

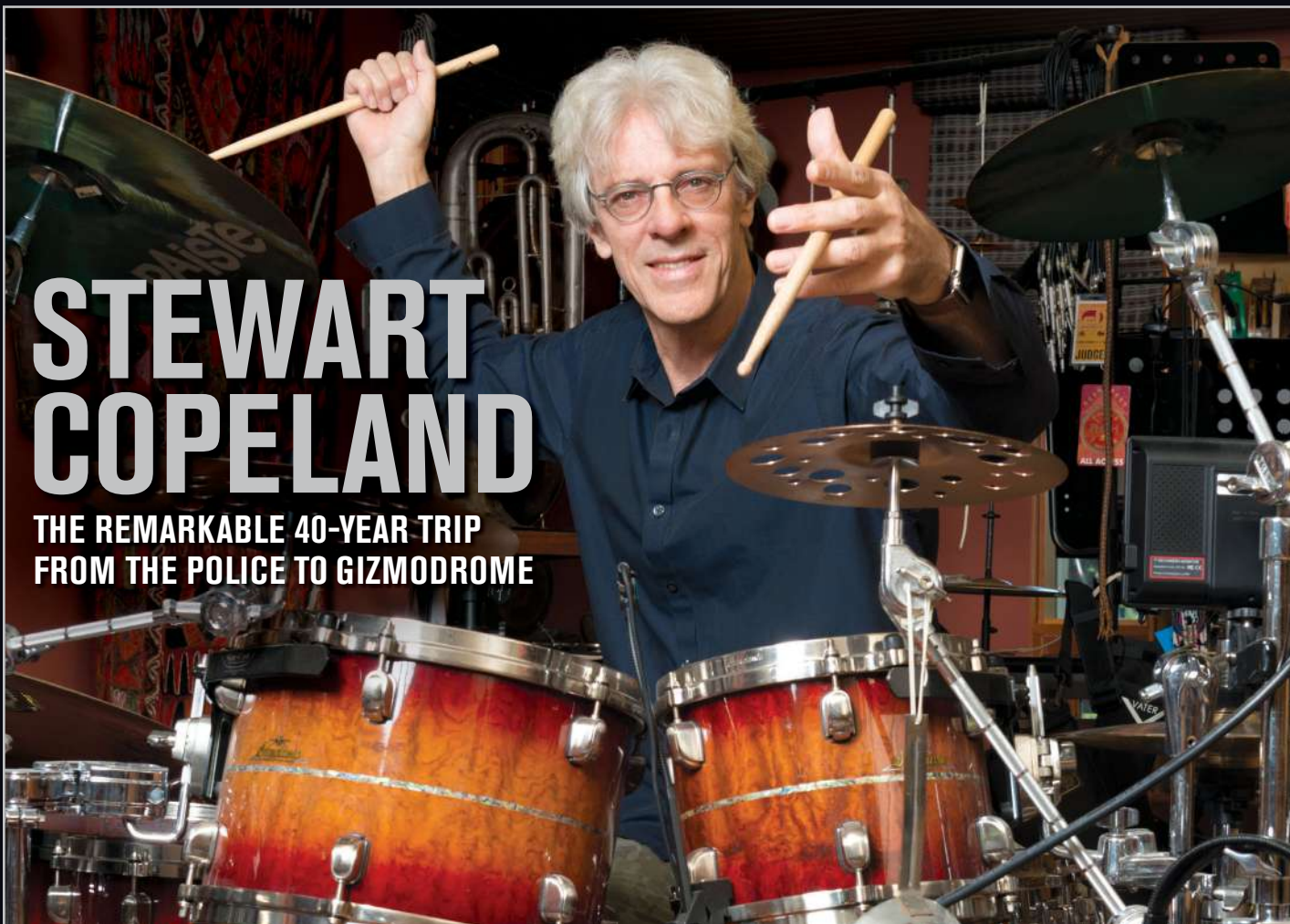
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by Ken Micallief



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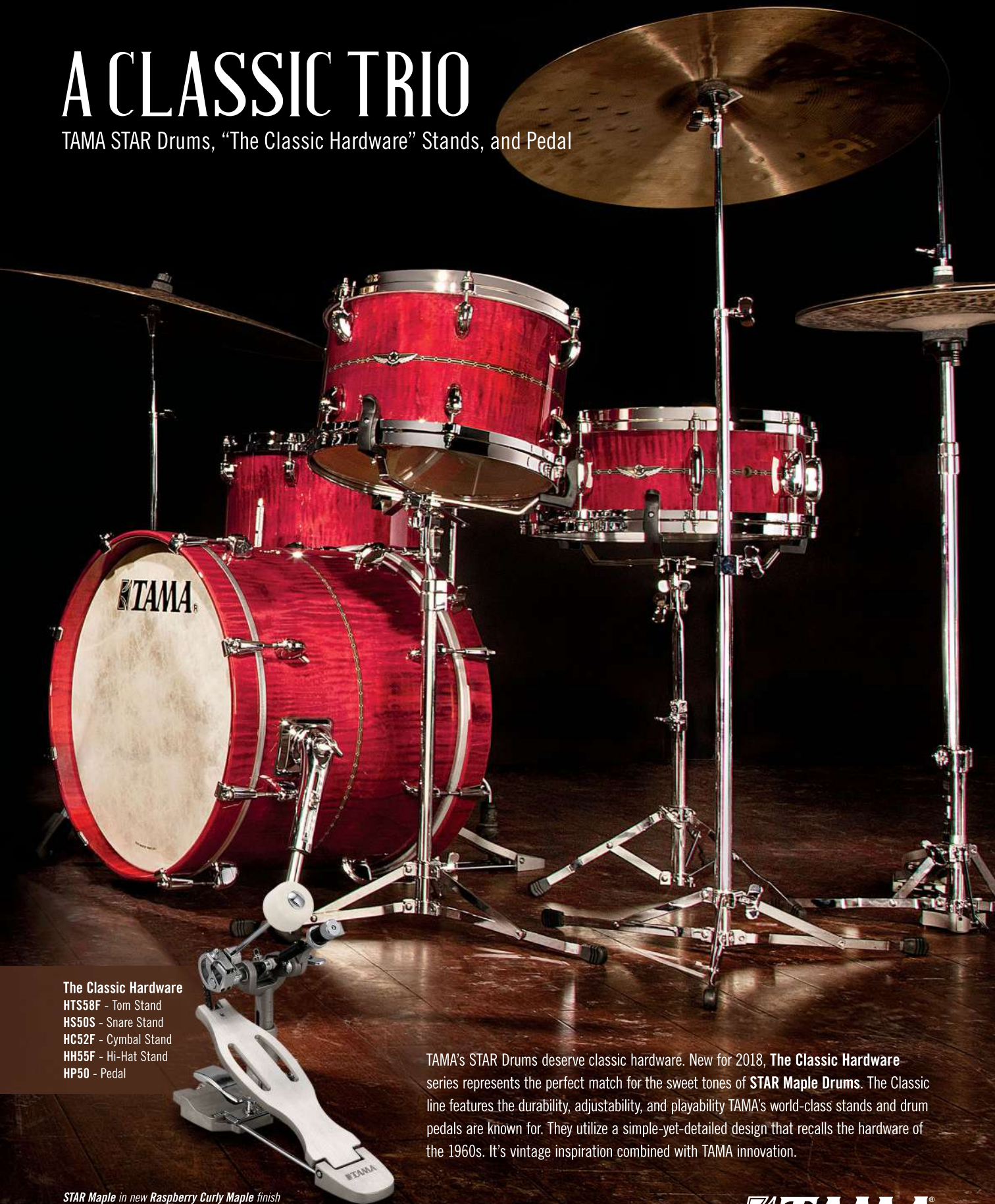
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# AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

## A Year in Transition

There have been numerous landmark events in music history that have made certain years seem more significant than others, such as the death of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750, which signified the end of the Baroque period, or the dawn of the jazz era following the release of the first Original Dixieland Jazz Band album in 1917. And who can overlook British pop/rock's global takeover following the Beatles' 1964 debut appearance on American television?

But what about the stretches of time that passed between those rare, singular events? As an experiment, we decided to take a more macro look at one of those transitional periods, 1978, and quickly realized that a ton of things went down that year. The pioneering punk band the Sex Pistols played its final show, disco music took over the mainstream following the release of *Saturday Night Fever*, Van Halen blew minds for the first time with its new brand of power rock, legendary drummer Keith Moon died from a drug overdose just twenty days after the Who released *Who Are You*, and this month's cover artist, Stewart Copeland, helped usher in a new wave of alternative rock on the Police's debut album, *Outlandos d'Amour*. You can read more about Copeland's early years and what he's been up to lately, and we catch up with several other top drummers who had a particularly fruitful output in 1978 to get an insider's perspective on the music scene from forty years ago.

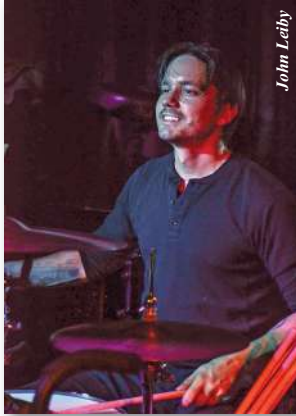
Also included is the first installment of a revamp of our popular online series "What You Need to Know About..." This month we take a look at bass drum heads, including a survey of the various available models, what each type is designed to do, and which heads would be the best choices for specific kinds of sounds. The goal with this series is to help you make better-informed decisions for purchasing gear that matches your playing style and tastes.

We're also super-excited to kick off a brand-new educational series by Rascal Flatts drummer and renowned author/educator Jim Riley that focuses on crucial grooves for every working drummer to know. In honor of this month's 1978 theme, Jim takes a look at a few variations of the infamous disco beat.

Enjoy the issue!

*Mike Dawson*

**Michael Dawson**  
Managing Editor



John Leiby

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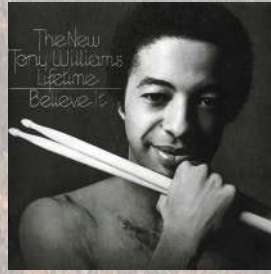
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# What's Your Favorite 1970s Jazz or Fusion Drumming Album?



This month, as we delve into the music and drumming of 1978, we asked our readers and social media followers to name some of their favorite records from the entire decade. Here they weigh in on great '70s jazz and fusion performances.

Mahavishnu Orchestra's *The Inner Mounting Flame* [1971] was a game changer. No one had heard drumming like that before. Billy Cobham played complex rhythms and mind-blowing fills with immense power in every time signature but 4/4. This album also introduced the drumming community to the pang cymbal that Cobham played upside down while employing his deft ambidexterity. Suddenly every drummer began using an upside-down China cymbal as result. Cobham launched fusion drumming, and everyone who followed used him as the template.

**Todd Remmy**

Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds of Fire* [1973] is an absolute masterpiece, from the Indian rhythms to the ridiculous chops. Billy Cobham lays down heavy grooves in several time signatures, plays with amazing dynamic range, and has the facility to change the feel instantly. Let's not forget his groundbreaking use of double bass throughout the songs—not just during the solos—which had rarely been attempted previously and wasn't matched or exceeded for maybe a decade afterward. This was truly ahead of its time.

**Ryan Alexander Bloom**

Herbie Hancock's *Thrust* [1974] was different from anything else I'd heard at the time. The grooves that Mike Clark and bassist Paul Jackson put down still inspire me.

