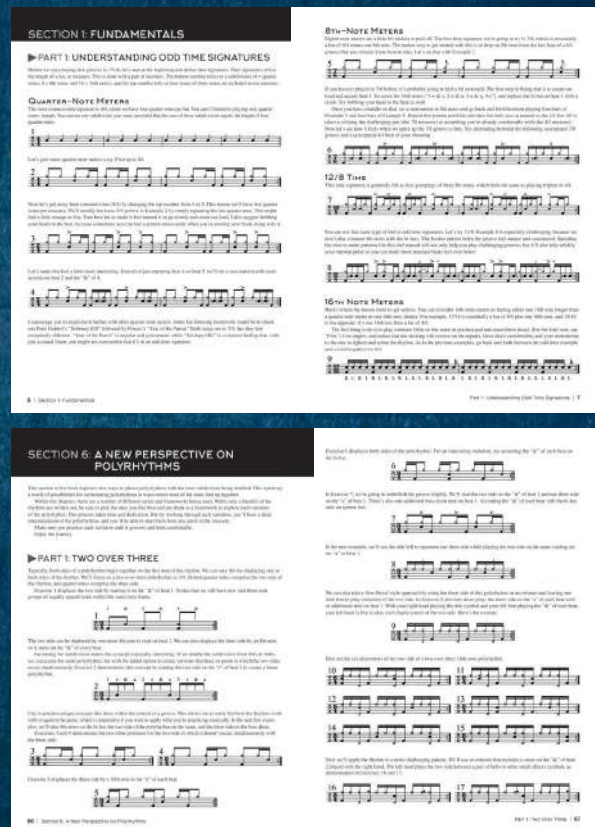
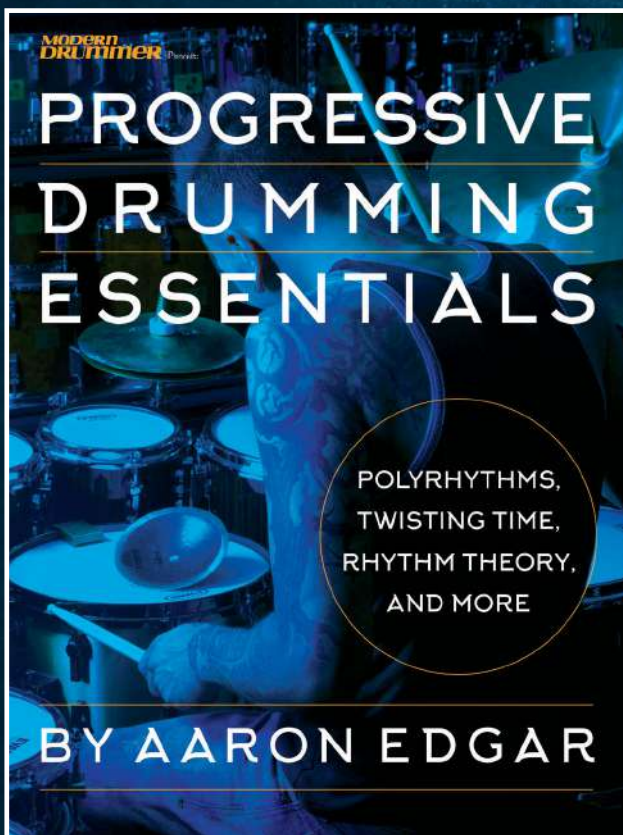
Three world-class Yamaha artists performed at the event: Larnell Lewis (Snarky Puppy), Dave Weckl (Chick Corea, Mike Stern), and Tommy Aldridge (Whitesnake). Yamaha Drums executives in attendance included product developer Shigehiro "Ziggy" Okamoto, artist relations manager Shinnosuke "Danny" Natsume, manager of development Shin Irisa, senior vice president Tom Sumner, chief marketing director Roger Eaton, and marketing manager Steve Fisher.

The day's performances were held in the Musicians Institute theater, and the school opened various classrooms in which attendees could demo Yamaha's PHX and Tour Custom acoustic kits and its hybrid electronic/acoustic setups. Yamaha endorsers, including the drummers Jimmy Keegan (Spock's Beard) and Keith McJimson (Ariana Grande), along with Yamaha assistant marketing manager Joel Tetzlaff, senior designer Daryl Anderson, product specialist Jim Haler, and Pro Music Division district manager Neil Patton, were there to answer gear questions.