**Matt Cunningham**

Herbie Hancock's *Thrust*. Mike Clark's linear style inspires me every day to come up with phrases that go over the barline and linear grooves that start in different places.

**Kade Parkin**

*One* by Bob James [1974]. Steve Gadd and Idris Muhammad own the record and show off some fantastic chops. The song "Night on Bald Mountain" with Gadd is especially great. This is also the first jazz record I ever got into, thanks to my dad having it on vinyl when I was very young.

**Mark Kaefer**

On Jeff Beck's *Blow by Blow* [1975] Richard Bailey's technique, wrist control, and offbeat patterns are groundbreaking. Some drummers play to the music. This music plays to the drums. Incredible drummer.

**Tom Rathbun**

I couldn't believe that it was possible to play the way the young Narada Michael Walden did on Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Visions of the Emerald Beyond* [1975]. It was melodic, soft, hard, and always together with the other musicians, which created magic. It's one of my favorite albums of the genre.

**Ronny Svensson**

*Believe It* by the New Tony Williams Lifetime [1975]. Williams took his jazz heritage along with his love for rock and turned everything over again. He always played like no one else. The drum solo on "Mr. Spock" leaves me in awe every time I hear it.

**Noah Paul**

Chick Corea's *The Leprechaun* [1976] is Steve Gadd's finest hour by far. And not only Gadd but every member of the band performed an absolute blinder. It's one of the few jazz-fusion albums of the '70s that still sounds great today.

**Tim Sharp**

Alex Acuña's playing on Weather Report's *Heavy Weather* [1977] was so fluent and elaborate, with killer fills and awesome chops without overplaying. He made such tasteful contributions to all the masterpieces on that album.

**Randy Cramer**

The Dixie Dregs' *What If* [1978] is an incredible album. Rod Morgenstein showed a wonderful command of dynamics, tempo, odd meters, and styles, and played some very creative drum parts and fills that do more than just fill up time. He used space within his fills to make them even more interesting without relying solely on speed or a barrage of 32nd notes.

**Mark Mahoney**

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# OUT NOW



## Dafnis Prieto on the Dafnis Prieto Big Band's *Back to the Sunset*

The prolific Afro-Cuban and jazz connoisseur honors his musical heroes with a heavy ensemble.

This past April 6, the Cuban-born drummer, educator, and bandleader Dafnis Prieto released his sixth record as a leader, *Back to the Sunset*. With help from the album's producer, Eric Oberstein, Prieto gathered a seventeen-piece big band—along with special guests Brian Lynch on trumpet, Henry Threadgill on alto sax, and Steve Coleman on alto sax—to blaze through the drummer's fervent Afro-Cuban-infused jazz compositions. Throughout the effort, Prieto's signature polyrhythmic independence shines as he deceptively builds a mountain of sound behind a comparatively modest four-piece kit.

The drummer, who became a MacArthur Foundation Fellow in 2011, devoted an entire year to composing and arranging this latest release. "Some songs," he says, "are completely new, and others were previously written for my other projects, and I rearranged them for the big band setting."

Although Prieto dedicates each song on *Back to the Sunset* to a musical hero who's inspired him—such as Tito Puente, Michel Camilo, and Andrew Hill—he says, "I draw inspiration from many sources. It could be emotional, intellectual, scientific, or simply musical, and the process of composing changes from one song to another. But the general inspiration for this album comes from my desire to do something bigger for the musicians who have influenced and inspired me throughout my career, and to express my gratitude toward them."

On "Out of the Bone," Prieto showcases his prolific chops, rhythmic independence, and overall sensitivity with a fiery solo starting at 4:46. But he insists that there's no difference between his thought process during a solo or while playing an entire composition. "Every solo and song has its own unique characteristic and attitude," Prieto explains, "and I like using different approaches. I generally sing the ideas I want to play.

That way it's clearer to me when I play them. I follow my musical intuition, let myself go with the story, and play whatever I feel the music needs at that moment. That particular solo is at a relatively fast tempo with a complex, syncopated background—no one plays on the downbeats. In this case, you need to be very focused or you'll fall off the throne. When you're really improvising, you're creating a story within the music that requires a great deal of concentration and energy. There are other kinds of solos that might be more spacious or relaxing, but they still need concentration to develop their story."

Prieto creates a rhythmic illusion at 6:29 in "Una Vez Más" by displacing a percussion break and intricate cowbell pattern to the second 16th note after the downbeat. He packs moments such as these into *Back to the Sunset* and credits his cultural background for his ability to handle these complex passages. "Coming from Cuba and having been exposed to a powerful rhythmic vocabulary helped me understand syncopation and polyrhythms," he says. "You can easily hear these rhythmic characteristics in many popular Cuban styles, such as rumba or carnival music. And of course there was a strong influence of African music, which is heavily based on layering syncopated rhythms. On a technical level, *polyrhythm* means rhythmic independence. So to play different rhythmic layers simultaneously, you'll need to have decent independence."

Prieto also offers advice on developing your own voice on the kit. "I believe there's a unique sound in each of us, and that sound is the sincerest sound that you can play," he says. "But it needs to be identified and nurtured by the player. It also has to do a lot with personality, intuition, musical background, technique, and so forth." **Willie Rose**

**Dafnis Prieto plays Yamaha drums, Sabian cymbals, and LP percussion, and he uses Evans heads and Vic Firth sticks.**

## More New Releases

**Dr. Dog** Critical Equation (Eric Slick) /// **A Hawk and a Hacksaw** Forest Bathing (Jeremy Barnes) /// **The Melvins** Pinkus Abortion Technician (Dale Crover) /// **Hop Along** Bark Your Head Off, Dog (Mark Quinlan) /// **Black Stone Cherry** Family Tree (John Fred Young) /// **Dave Holland** Uncharted Territories (Ches Smith) /// **Underoath** Erase Me (Aaron Gillespie)

# ON TOUR

## Diego Arcaute with Juana Molina

Whether playing odd-time indie electronica, contemporary pop, or folkloric acoustic music, the Argentinian drummer brings a seasoned sensitivity and open mind to the studio and the stage.



Mariko Miura

With the understandable focus on Brazilian and Cuban rhythms among drummers, we tend not to spend as much time deep-diving into the music of other Latin American locales. But countries like Argentina—the eighth largest in the world, and one of the most diverse ecologically and culturally—offer a goldmine of ideas to explore. The innovations of famed Argentinian musical figures like tango star Astor Piazzolla, soundtrack master Lalo Schiffrin, and jazz saxophonist Gato Barbieri have inspired international music makers for generations, while modern artists like the experimental electronic pop singer Juana Molina boldly push folkloric concepts in new directions.

Take, for instance, the track “Eras,” from Molina’s 2013 album, *Wed 27*. Though the song is in 7/8, Diego Arcaute’s bass drum keeps a steady 4/4 beat. “Eras” is the most streamed Molina track on Spotify—encouraging news for adventurous rhythm sections. “It is true that it’s not usual to hear those odd time signatures in this kind of music,” says Arcaute, whose credits include the contemporary Argentinian multi-instrumentalists Axel Krygier and Lucas Martí, as well as folkloric ensembles and improv groups. “Juana is a very intuitive musician, and she makes it sound natural in her compositions. I used to play with artists and bands where there is a lot of emphasis on odd times, so I feel very comfortable playing these type of rhythms.”

In addition to the idiosyncratic approach to rhythm, Molina’s records feature a deft and seamless combination of electronic and acoustic sounds. “The real challenge with Juana’s music,” Arcaute says, “is synthesizing on stage the thousands of elements that sound simultaneously on the records. Ninety-five percent of the sounds that I have in my Roland SPD-SX are samples of Juana’s albums—guitars,

keyboards, and percussion sounds. For this tour I developed a freaky system that only I can understand. [laughs]”

Molina’s current live band is a three-piece, which Arcaute admits can test his skills. “The main aspect is that we have to attach as much as we can to the recordings,” he explains. “So we have to do many things at a time. It took a lot of time to think about, assemble, and rehearse the show. I really enjoy this kind of situation, because I have to play in a different way from what a classic-rock drummer should.”

And those ways keep changing, as Molina adjusts her own approach. “Juana has been changing her directions about [stage] volume and sounds since we met each other,” Arcaute says. “The first time I played with her, in 2010, she didn’t want in any way a hi-hat sounding in her music. At that time she was more excited about [the traditional Argentine drum] bombo legüero, gongs, and brushes.

“As time went by,” Arcaute continues, “everything has changed. Nowadays there are moments of the show when I can play drums really loud. Having said that, we always laugh because every time we do soundcheck she gets into shock and curses my name when I hit the floor tom for the first time. On the other hand, now I know what things she likes and doesn’t like. An example of that: If you want to upset her, you should play a reggae rhythm. [laughs]”

While American concertgoers who’ve been lucky enough to witness Molina’s show in cities like Chicago and Savannah, Georgia, can vouch for her and Arcaute’s distinctive rhythmic strategy, the rest of us can enjoy live performances online, such as last September’s KEXP studio set or an earlier NPR Tiny Desk Concert. And to read more about what goes into Arcaute’s live and studio approach, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com). **Adam Budofsky**

**Arcaute plays Istanbul Mehmet cymbals and Roland electronics.**

### Also on the Road

**Frank Zummo** with Sum 41 /// **Stephen Gere** with Built to Spill /// **Patrick Keeler** with the Afghan Whigs /// **Bill Stevenson** with Descendents /// **Jean-Paul Gaster** with Clutch /// **John Sherman** with Red Fang /// **Tim Alexander** with Primus /// **Brann Dailor** with Mastodon /// **Dan Pugach** with the Dan Pugach Nonet



## PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

# Turkish Cymbals

## Lale Kardeş Signature Series

Big, bold tones based on the classic sounds of '60s and '70s rock.

**Turkish Cymbals is an Istanbul-based** company that blends centuries-old manufacturing methods with contemporary techniques to provide modern drummers with rich, nuanced instruments for any genre. When designing a signature series with endorsing artist Lale Kardeş of the bluesy garage-rock trio Ringo Jets, the goal was to create large, light cymbals with dark, washy tones. The series comprises 15" hi-hats (\$402.50), 18" and 20" crashes (\$273.90 and \$354.20), and 22" and 24" rides (\$418.60 and \$460.90). Each cymbal features a dagger/hand logo that was illustrated by Kardeş.



### The Specs

The Lale Kardeş signature models are medium-thin cymbals meant to deliver big, warm sounds that open up fully at all dynamics. They're finely lathed and extensively hammered from the edge to the bell. The 20" crash and 22" and 24" rides feature wide, flat bells. The 18" crash has a smaller bell. Both the crashes and the rides have a very soft, flexible feel.

The 15" hi-hats are firmer than the crashes and rides and have smaller, steeper bells. The top hi-hat has deeper and more uniform hammer marks, while the bottom is treated more subtly.

### 15" Hi-Hats

The Kardeş hi-hats feature a medium-thin top over a medium-heavy bottom. The large diameter contributes to their dark quality, but they have plenty of weight to produce big, washy open tones, clean closed strokes, and wide-sounding foot chicks. They have a crispy, silvery timbre that adds a nice amount of high-end sheen and presence. I found these hi-hats to be surprisingly expressive while also possessing plenty of power and projection. These would be a great choice for blues, rock, and session drummers looking for large all-purpose hi-hats that are neither too clunky for light playing nor too papery to cut through at high volumes.

24" Ride





20" Crash

# Turkish®

handmade cymbals from Turkey

## 18" and 20" Crashes

Both Kardeş crashes produce warm yet brilliant tones that open up fully when hit lightly and explode when struck hard. The sustain is rich, washy, and balanced, with no single overtone dominating any others. The 18" has a brighter attack, smoother sustain, and quicker decay, while the 20" has a slower attack and a darker and slightly more complex sustain. Both crashes have excellent ride potential, especially when used as crash-rides, and the bells offer nicely integrated and musical tones. Like the hi-hats, these crashes would be great choices for any situation requiring large, rich, and smooth tones.

## 22" and 24" Rides

The rides in this series are weighted slightly heavier than the crashes, so they don't flex quite as much. But they complement the crashes very well, producing big, washy sounds with a bit more articulation and stronger bell tones. The 22" has a breathier sustain and a quicker crash, which makes it the ideal choice for simple setups requiring a dual-purpose crash-ride. The 24" has a deeper bell tone and a darker but more articulate ping. You can elicit massive, washy crashes from it as well, which supported more aggressive playing styles. Of all the cymbals in this series, the 24" ride was the one that echoed the warm, energetic sound of '60s/'70s rock most clearly, especially when played on an oversized vintage-style kit. But all of the models possessed a level of richness and expressivity not often found in factory-fresh cymbals.

**Michael Dawson**

15" Hi-Hat

# Turkish®

handmade cymbals from Turkey



## PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

# Van Kleeef

## Ageless Collection 4.5x14 Snare

A spectacular specimen sporting a precious 1.5mm sterling silver shell.

**English musician-turned-builder** Alan Van Kleeef has earned high praise from drummers, critics, and collectors over the past few years for his continuous output of unique, top-shelf snares and kits crafted with premium metal and wood shells and proprietary hardware. We've checked out VK's aluminum, titanium, steel, cast-bronze, and magnesium snares in past issues, as well as a fantastic all-aluminum kit, but nothing prepared us for the company's latest creation: a series of precious 4.5x14 snares with solid 1.5mm 925 sterling silver shells. Only forty-seven of these bad boys are being made, with each carrying a hefty price tag of £4,999 GBP. We were lucky to get our hands on one to review, so let's check it out.



### The Specs

The 1.5mm shell on this remarkable drum is crafted from 925 sterling silver, which consists of 92.5% pure silver and 7.5% copper and other metals. The other metals are essential in order to add hardness; pure silver is too soft and malleable to be used for a rigid 14" drum shell.

VK outfits these drums with its own stainless-steel straight hoops, hand-polished stainless-steel single-point tube lugs, and a stainless-steel strainer and butt plate with laser-etched logos. The strainer also includes a built-in VKey, which is a silent ratchet-style tuner that's held in place behind the throw-off lever. Puresound wires and Remo Ambassador heads complete the setup.

Each drum ships in a foam-lined silver-colored Hardcase case and comes with a pair of white gloves to wear during setup to minimize tarnishing from touching the shell with sweaty



or dirty hands. Although only 4.5" deep, this is a hefty drum that might require a heavy-duty stand to keep it secure and stable.

### The Sound

We put this luxurious drum through its paces in the studio, testing its versatility and sensitivity across the entire tuning spectrum. While it sounded unlike any other metal shell we've tested, there was a fair amount of high-end ring and bite, akin to what you'd get from a thin steel shell, but it also possessed the dryness and crispness often associated with aluminum.

This is a very articulate drum, regardless of how it's tuned, and the wires respond quickly at all dynamics. The middle register had a controlled, throaty "honk" that gave it just enough character to stand out in a mix without being overly resonant. However, I found that this drum sounded best in the higher and lower ranges. Funk and jazz drummers will love its super-clean attack and focused, musical tone when cranked, while session players would get a lot of use out of the tight but quick and chesty thump it produces with the batter head slack and muffled with a small square of tape or gel. While obviously not designed for everyone's budgets and needs, VK's exclusive 925 sterling silver snare performs just as great as it looks.

**Michael Dawson**



# Keith McMillen Instruments

## BopPad

A seemingly simple USB pad controller with virtually limitless capabilities.

**Keith McMillen Instruments (KMI)** is a California-based company that focuses on developing innovative hardware and software that allows musicians to incorporate computers and tablets into their performances with incredible levels of nuance and control. The primary technology that the company developed to unlock such advanced expressivity is called Smart Fabric, which features a layer of sensors beneath each pad that interprets subtle changes in velocity, pressure, and strike position with realistic accuracy. KMI's first foray into the electronic drum market is the super-slim yet highly durable and versatile four-zone BopPad (\$199). Let's check it out.



### What Is It?

The BopPad is a 10" drum pad with an 8" playing surface that's divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant can transmit a variety of MIDI data based on how hard you strike, where you strike, and how much pressure you apply. Each zone can also send up to six different MIDI notes and five additional MIDI messages to control various parameters, such as pitch bend, channel pressure, polyphonic aftertouch, and continuous controllers for panning, modulation, effects, and so on.

The .5"-deep BopPad has a super-slim profile, so it can be stored easily in a laptop bag, drum case, or cymbal sleeve without adding any noticeable bulk or weight. The sole connector on the BopPad is a USB port that's used to interface the pad with a laptop or tablet equipped with MIDI instruments and a digital audio workstation. KMI also offers a simple, durable aluminum mount that features four rubber-tipped arms and a threaded receiver that fits onto a cymbal stand.

### How Does It Work?

If you want to use the BopPad as a simple four-pad trigger, simply plug it in to your computer or tablet with the supplied USB cable. (An adapter will be required for most tablets.) Then open up a MIDI instrument in your DAW of choice, assign the sounds you want to trigger to the MIDI notes assigned to each quadrant of the BopPad, and start playing. The BopPad is designed to

respond accurately to all dynamics and playing styles, whether you strike it with your hands, sticks, mallets, or other implements. It also has less than 3 milliseconds of latency, so there's no discernable delay from when you strike to when you hear sounds (as long as your computer or tablet is up to spec). It only took me a few seconds to configure a basic drumkit in Ableton Live to get the BopPad to play the sounds I wanted.

Because the BopPad has an extremely wide dynamic range, you may need to adjust the gain and sensitivity of the sensors to prevent double triggers. Those changes are made within KMI's free BopPad Editor software. The software is simple and easy to navigate. In addition to adjusting gain, sensitivity, and stroke density in the editor, you can also add, change, and layer MIDI note assignments for each quadrant and save an unlimited number of setups. (The BopPad itself can hold up to four presets at a time.)

When you're ready to progress beyond a simple four-pad trigger device, which the BopPad does as well as any controller we've ever tested, then you'll want to dig into the Modlines section of the editing software to unlock this pad's full creative potential. This is where you can define and edit MIDI control data to make the BopPad respond to changes in pressure, velocity, and strike location with things like pitch bend and other MIDI effects.

KMI provides four factory presets for you to get a feel for what the BopPad can do. The Universal preset assigns standard General

MIDI notes for hi-hat, kick, snare, and low tom to the four quadrants, while a controller for modulation wheel (aka vibrato) is set up to be applied as you move from center to edge. Preset 2 (Unison) has all four quadrants assigned to the MIDI note for a snare. The vibrato is controlled by how much pressure you push into the pad, and a second controller responds to edge versus center strikes. (The center-to-edge controller can be assigned to pitch change, panning, and other effects.) The remaining two presets are configured for playing the BopPad with sticks (#3) or hands (#4).

During our testing period, we barely scratched the surface of what the BopPad can do. I found a lot of cool and inspiring ideas by using the pad like a hand drum and using the pressure sensitivity feature to change the pitch of the triggered sounds by pressing into the fabric with one hand while playing patterns on it with the other.

It was also a lot of fun playing the BopPad with sticks and creating multidimensional sounds that responded organically with different controls and effects as I struck the pad softer or louder, closer or further from center, or with different degrees of pressure.

It's ultimately up to users to determine how far they want to dig into the BopPad's advanced capabilities. Check out some of the demo videos the company posted to its website, and also take a look at how visionary artists like electronica wizard Zach Danziger are utilizing the open-ended functionality of KMI's products within their own innovative hybrid electronic/acoustic drumming. If you're unsure of whether or not the BopPad is for you, we suggest you just get your hands on one and start experimenting. There's a whole new universe of creative possibilities here just waiting to be explored.

**Michael Dawson**

# Techra

## XCarb Drumsticks

Light and fast carbon-fiber models designed for utmost durability.

**Techra is an Italian company** that applies more than fifty years of experience crafting components for the aerospace, avionics, and automotive industries to the manufacturing of carbon-fiber drumsticks and other drum accessories. Techra's catalog includes models designed especially for hard hitters (Colossus and Hammer of the Gods), grip enhancement (Carbon Pro Supergrip), electronic kits (E-Rhythm), and lighter response, which include the XCarb 5A and 5B models that we have for review.

### The Details

Techra's stated mission is to "offer musicians new expression opportunities using innovative materials and concepts." It's also proud of its efforts to help preserve the environment by reducing the consumption of wood and by offering products that are 100 percent recyclable. While designing the sticks, the company took into account the needs of drummers for something that's light and responsive but stiff enough to produce full tones on drums and cymbals. Using carbon fiber instead of wood also makes Techra's sticks up to four times more durable.

The XCarb series is Techra's lightest line of carbon-fiber sticks. The 5A model measures .567"x16" and weighs 48.6 grams, which is comparable to a similarly sized wood stick. The 5B is .594"x16" and weighs 50.3 grams. Both sticks feature small acorn beads, hollowed cores, and short tapers from the shoulders to the tips. The butt ends come with rubber end caps to help minimize vibration and give the sticks a wood-like feel. The carbon fiber has a slightly textured feel that's similar to that of a natural or lightly lacquered wood stick. Techra uses a different color cap for each size, which makes it very easy to identify matched pairs when placed with the grip facing up in a stick bag or holder.

### In Use

I spent a fair amount of time swapping between the Techra XCarb sticks and traditional wood versions at the kit and practice pad and noticed very little difference in terms of weight and vibration. Both pairs of Techra sticks were perfectly pitch-matched, which wasn't the case with the wood versions I used for comparison. The resonating frequency of the XCarbs was pitched lower than that of the wood sticks, but it had the same amount of sustain. The XCarb sticks rebounded quicker and produced lighter tones than the wood sticks did, which gave the ride cymbal a bit more clarity and helped improve articulation at lower dynamics. In terms of durability, I noticed no wear to the XCarb tips after several hours of heavy use, and the shoulders exhibited minor notching from the hi-hat, rimshots, and crashes.

In the past, synthetic drumsticks have been largely targeted towards heavy hitters who shred through multiple pairs of sticks per gig and are willing to sacrifice some tone, response, and feel for the benefits of durability. These Techra XCarb 5A and 5Bs, however, are poised to become the preferred drumsticks of drummers of all types and playing styles, for they provide all the nuance, tone, and natural feel associated with high-quality wood sticks while also providing an exponentially longer lifespan. The street price is about \$43 per pair, and additional sizes include 7A and 2B.