Larnell Lewis, a Yamaha artist since 2004, performed first. The drummer played the company's



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Backbeats

new Tour Custom kit with Absolute Hybrid Maple and Recording Custom steel snares. Next Dave Weckl took the stage, saying before his set, "All of my favorite artists seemed to be playing these drums. My journey started with some custom-made drums that I'd made smaller and deeper—the toms were square sizes. That Recording Custom set was the one I played at the [1989] Buddy Rich Memorial Scholarship Concert and on some of my early videos."

Tommy Aldridge, a Yamaha artist since 1980, closed out the performances. "The impact [Yamaha] has had on my career has been truly life changing," he said from the stage. "They really make a drummer's drum." Aldridge pulled out all of his signature licks, stick twirls, and powerful grooves during his set. He and Weckl both played on PHX series kits, which represent Yamaha's top-of-the-line option, with 11-ply hybrid jatoba/kapur/maple shells.

Yamaha also honored two longtime artists, studio legend Rick Marotta and Huey Lewis and the News's Bill Gibson, with special appreciation awards. During the presentation, Marotta said, "I've been a [Yamaha] artist since the mid-'70s. Steve Gadd went over to [the company's headquarters in] Japan for the first time two or three weeks before me. When he came back, he called me up and said, 'We're both Yamaha artists now. I gave them your specs, and when you go over, your drums will be ready!' I literally got off the plane, was taken into a room, and there was a whole set of drums for me to take back to the States. I think it was the original Recording Custom."

Steve Fisher spoke last at the day's event. "I'm very honored to be the steward of Yamaha drums as we reach our fiftieth year of making high-quality, handcrafted instruments," he said. "But without our artists, Yamaha Drums would not be what we are today—period."

Story by John Martinez

Photos by Twinfolk Creative



From left: Yamaha artist relations manager Greg Crane, artists Bill Gibson and Rick Marotta, marketing manager Steve Fisher, and assistant marketing manager Joel Tetzlaff after Gibson and Marotta received appreciation awards



Aldridge



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The Zildjian cymbal setup consists of a pair of 14" K hi-hats, a 16" K Dark Thin crash, an 18" K Dark crash, and a 20" K ride. Also included are twelve pairs of Promark Firegrain drumsticks in the winner's preferred size. The kit features Evans UV1 batter heads and Reso 7 bottoms.

*Snare pictured is not included with the prize. Actual prize snare matches the Dios Satin Gold kit.

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Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the Ddrum/Zildjian Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS MARCH 1, 2018, AND ENDS MAY 31, 2018. 4. Prize Drawing: Winners will be selected by random drawing on June 4, 2018. Winners will be notified by phone or email on or about June 7, 2018. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Ddrum, Zildjian, Promark, Evans, D'Addario, 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 5-piece Ddrum Dios drumkit, 5-piece K-Zildjian cymbal set, 12 pairs of Promark Firegrain drumsticks, and Evans drumheads. Approximate retail value of contest is \$4,999. 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/Ddrum/Zildjian/Official Rules/Winners List, 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004.



The Drum Orb



The California-based inventor, musician, and performance artist William Close brings us a unique spherical percussion instrument dubbed the Drum Orb. The work is ten feet in diameter, and during performances it's suspended fifteen feet in the air by a steel cable and played with soft mallets. According to Close, who has a background in architecture and the arts, large outdoor globes such as the Unisphere that was built for the 1964–65 New York World's Fair in Queens inspired him to create the instrument. Close says his goals included creating a fully functional musical instrument as opposed to a piece of performance art.

The Drum Orb spins freely when suspended, and bungee cords hold multiple Remo frame drums within the sphere. When a drum is played, sympathetic vibrations create tones from the adjacent drumheads that haven't been hit. The instrument can be played simultaneously by multiple performers and, according to Close,

creates full, thundering sounds. Live, Close enhances the theatrical dynamics by incorporating suspended aerial drummers who play the set.

Close tells *MD* that if what he imagines musically doesn't exist, he'll create it himself. For evidence of another of his inventive ventures, search online for the Earth Harp, a nearly thousand-foot stringed harp that the artist suspends over audiences; it holds the Guinness record for the world's longest stringed instrument.