**Michael Dawson**



# Dashboard Confessional's Ben Homola

**Consummate touring/recording drummer** Ben Homola has recently been sporting a new C&C drumkit on the road with alt-rock band Dashboard Confessional. "The C&C maple kit I have out on the road was built for this tour," says Homola. "One thing that makes this kit unique is that I'm using concert toms with no bottom heads. I'm a big fan of Phil Collins, and of Joey Waronker—who also happens to play C&C drums. When I spoke with C&C owner Bill Cardwell, I explained how much I loved the sound of Joey's drums and that I wanted a Phil Collins 'In the Air Tonight' vibe. Something about that sound has always grabbed me. With that information, C&C built me what is probably my favorite drumkit to date. They make their shells in-house out of pretty much any type of wood. My drums are sonically similar to 1960s-era Rogers and Camco but with a little more warmth. They have the right amount of attack and sustain, so I don't need to do much muffling."

"When Bill and I were discussing the concert toms," the drummer continues, "he said maple would be the best wood for the sound I described. They have 6-ply shells with reinforcement rings made from the same wood. I feel as though [the rings] add warmth and stability. That's super helpful since there aren't any bottom heads to add resonance."

In regards to snare drums, Homola says he favors metal shells. "My snare is a Q Drums Plate Series Brass. It's one of the best snares I've ever played. It weighs about sixteen pounds, and it's loud. It's a great rock snare. I also keep my snare wires slightly loose. If they're too tight, they'll choke the drum and produce a boxy sound."

To dial in the right tones on his toms, Homola uses Coated Vintage Emperors. "I don't tune them too tight," he says. "I like to get a nice thud out of them, but I also like them to be tight enough to get a little rebound. I don't want to feel like I'm hitting pillows. We mike the drums from the inside of the shell, which gives us a little more play on how we can tune. I was a little worried that our team was going to be hesitant that I was playing a concert tom kit, but they were excited about it and they've done a sensational job making the drums sound great."



**Drums:** C&C maple in Tony Williams Yellow

- A.** Q Drums 7x14 Plate Brass snare
- B.** 9x13 tom
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 14x24 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1.** 15" K Light hi-hats
- 2.** 19" A Medium-Thin crash
- 3.** 24" K Light ride
- 4.** 20" A Medium-Thin crash

**Hardware:** DW 7000 series straight cymbal stands, 5000 series hi-hat, and 9000 series snare stands, throne, and bass drum pedal (with Danmar Zoro square beater)

**Heads:** Remo Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and Starfire Chrome front, Coated CS Black Dot snare batter and Ambassador Hazy Snare Side bottom, and Coated Vintage Emperor tom batters

**Electronics:** Roland SPD-SX and BT-1 Bar Triggers, iPad

**Accessories:** Miscellaneous pieces from Keplinger and Upcycled Percussion, Tackle Instrument stick bag

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5B Extreme

**Interview and photos**  
by Sayre Berman



D

C

A

B

E

1

2

3

4

# New York Jazzer Jimmy Macbride

**Still only in his mid-twenties, the drummer has been making a name for himself in the ultra-competitive New York City jazz scene for several years now, bringing an assured command of his instrument to recordings and live work with a sound that belies his age.**

by Ilya Stenkovsky

**G**rowing up in the Hartford, Connecticut, area with musically inclined parents, Jimmy Macbride caught the jazz bug early. He eventually moved to the big city to attend Juilliard, where he studied with the master drummers Carl Allen, Kenny Washington, and Billy Drummond. It was there where old and new records were heard, skills were honed, and relationships were formed.

Macbride is a classic swinger, with a beautiful cymbal touch and proper chops to be able to support all the varied musical situations he finds himself in. On recent albums by saxophonists Adam Larson and Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, and by guitarists Alex Goodman and Alex Wintz, Macbride kicks the proceedings into high gear with a reverence for traditional jazz approaches. But he also brings modern stuff for modern tunes. Not content to rehash the same old standards, Macbride and his peers are intent on taking jazz into the twenty-first century.

**MD:** How did you gravitate toward drums?

**Jimmy:** My parents are both creative. My dad is a composer and writes a lot of music, for percussion ensemble specifically. Maybe that got into my head somehow. There wasn't any one thing. They said I was banging on pots and pans, and I gravitated toward playing drumset. I didn't have any interest in playing classical percussion. In middle school is where I really decided to be a jazz drummer. Some of the first music I heard was Frank Sinatra, and I enjoyed the sound, but then I started to learn about improvisation, the feeling of it, and certain grooves, the subtlety and dynamics. That appealed to me, as well as the fact that your own voice could come out in the music, and that not everything was written down.

**MD:** What did you take away from Juilliard?

**Jimmy:** Two main things. First, meeting the other students who were like-minded and liked the same music as me and who were around my generation—people who I continue to play with today. And then, just finding a community of people that I could be part of. New York is such a big city, with so many musicians, that had I moved here without being in school, it would have been overwhelming. And the other thing was studying with Carl Allen, Kenny Washington, and Billy Drummond, three drummers who I admired, and part of the reason I wanted to go to that school.

**MD:** What did you learn from each?

**Jimmy:** Carl introduced me to a lot of records I didn't know about that he thought would be helpful for me. He helped me physically with my posture and being consistent about where you hit things,

like the snare in the same place. That's something I still think about a lot and that's very important to me.

Billy Drummond is super-open-minded, so he would ask me about what I wanted to work on. And he'd suggest checking out a record that might give me an idea of some new way to approach something that I might encounter in the real world of playing gigs. He has creative and unique ways of approaching things like playing in odd meters or playing more open music. He has a great blend of having such knowledge of the history of the instrument, but he sounds very fresh and in the moment.

Kenny is such a student of the drums, and he cares about playing the instrument correctly. You know he likes a certain era of music and that connects with him the most, but the way he approaches teaching fundamental drum stuff can be applied to any style of playing, beyond jazz even.

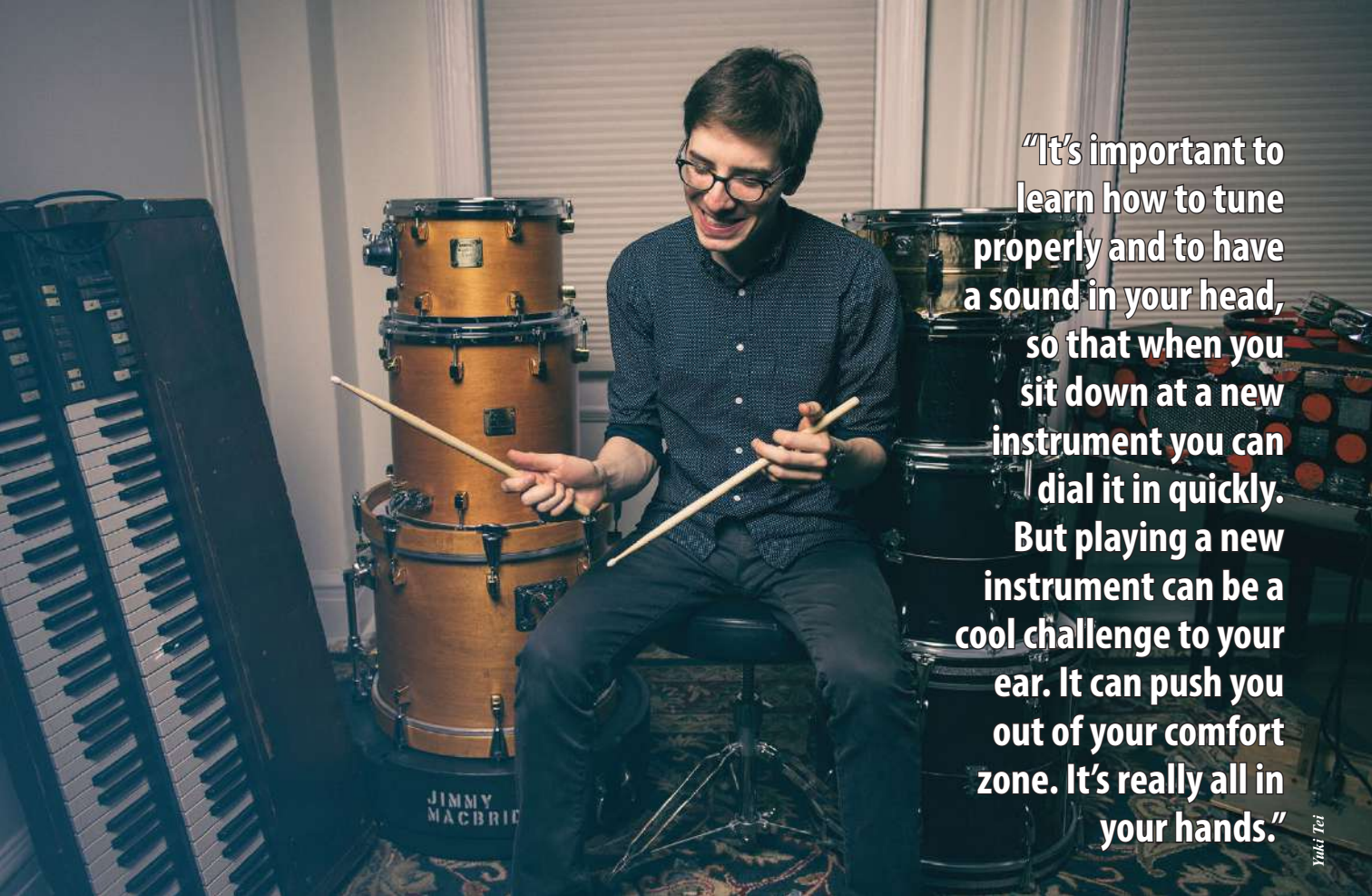
**MD:** You switch back and forth between matched and traditional grip. Is this a nonissue in 2018?

**Jimmy:** To me it's a nonissue. However, if you can get the sound that you want [with one grip or the other], and execute ideas the best, then that's what you should do. I started with matched when I first learned how to play drums. That's what made sense to me and how I saw some people do it, and my teacher never said otherwise. I didn't play traditional grip seriously until I moved to New York. I knew it was something I wanted to be able to do, because I had seen so many of my heroes playing that way. I liked the sound of it, and I liked the look of it. Plus those three drummers I mentioned played traditional and kind of encouraged it. Now I switch back and forth depending on the situation, maybe within the course of eight bars.

**MD:** Talk about the jazz scene today. In New York in particular, has anything changed since you came on the scene, even recently?

**Jimmy:** The jazz scene in New York is as vibrant as ever. There's no shortage of people being creative, playing all sorts of different kinds of music, pushing boundaries on their instruments or compositionally. There are still plenty of places to play. But it's also harder than ever, because with the advent of streaming services, artists aren't making as much money from record sales as they used to. If you put out a jazz record in today's world, you're doing it because you want people to hear your music, not because you want to make any money. So it's an investment on your part, an investment in your career. You hopefully believe in your art to invest that time and those resources into it. But in New York, you can go out every day and hear amazing music.





**“It’s important to learn how to tune properly and to have a sound in your head, so that when you sit down at a new instrument you can dial it in quickly. But playing a new instrument can be a cool challenge to your ear. It can push you out of your comfort zone. It’s really all in your hands.”**

Yuki Tei

**MD:** How do you center yourself to make music with subpar backlines?

**Jimmy:** It’s important to learn how to tune properly, and to have a sound in your head, so that when you sit down at a new instrument, you can dial it in quickly—a general range you want things to be in. I prefer things to be closer to what I have at home, but playing a new instrument can be a cool challenge to your ear. If things are a little different, it can push you out of your comfort zone. It’s really all in your hands. I’ve seen many master musicians sit at any drumset, and it doesn’t matter if the drums are tuned well—they still sound like themselves. It’s remarkable. But having your cymbals helps, and I often bring a snare to clubs in New York, just to make me feel more comfortable.

**MD:** You’re mostly interested in being a part of making original music?

**Jimmy:** I love standards and playing tunes by jazz composers, but most of the people I play with prefer to play the music that they’ve written themselves. I do enjoy playing original music and interpreting people’s music and trying to bring my own thing to it, whether I want to or not, because that’s what most people are doing nowadays.

**MD:** How do you interpret standards, especially coming in after so many heavy drummers before you?

**Jimmy:** I’m with you. I always feel like you can’t reinvent the wheel. But I have many reference points from records I’ve listened to, and things get filtered through that. But at the end of the day, I don’t worry too much about whether what I’m doing is super-original or not, because I’m just concerned with playing well and playing musically, for whatever the situation is—playing original music, standards, or pop music. And I keep the basic tenets of music making that I think are important, like listening, dynamics, making the music feel good, and supporting the other people around you. So because

I am who I am, maybe naturally something of my own will come through. And if the music is well written, open enough, and flexible enough, it will allow the musicians to do that without much effort. The songs play themselves when they’re good, and you naturally fall into the groove and feel comfortable to do whatever you want.

**MD:** And if you play a funk beat and Steve Gadd plays a funk beat, yours is still going to sound like Jimmy Macbride, unintentionally.

**Jimmy:** Right—I hope so. I don’t think I could ever sound like Steve Gadd, even though I would love to. If you just try to play well and support the people around you, naturally over time you’ll hopefully develop your own thing, and hopefully people will recognize that and want you to continue doing that for their music.

## Tools of the Trade

Macbride plays a Sonor Hilite Exclusive kit circa the late ‘80s/early ‘90s that includes a 5.75x14 snare, a 10x12 tom, 14x15 and 15x16 floor toms, and a 15x18 bass drum (with an alternate matching 22" bass drum and 13" tom). Additional snares include a 6.5x14 Ludwig hammered bronze, a 5x14 Canopus Mahogany, and a 5x14 Rogers Powertone COB, all fitted with Canopus Vintage snare wires. Jimmy also occasionally uses a kit made by the now-defunct Modern Drum Shop; it has a black sparkle finish and includes an 8x12 tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 14x18 bass drum. Macbride endorses Paiste cymbals and primarily plays a 22" Masters Dark ride with two rivets, a 20" Masters Dark crash/ride, an 18" Masters Dark crash, 14" Formula 602 Medium hi-hats, and a 22" Sound Creation Dark ride with three rivets. He uses Vater New Orleans Jazz sticks with a wood tip and standard Regal Tip brushes (black rubber handle), Remo Coated Ambassador heads all around (except for a Remo Powerstroke 3 on the 22" bass drum), Yamaha hardware, and a Camco chain-drive bass drum pedal.



# Drum Wisdom

## Jim Mola

by Keith Carne

By his own admission, Jim Mola moved to New York in 1985 to set the world on fire as a drummer. Now, after thirty-three years of experience in the trenches as a working musician, the types of gigs he's playing align exactly with what he hoped to be doing at this point in his career: regular session work, frequent gigs in speakeasies, bars, and small clubs, and a busy career as a

clinician and educator including a faculty position at Manhattan's famed Collective School of Music. What he never imagined was his literal place on the bandstand: that for roughly half of his gigs, he'd perform from downstage, crooning into a mic, rather than upstage, laying down a musical backdrop behind a set of tubs.

Mola, who is as talented and tasteful a drummer as they come,

"worships at the altar of Elvin, Max, Tony, and Jack," as he puts it. Yet raising a family in an inelastic place like New York City requires an elastic temperament, especially for a musician. As he explains it, while working the bar and wedding circuit, he stepped into his vocal and voiceover work through the back door. Whether he's draping his velvety Sinatra over tunes in Robert De Niro's *The Good Shepherd*, running clinics at Drummers Collective, swinging like a studied madman behind Tony Bennett, or playing for millions with Weird Al Yankovic on HBO's *Last Week Tonight With John Oliver*, Mola makes his inherent musicality work for him. It's what keeps him working.

As a voiceover specialist, Mola works with first-call musicians—Howard Shore, Shawn Pelton, John Patitucci—and observes what makes top-bill session players so special. He's learned to inject that "something else" into his own playing; his singing has essentially turned him into a better drummer. Musicality and expression are at the forefront of his focus, regardless of his place on the bandstand. And even though he might earn better paychecks riffing on characters' speaking and singing voices, he still understands the importance of one's individual voice on the drums, and that the ultimate goal is expression.

In this latest chapter of *Drum Wisdom*, we ask Mola to lay out his priorities and offer insights that help us craft the sound we want to present to the world.



John Fell

**If you're going to make a living in New York, you have to do everything but tap-dance.** There's a certain expectation that you can cover a lot of ground. When you get here it kind of slaps you in the face that you see so many creative musicians playing so many different styles. You want to pull more of that into what you do and make it part of your playing.

**If you had told me in 1985 when I came to New York that I would be singing [on almost half of my gigs], there would've been a fistfight.** Like John Lennon said, 'Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans.' I grew up surrounded by family, and my cousins were my playmates. We would memorize the dialogue to old movies, so here I was at seven years old, walking around doing Jimmy Cagney impersonations. Fast-forward twenty years, and when I moved to New York people were calling me for gigs—bars, weddings, whatever—and they'd say, 'We need someone to sing such and such a song.' I'd say, 'I didn't come here to sing; I came here to play drums...but I can do it.' So not only did I sing the song, but to amuse myself I sang it like the person. It became a commodity. I wasn't planning on it. That turned into an entire career as a session singer.

**Most singers guard, promote, and want to be known for their sound. I was interested in that as a drummer, not as a singer.** I didn't have that ego investment in singing. That led to all kinds of work, because I wasn't attached to [any particular sound]. Drummers might get asked to tune their drums like Steve Gadd, and they might say, 'You hired me—I want to be me!' I didn't have any of that when I was singing. I got to New York and I needed to make money, and the Screen Actors Guild is a lot more powerful than the musicians' union. [laughs] You can play drums on a commercial or sing on a commercial, and the disparity between those two paychecks is just ridiculous.

**It's stupid to not do something that you're able to do.** For a creative business, you'd be surprised how often [music professionals] want to put you in a box so they know how to think about you. I tried really hard for a long time to keep [playing and singing work] separate. Maybe they might not take me seriously as a drummer. I would make jokes about my secret day job as a singer. But I got tired of all that. I do the things that I can do, trying to make a living, trying to support my family, trying to express myself as a musician.

**Drummers do best when they concern themselves with the most basic musical ideas possible:** form, structure, contrast, color...things that make music and art in general tick. If you get to the gig and you play what you practiced this afternoon, you've lost it. You're no longer a part of the conversation, in the moment, honest. You sounded so good in the practice room, you can't wait to do it on the bandstand. But if you learn the Gettysburg Address and your friend asks you what you're doing Friday night and you launch into 'Four score and seven years ago...' you're kind of crazy. Creativity is flexibility. It's water, not stone.



**The greatest compliment I've ever received from a musician came from a guitarist I was playing a gig with who told me, 'Man, you understand a lot of different grooves!'** I think great musicians honor a certain quality of space and of how [their music] breathes. Whether it's George Harrison, Eric Clapton, or McCoy Tyner... the dialect between those musicians changes, but there's a sacred space that they all look for in their playing and the way their time feels. As a drummer I've tried to learn what those spaces, sounds, and dialects feel like.

**Shapes and structures that produce a sound are artistically interesting.** On [Dinah Washington's] *Dinah Jams*, Max [Roach] plays these ideas that sounded to me like one long legato phrase. As a kid, I didn't even realize there were separate stickings—it sounded very liquid to me. He played shapes a lot.

**Equipment-wise I'm falling in love with everything I've got all over again.**

I've been with Sabian almost since they opened their doors. They're in a spot right now where they're making amazing cymbals and they're willing to take chances. My main ride is a 24" and it's just the most expressive instrument. Aquarian heads have really made a difference too. They're very warm and have a beautiful sound that's a little shorter. That a drum 'rings for days' isn't a musical consideration. I use the Jack DeJohnette heads on my snare and bass drums—the coating is a little thicker; they're slightly drier. I use a few Vater Buzz Kills on my bass drum, and pretty much no muffling at all. I get more compliments from musicians—not just drummers.

**Drummers need to get out of the drums.**

We need to practice like crazy, but we need to get out of the practice room. I think drummers would be much better served if they went and watched the Alvin Ailey Dance Company than going to another drum clinic. I love drum clinics—I give them and we need them—but if you're not going to see Picasso's or Michelangelo's works you're doing yourself a disservice.

In Florence, at the Accademia Gallery, in the hall leading to Michelangelo's David, there is a series of blocks of marble that a pope had commissioned Michelangelo to make figures from, but they kept arguing about money, so he would stop. Then the pope would agree to pay, so he'd start a new one. So there are all these blocks of marble in various degrees of completion. Every single one of these blocks looked like there was a man inside it trying to get out. It was stop-you-in-your-tracks amazing. *That's* what [Michelangelo] saw. He said, 'I'm just trying to release what's in the marble.' That's an artist's vision. I think the people who drummers idolize, when they're at their best, they're freeing the music that's inside.

**Mola uses Vater sticks and mallets, Sabian cymbals, Aquarian heads, Humes and Berg cases, Cympads, and PreSonus electronics. He usually plays a Gretsch square-badge walnut set and a 1930s 7x14 Slingerland Radio King or 5.5x14 Canopus snare.**





# Stewart Copeland

## Stay Curious!

Forty years ago the passion and presence he displayed with the Police locked the drum world on his every move. Today, after exploring a multitude of ways in which to express and employ himself through sound, he's focusing once again on a band setting. Longtime *MD* contributor **Ken Micallef** remembers the shock of the new and learns about the drummer's return to old-time rocking out.

On October 19, 1979, my bandmates and I made the trek from the backwards burbs of Charlotte, North Carolina, to the leafy campus of Davidson College, some forty-five minutes to the north, to witness the three-piece spectacle we'd heretofore only heard on "FM alternative radio," the Police.

Our band, the Chaplins (don't ask), traded in new-wave material, our best track a rip-off of the Police's spiky "Truth Hits Everybody," from their 1978 debut album, *Outlandos d'Amour*. Sure, we covered our share of late-'70s megahit wonders: Elvis Costello and the Attractions' "Pump It Up," the Cars' "Good Times Roll," the Clash's "London Calling," Nick Lowe's "Cruel to Be Kind." But really, the Police were *it*. I was a Stewart Copeland sycophant. The Police played like a band of true punks but with serious musical acumen and terrific songs that were infused with ideas from ska, reggae, Afro-Cuban, and other international styles. Copeland, bassist/vocalist Sting, and guitarist Andy Summers were on a mission to rule the world, or at least its Top 40 charts.

It was with great relish and collected gas money that we drove north to Davidson in my mom's blood-orange Honda Civic. But nothing prepared us for the aggressiveness, energy, and bombast, for the full-on musical *revolution* we witnessed that fall night.

A quarter of the way through their 1979-80 *Reggatta de Blanc* tour, the Police hit the college's small auditorium stage and destroyed it. Sting was snarky, Summers regal, and Copeland a maniac freed from his cage. Challenging the band, the audience, even his own skinny, seemingly malnourished body, he played with a beautiful yet manic grace that drew on the energy of '70s punk. But the way he hammered rhythms both spacious and exotic, and his fearless

mauling of the barline—always pushing forward—was intoxicating. Soon Copeland's trademarks, such as dub-tinted rim work, flowing hi-hat flourishes, Caribbean and Middle Eastern bell patterns, and excitable Octoban commentary, all housed within a powerful groove that often adroitly avoided the 1, went global.