The Drum Orb has been adapted for rock, jazz, classical, and electronic settings. The setup breaks down to fit into three suitcases and can be checked for airplane travel. Close has performed internationally with the setup in Ibiza, Spain; Shanghai, China; and throughout the United States. For more info on the Drum Orb and Close's other projects, head to earthharpsymphony.com.

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



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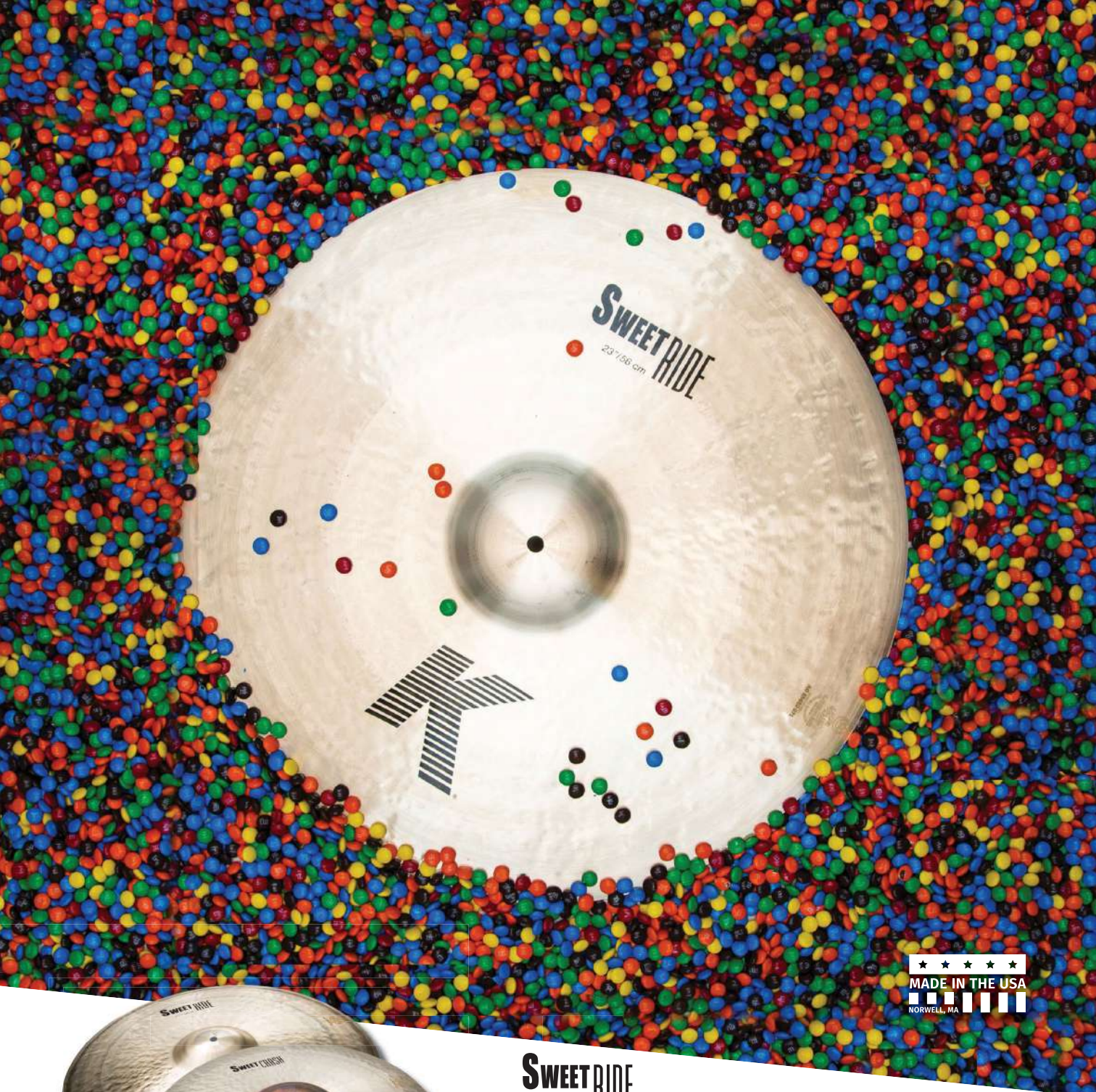
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