Thirty-odd years after the band's initial break-up (they would reunite for a 2007/08 world tour), and Stewart Copeland is easily the most prolific former member of the Police. His creative output is downright daunting: early solo releases under the pseudonym Klark Kent; the percussion ensemble/chamber orchestra project *Orchestra!!!*; the collaborative bands *Animal Logic* (with Stanley Clarke and Deborah Holland), *Oysterhead* (with Les Claypool and Trey Anastasio), and *Gizmo* (featuring David Fuczyński); TV and movie soundtracks including *Rumble Fish*, *Wall Street*, *Talk Radio*, *The Equalizer*, *Out of Bounds*, and his own film, *The Rhythmist*; and orchestral works for operas, ballets, and symphonies such as *Ben Hur*, *Tyrant's Crush*, *The Tell Tale Heart*, and *Gamelan D'Drum*.

Copeland has received multiple Grammy Awards and, neatly framing his career, topped the Most Promising Newcomer category in the 1981 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll and was voted into the magazine's Hall of Fame in 2005. These days he's reasserting his rock bona fides with *Gizmodrome*, a supergroup featuring guitarist/vocalist Adrian Belew, Level 42 bassist Mark King, and keyboardist Vittorio Cosma. It's merely the latest example of Copeland's perpetual challenge to himself, to answer the question: What would *this* sound like?



**MD:** Your evolution from rock drummer to soundtrack worker bee to composer of ballets, operas, and classical works, and now being back in a rock band—it's all pretty incredible.

**Stewart:** Well, I've got two words of advice about that: Stay curious.

**MD:** The material in *Gizmodrome* has your classic drumming signature. Were the songs written around the drums?

**Stewart:** One of them was. "Sweet Angels (Rule the World)" began as a drum track for Taylor Hawkins. He was making a solo record, and he says to me, "Send me a drum solo." I missed the part about "four bars of drum solo." So I recorded a two-and-a-half-minute drumathon with everything I've got in here: timpani, Octobans, crotales, all

kinds of unnamed metallic and wooden objects, with which I created this groove. Ultimately he used four bars of it and *Gizmodrome* used the rest as a backing track. I played the band this tapestry I'd built, we created a song on top of it, and then we threw out most of what I'd recorded for Taylor. But that's where I began.

**MD:** That song opens with timpani, which continues through the track; is there more orchestral percussion on the record?

**Stewart:** Not as much as on that track, but I did pull out all kinds of toys. We went nuts and made these incredible backing tracks in Milan. Then we spent two summers doing vocals and adding guitars, removing guitars, adding percussion, using the studio to the max. In the century in which we live,

the studio itself is an instrument. And we definitely performed on that instrument with this material.

**MD:** This is a dense album.

**Stewart:** This isn't an instance where we mailed tracks back and forth to each other. Ninety percent of what you hear is four guys in a room. But all the cool little details, like the timpani, those took a lot of studio time to get sounding cool.

**MD:** Why Milan?

**Stewart:** Milan has open-air concerts where the tickets are either free or very cheap. I'm over there with no record, no product, no agenda. Just to be there. The agenda, as Adrian Belew has said, is "Pasta!" I go and play with a little chamber ensemble, sometimes with the wild tribes of Sorrento,



**“Orchestral music has always been like an Instagram filter on top of all my experiences in rock ‘n’ roll.”**

of which I am now a member. Vittorio Cosma and I had been concocting an act of some kind over the summer. Vittorio is a major force in Italy—a conductor, arranger, film composer, music director. He was the keyboard player in [legendary Italian progressive rock band] PFM. So one day he calls and says, “A record company wants to record us.” And the rest is Gizmodrome.

**MD:** Sounds like a great place to record an album.

**Stewart:** We threw out all these Italian enticements to Adrian Belew, and soon we were in deep urban Milan in a recording studio. Adrian and Mark King came thinking this was going to be a Stewart solo project. But the fun we had, you can’t get that by

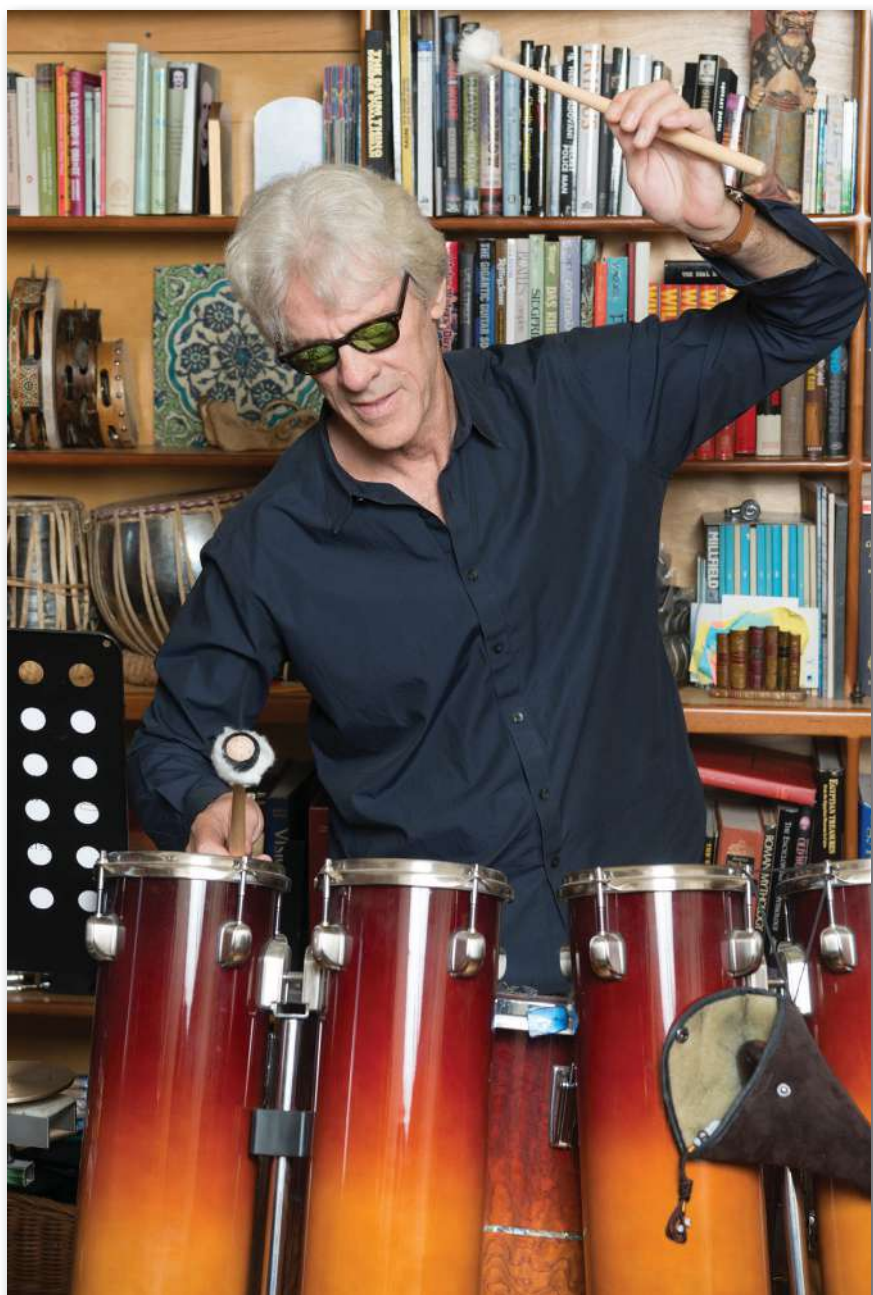
hiring session players. To get them to reach deeper into their cookie jars, I gave them full license. You hear the combined talents of four guys on a mission, which you just don’t get from one artist directing session players. Before they knew it, they were in a band.

**MD:** “Zombies in the Mall” is in 3/4, but you’re playing kind of a 2/4 snare.

**Stewart:** Nah. I’m too lazy to figure out that 6/8 shit.

**MD:** But it’s a classic Stewart Copeland time illusion.

**Stewart:** I don’t really see it that way. There’s a million clever tricks that I do rack up that I’m really proud of. That cross-rhythm thing, playing four against three, is always a good





laugh. It sways in a nonstandard way, which is always a good thing.

**MD:** What's the origin of "Zubatta Cheve" and its groove?

**Stewart:** That came from an open-air show Gizmo played in Sorrento. We got into this groove and the audience was laughing and shouting, and we just sat on this groove. I record everything. When I got home I took out my scalpel and carved that groove into a track, which became a Gizmo song.

**MD:** Did that drum groove come out of some indigenous thing? It's like a street march.

**Stewart:** It just happened one night. I have mixes of other things I played on the song, and it's mostly just the audience. They like to shout. "Oh!" "Ah!" I'm playing this beat and

they're singing and shouting.

**MD:** Your lyrics are always unusual, but with Gizmodrome they're more thoughtful. In one song you say, "Satan sings softly and sweetly." Are you sharing more of your reflective, personal self now than in the past?

**Stewart:** [pause] Yes. But I'm not thinking about who I am as a guy, as a dad, as a suburbanite, a good husband and father in the world. The guy singing those songs and words is not necessarily me. As I used to say back in the Klark Kent days, "The mask revealed the true identity." But it works the other way too. If you're Joe Blow like I actually am, I can put on a mask and some other monster emerges with funny and weird shit to say.

## Tama and Paiste at Sacred Grove

**MD:** Why do you call your studio Sacred Grove?

**Stewart:** A sacred grove is a place where the hunter-gatherers would sense a certain vibe. The way the trees and the rocks were situated on the land, the whistling through the trees... certain places gave them a sense that God lived there. And 13,000 years later, with civilization, that location is probably now home to a church. And there are certain places where there are ley lines or for whatever reason you just feel that something happens there. And this studio that I have is certainly such a place. I don't know if God lives here or not, but Neil Peart likes to come and jam.

**MD:** You can play any brand of gear, but

## Copeland's Setup

### Drums:

- 5x14 Stewart Copeland Signature snare
- 8x10 tom
- 8x12 tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 16x18 floor tom
- 18x22 bass drum
- Octoban low-pitched set

**Hardware:** Tama Iron Cobra Power Glide Twin bass drum pedal, Iron Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat stand, and Star combo tom/cymbal stands, boom stands, and snare stand; Roc-n-Soc NRX Nitro throne with backrest

**Sticks:** Vater Stewart Copeland Standard sticks, Mike Balter F92 mallets

### Cymbals:

- 14" 2002 Flanger splash (discontinued)
- 12" Signature Combo Crisp hi-hats \*
- 6" 2002 Cup Chime
- 18" Signature Fast crash
- 8" Signature splash
- 10" Signature splash
- 16" Signature Full crash
- 22" Signature Blue Bell ride \*
- 17" Signature Fast crash
- 18" Traditionals Light Flat ride (discontinued)
- 18" Signature Fast crash

**Heads:** Remo Coated Emperor (live) or Ambassador (studio and orchestral) snare batter, Clear Emperor (live) or Ambassador (studio and orchestral) tom batters and resonants, Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter, and Black Dot on Octobans

### Cymbals for orchestral performances:

- 12" Signature Combo Crisp hi-hats \*
- 16" Formula 602 Classic Thin crash
- 18" Formula 602 Classic Paperthin crash
- 18" Formula 602 Classic Thin crash
- 22" Twenty Custom Full ride (discontinued)
- 20" Formula 602 Classic Medium Flat ride
- 10" PSTX Swiss splash
- 14" PSTX Swiss Flanger crash

\* Stewart Copeland Artist Inspiration line

**Miscellaneous:** Adams 26" and 32" Professional timpani, Tama 8" and 10" Mini-Tymp and 16x20 gong bass drum, Paiste gong and cymbal rack, Paiste two-octave crotales (C6 to C8), Toca doumbek, Alternate Mode MalletKAT 5



you've stuck with Tama and Paiste. Why? **Stewart:** Tama makes great drums. I occasionally sit on other people's drums—your DWs, your Yamahas, Slingerlands, Gretsch, and so on. Tama seem to think more about the drums. I'm still basically a glorified roadie and drum gearhead. I spend many happy hours thinking of booming out that new splash cymbal so it doesn't get in the way of the something-else cymbal.

Tama has got it all together. I've been playing their drums for forty years. They're

the wooden stage and make music. It's astonishing the difference between sixty guys on wooden instruments and one Fender Champ amplifier.

A symphonic concert feels magnificent and powerful, but it's not that loud. You don't sense an absence of volume, though, because it's so rich and sonorous. But a rock band is ten times louder. In an acoustic environment with an orchestra...for me to hit my snare drum, which is tuned and designed to bring a bird down from the sky, I have to caress it very gently. And

orchestral epiphany when we did the Police reunion tour. It was after that tour that I began playing regularly with orchestras and working on getting that technique under control. Another blessing of playing quietly? All those rudiments that you studied as a kid and the reason you do all those ruffs and drags, those really subtle nuances that drums are capable of but have no place in a rock band—these techniques come forth again and can shine!

**MD:** How do you balance the two environments?

"Stewart oozes style, and we all know it. His playing is unique and original. It's exciting and unpredictable. That snare, that hi-hat, that ride cymbal, that feel, those fills, that phrasing! He has his own distinct, recognizable sound and approach, like no one else that came before or after him. It's what we all strive for, and most never achieve it. But somehow he makes it seem completely effortless. If in the '70s Bonham inspired an entire generation of drummers to want to be him, Stewart was the guy in the '80s. A fresh new sound and the MVP in each of their respective bands. He sent us all running to the headphones to listen, pick apart, and want to emulate on some level. Realizing we'll never be him, all we can do is be inspired by him, and hopefully that inspiration and joy comes through in our playing. I could go on and on. Favorite tracks? If I listed five I'd be leaving out the other fifty, so I'm not even going to go there, girlfriend."

—Josh Freese

"Copeland was one of my main influences while I was still living in Mexico City during my teens. He possesses one of the most recognizable sounds in rock 'n' roll, which is no small feat. The snare drum crack, the Octobans, the splashes, the hi-hat work...it's all incredibly clever, unique, and personal. The way he would displace the beat and avoid the obvious drum parts was always fascinating to me and in my opinion made the Police one of the most identifiable bands in history. 'Walking on the Moon' and 'Driven to Tears' are great examples of how he could be inventive, busy, and supportive at the same time while imprinting his own signature feel and sound. I think the fact that he is an all-around great musician who composes and is also a multi-instrumentalist is what makes him such a clever drummer."

—Antonio Sanchez

"Stewart Copeland had a huge impact on me. When I heard the Police for the first time, I just didn't get what was happening. He has the ability to convey a pulse with a completely different approach from anyone else I used to listen to at the time. It was unique and creative, but without being complicated. It was full of nuances and colors but still very powerful and confident. But the biggest lesson that I got from him was this: I loved him...in fact, so much that I tried to become him for a while—until I understood that he would not try that if he were in my position; he's so good at being himself. That's what I do now—becoming more and more myself. Gosh, but I still love him."

—Benny Greb

quite bright and punchy sounding, and I've discovered they're very versatile. Those same Tama drums that I played at Giants Stadium work pretty well at a tenth of that volume with a sixty-piece orchestra with no amplification. When I play dates with a symphony, sometimes there's no soundcheck, no PA, no microphones, no electronics at all. Sixty guys go out onto

those same drums sound fantastic at *that* volume. One of the benefits of playing very quietly is the drums sound humongous.

### The Drummer as "Flinty-Eyed Film Composer"

**MD:** How does your orchestral work change the way you play drums in a rock band?

**Stewart:** I was only halfway through this

**Stewart:** I'm faced with playing in Gizmodrome and I've got to figure out a way—because I really like playing quietly; I can play with more power and finesse and coolness. I enjoy it more, and it's really blazing at that lower volume. Jonathan Fishman with Phish barely touches the drums and it sounds huge. I want to get some of that.





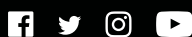
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## Stewart Copeland

In *Gizmodrome* when I sing and play guitar up front we have Pete Biggin from Level 42 on the drums. And I have to keep his volume down! I'll say in the rehearsal room—and your readers will gasp with loathing—but I'm the guy saying, "Can you play that a little quieter?"

**MD:** Rock bands should play with dynamics like in jazz and orchestral groups.

**Stewart:** Well, the drummer is in control of the dynamics. You're not teaching Grandma to suck eggs here when it comes to drummers and dynamics. We know what that's all about. Okay, it won't be zero to four, but how about three to eight? It's just volume, not energy. I believe you can really kick it when you haven't *already* kicked it.

### Stewart's Setup, Then and Now

**MD:** What are your drum and percussion rigs for *Ben Hur* and *Tyrant's Crush*?

**Stewart:** In *Tyrant's Crush*, just a drumset. For *Ben Hur*, drumset and percussion. I play drums fine, but for percussion I have to read the score. It's a very complex score. I wrote the damn thing! I've played it a hundred times, but I still have to read my way through the percussion section. The drum parts, I play it differently every night, because I know every millisecond of the music. The last show was in Vienna; now we're booking 2019.

**MD:** Do you use clicks for either or both shows?

**Stewart:** No click in *Tyrant's Crush*—it's completely organic. But with *Ben Hur*, because it's synchronized to the film, there's a click, and I have a small video monitor with the movie playing. It has bar numbers, streamers, all kinds of information, because I have to navigate to the frame with the film with sixty other guys.

**MD:** How has your drum setup changed through the years?

**Stewart:** I got rid of one tom-tom. One day I got a call from George Martin, who was at the Hollywood Bowl playing Beatles orchestral music. He called me to play drums. I figured if I'm going to be doing Ringo chops, let's do it on a Ringo drumset. So I set up just like Ringo: one rack tom, one floor tom, and two cymbals. And I made an incredible discovery: The drums are so much easier and more fun to play when you don't have all these f\*\*king drums in the way!

**MD:** How many toms do you play now?

**Stewart:** Still too many. Two in the front and two on the side. I don't get around to the Octobans anymore. If I set them up, I'm only hitting them because they're there. I

can say what I have to say without them. At lower volumes, the top left tom, serves that function. With a rock band it doesn't cut like Octobans do. But at symphonic levels tom-toms have got that covered. I did overdub Octobans on the *Gizmodrome* record.

**MD:** When you're playing your rock kit with an orchestra...

**Stewart:** With *Ben Hur* I have two drumsets, which is my drumset and my percussion rig—basically a gong drum and Octobans as a unit. And crotales, with all kinds of cymbals and gongs hanging from the rig. I used those setups on the Police reunion tour as well. It's the rig behind the main drumset. I play a lot of *Ben Hur* on crotales and Octobans and gong drum for a more ethnic vibe. But my basic touring kit hasn't changed since the Police. I've just scrubbed the Octobans and the one tom.

**MD:** Do you tune the drums the same as you did in the '70s and '80s?

**Stewart:** Pretty much. The drums were always tuned pretty high to cut through. They might not sound like much when they're set up, but when they go through the PA into a big room, that high-pitched sound cuts better and has plenty of power. You get the fullness and the cut.

**MD:** One of your trademarks is your incredible energy level, to where in the Police you were ahead of the beat, to drive the music harder.

**Stewart:** I discovered something recently, and I won't throw anyone under the bus, but I've talked to several of Stingo's session players and those that have toured with him. They blew my mind by telling me that Stingo rushes! And the two of us together? That's the problem! We were both rushing like madmen, and maybe that's where the energy of the Police came from. That can be a problem when Sting tries to sing his songs at crazy tempos. I always thought it was me; I crack when it comes to tempo. So shoot me. But what I learned, to my astonishment—and it increases my love and adoration for the man—is that Sting is a sonofabitch rusher too! And by the way, none of this is criticism. Sting is also a very visceral musician. He's not faking it. He's the real thing. If he rushes, that was some of his frustration with me. It never crossed either of our minds that we're both the culprits.

**MD:** You're a lefty playing a right-handed kit. Has that made a difference?

**Stewart:** I think so. But to be clear, on almost any instrument it matters not if you're left-handed or right-handed, because both hands are working. Though Jimi Hendrix did sound different because

A-list Drummer Derrick Wright

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## Stewart Copeland

he turned his guitar upside down and his strum went the opposite way.

**MD:** Ringo is also a lefty playing a righty kit.

**Stewart:** Yes, and maybe that took him down some pathways that made his instinctive creation slightly different from the normal guy.

### Inside *Tyrant's Crush*, *Ben Hur*, *Gamelan D'Drum*

**MD:** You've scored *Ben Hur*, composed drum concertos for various orchestral commissions, scored *Gamelan D'Drum* for gamelan orchestra and the Dallas Symphony, and composed *Tyrant's Crush*. Can we buy any of these soundtracks?

**Stewart:** Nothing is buyable, because of the strange animal, for one, that *Ben Hur* is. That's a live experience that happens with an orchestra and me in front of a screen with this old movie. And I've altered and edited the movie for the purposes of a concert. To make a product out of that would be to transgress upon the original [silent] movie, which was cut down from two hours and forty minutes to ninety minutes for a good concert.

When the book *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* was originally written in 1880, it was the biggest seller next to the Bible. Then *Ben Hur* opened on Broadway and ran for twenty-six years. They made the silent film in 1924, which is the one I'm working with. The movie was enormous. Forty years later Charlton Heston remakes the movie, and it receives the most Oscars ever. Then this modern dog came out, the 2016 version. Piece of shit. F\*\*ked my brand! People think my version is that crap film, dammit!

**MD:** Your first soundtrack score for a major film was *Rumble Fish*. Could you read and score music back then?

**Stewart:** Yes and no. I had learned music as a kid and at the San Diego College of Performing Arts; I was a music major. Then I never saw a sheet of music for twenty years. At the end of the Police I'm in the studio playing everything by myself. One day Francis Ford Coppola says [regarding *Rumble Fish*], "Great, love it. But it needs strings." Yes, great idea! I'm on it. I get on the phone to a contractor: "Gimme strings." "How many strings?" "I don't know. Book some strings!"

These music readers show up. It's not like a rock guitarist. I explain the mood to them and say, "Who wants to take a solo?" Silence. One of them said, "Maestro, do you want us to play what's on the page, or whatever the hell you're talking about?" There wasn't much on the page. Whole notes, that's

all I had the imagination for. They play it down and they're gone in an hour. Done and dusted, because it was on paper. I didn't have to negotiate and cajole and inspire—it's on the page. Since then I've been putting more on the page, and now my page is pretty freakin' black. There's the staccatos, the pianissimos, the hairpins, the articulations—you have to shape the music.

**MD:** How did you learn to do all this?

**Stewart:** It's a language. I was using orchestrators for twenty years before I became a flinty-eyed film composer. I'd write it in MIDI, then hand it over and talk to the orchestrator regarding my intentions. *The Equalizer* was all electronic. In later feature films, I'd write the score in MIDI, but sometimes it didn't end up as I'd hoped. I checked out Wagner, Stravinsky, and Ravel, and with them there's a lot more information on the page. So I started doing more of what I call "putting the Italian on the page." You've got a row of notes? Now put the Italian on it. You give it shape, not just what they play but *how* they play it. Creating an orchestral score, like *Tyrant's Crush*, it's thirty minutes of music. It took me five minutes to write the music and a year to score it. Unfortunately, there is no recording of that.

**MD:** Why not?

**Stewart:** Orchestras have unions, and you cannot just record them. You're already cutting a big check to hire sixty musicians—now you want to make a record? That's another check. And whenever I do these shows with the Colorado or Buffalo or Dallas symphony, they hire me to play the show and that's as much money as you've got. They're not paying for a record too! There are a couple clips of *Ben Hur* on YouTube, however. The 2002 production of *Ben Hur* opened in London and played in Europe, and they made a couple thousand copies of that production. Sort of a dog's dinner, music made for a live show cut into an album without a lot of thought.

**MD:** Could you read an orchestral chart while you were in the Police?

**Stewart:** I could read it, but I couldn't hear it as I read it. And I still can't really. I'm not like the guys who went to conservatory. A conductor can look at my score and hear it in his head. I do mental arithmetic to translate it.

**MD:** Will you be doing more film or soundtrack work?

**Stewart:** Not if I can help it. The work is fun but the business is hell, a real dog-eat-dog world. I enjoyed it for twenty years. Okay, I'm the biggest dog—eat my dinner and



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## Stewart Copeland

I'll kick your ass! But I learned so much. The film composer has the widest skill set of any form of musician, because he has to. He has to do period music, futuristic music, symphonic, electronic, jazz, happy, sad... very specific emotional messages with every known form of musical medium and instrumentation.

So I was getting all these chops, and I was also getting commissions to write music for the sake of music, which I enjoy a lot more. Working with directors was great, but the business sucked. The business of getting the gig, getting fired from the gig; it's play or pay whether they use the score or not. And the agent makes more money if he can get two of his clients scoring the movie. That's why I'm glad to be out of that business. No good deed goes unpunished, the idiots get promoted, the talented have their ideas stolen.

**MD:** Sounds like the record business.

**Stewart:** The record business is much nicer. Much more love, trust, and loyalty; friendship counts.... In the film industry, there's more money involved, it's more corporate, and where art meets the corporate world is a harder rub at that higher financial level. The music industry is the same industry, only remove a couple zeros, and that reduces a lot of those pressures.

**MD:** So to hear your orchestral works we have to buy a ticket.

**Stewart:** These are live experiences, in the room, not a record experience so much. One day I will sneakily put out my versions of the operas and sing all the parts—even soprano! I would sing it in my regular voice, then electronically take it up an octave. You can imagine how beguiling and beautiful that will sound.

### "The Super-Creative Type"

**MD:** Have you always been left of center in your musical thinking?

**Stewart:** When I was studying music in college I was imagining Stravinsky on guitar and me on drums. Then I couldn't make up my mind whether I wanted to be Mitch or Jimi. Then, during my years of rock 'n' roll, I'm listening to the Cramps and imagining Stravinsky around it. Orchestral music has always been like an Instagram filter on top of all my experiences in rock 'n' roll.

**MD:** You've talked about showing up with your best ideas, and knowing that you're more than a drummer.

**Stewart:** Drums are so much fun to play, and none of the other musicians in the band have drum chops. That's our little

empire. But get beyond that thinking—the entire *band* is your empire. You should be picking up the guitar, bass, and keyboards, and most importantly get on the mic, which is a challenge for drummers, because the Don Henley microphone is not a good look. But it's worth it. When bands are rehearsing, no one wants to sing, so the nerd who just wants to hang out says, "I'll sing," and twenty years later you're all working for him.

**MD:** You've also said it's important to fail.

**Stewart:** Yes, brush yourself off—it's only music. With that freedom, you can get deeper in your cookie jar, your reservoir of cool shit, that stuff that your mind comes up with. Recently UCLA did a study on super-creative types. I was one of their subjects. They put me into an MRI twice and gave me all types of tests. One common feature they found was that the creatives have certain f\*\*k-ups or gifts that give them a unique view into solving problems. They find the shortcuts. That propensity for random, wrong thought is a trait of this group. Take my song "Ride Your Life." "We are sinners all / and can't help but judge / but when the gavel falls / remember love." That applies for road rage and elsewhere. Be peaceful. Remember love.

### Put It Off for Later?

**MD:** You're always the guy with the most energy in the room. Where does it come from?

**Stewart:** Who knows. I do what I do. I go to bed at night. I don't understand such concepts as procrastination. What *is* that? How can anyone watch TV when there's a mission? Put it off for later? I don't even understand how that works.

**MD:** Do you have any goals left as a drummer?

**Stewart:** My goal as a drummer is to play ever more smoothly and quietly and to achieve more with less effort.

And one more thing: I put down my drumsticks for ten years once, then for shorter and shorter periods. Then Les Claypool told me it was my civic duty to play drums. What I discovered from lying fallow is that when the chops return—it took a while after ten years, which was messed up—but they come back better every time. So now, between *Ben Hur* shows, I don't even look at the drumset. When I do get back to them, the gift is fresh. And my love of playing the drums is magnified. So, lie fallow. The gifts will come back stronger than ever. Now I must run. I have to eat a sandwich and pick up the kids. Bye!



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# 1978

**MD travels back forty years with six of the biggest rock drummers of the day to learn how they worked in this year of transition.**

## Russ Kunkel

### The Song Server

by Jeff Potter



Joel Bernstein

**A**t the dawn of the '70s, music fans noticed the credit "Drums: Russ Kunkel" popping up on reams of LP jackets. From that pivotal point, Kunkel's momentum as a session ace surged through five decades. The drummer's tasteful parts and elegant

time pocket earned him A-list status in L.A. studios, especially in the emerging "singer-songwriter" scene. Right out of the gate, his superb drum tracks helped mold the foundations of that genre, including ultra-classics such as James Taylor's *Sweet Baby*

*James* (1970), Carole King's *Tapestry* (1971), and Joni Mitchell's *Blue* (1971).

Kunkel united with guitarist Danny Kortchmar, bassist Leland Sklar, and pianist Craig Doerge to form the quartet famously known as the Section. That core, along with



satellite members—including guitarist Waddy Wachtel and multi-instrumentalist David Lindley—became a hit-making fixture in West Coast studios. Amazingly, Kunkel simultaneously maintained a busy touring schedule.

In addition to the multiple discs Kunkel cut with Taylor, King, Jackson Browne, Dan Fogelberg, Warren Zevon, Carly Simon,

Linda Ronstadt, Bob Seger, and Jimmy Buffett, his mammoth discography includes titles by Bob Dylan, Crosby Stills & Nash, B.B. King, Harry Chapin, Bonnie Raitt, Neil Diamond, Stevie Nicks, Dolly Parton, Reba McEntire, the Bee Gees, Emmylou Harris, Glenn Frey, Aaron Neville, Joe Walsh, Roger McGuinn, and many others.

Today Kunkel continues his session work

and enjoys a sixteen-year association with Lyle Lovett. He recently reunited with several alumni of the Section to record an instrumental disc slated for release in Japan, followed by touring. “We did it in two days,” Russ says, “just the way we always did: Put everybody in a room and record it.” Here the drummer recalls the vibrant scene of 1978.

## “I embraced the technology. I saw it as a tool. When lots of drummers were complaining about drum machines, I went out and bought one.”

**MD:** Among the more than a dozen 1978 releases you played on were several monsters, including Warren Zevon’s *Excitable Boy* and Linda Ronstadt’s *Living in the USA*. Also in that year, Jackson Browne’s *Running on Empty* hit number three and stayed on the charts for a whopping sixty-five weeks. It’s considered one of the great live rock albums, and I understand that you sparked the concept?

**Russ:** We had recorded lots of material from the shows on that tour, including songs from Jackson’s whole repertoire. When he was starting to work on mixes in the studio, I mentioned, “Wouldn’t it be a great idea to have this album be a live recording of all new material?” He liked the idea; it made sense to him for that particular body of work—just using the new songs. It worked, and the rest is history.

At the January NAMM Show, the Section was inducted into the TEC Awards Hall of Fame. We performed, and Jackson Browne joined us for two songs. Before that, there was a panel discussion on *Running on Empty*.

**MD:** On the Section’s tracks, there’s a tremendous sense of groove that’s felt but never forced.

**Russ:** I think that’s just the familiarity of playing together. I was never doing anything consciously; it was pretty much *un-conscious*. Regarding the word *forced*, we never really did that; we were just trying to get a take. [laughs] It’s not about who can play the most licks. It’s “Let’s make the artist happy so we can get called back again.” That was certainly my point of view doing sessions. And I was fortunate to play with lots and lots of great musicians when I was coming up. Everyone influenced me. I got to play with [bassists] Joe Osborn and Larry Knechtel... a lot of people that came in the era before me. I would sneak around the studios and put my ear on the door and listen to Hal Blaine play—just look at his drumkits in the hallway at Capitol and go, *Ooh!*

**MD:** Speaking of Blaine, the Section was, in a way, the successor to the Wrecking Crew’s mantle.

**Russ:** That’s probably a fair assessment. But those are very, very large shoes to fill.

**MD:** One ’78 disc was a bit different: Bill Withers’ *’Bout Love*.

**Russ:** That was one of the big things in my life. By all rights, James Gadson—who I adore—should have played on every one of those albums. But I got to play on that, in an R&B style, which I love doing. But with all the singer-songwriter stuff, I was never called upon to do that. “Lovely Day” [from Withers’ *Menagerie*, released December

1977] is one of my favorite tracks that I’ve ever played on. I just love the way that song feels, and it’s a little bit out of my comfort zone of what people knew me for.

**MD:** In addition to your intense studio schedule, you toured frequently.

**Russ:** [Producer] Peter Asher was a real proponent. He wanted the bands that played on the records to also tour. He was real serious about that. He would change touring dates around our availability—book James’ tour early in the summer and Linda’s later so those of us who were doing both could do both. That was unheard of at that time. I remember in 1978 playing with James, Linda, and Jackson Browne through the course of spring to the late fall.

**MD:** What was your usual tuning back then?

**Russ:** With the toms, I tuned the bottom heads as low as they would possibly go without any wrinkles and then tuned the top heads identically so they had the same exact pitch. I would do that all the way down the kit, with a natural gradation.

For the snare, it would depend. On all the records back in 1978, that’s a Ludwig Black Beauty tuned pretty low. It was that fat snare sound that Hal and everybody had. But snare drum sounds changed and got real cracking and open. I love that too. When I went into the studio, people liked that there was a uniform sound to my kit.

**MD:** Since then, the recording process has changed vastly. That year also represents another cusp: Within a short time, drum machines would ascend.

**Russ:** In the ’80s I reinvested myself a bit. I knew that I had to be more than just a drummer. I’ve always had a studio in my house. So I started writing. I had three different deals with major publishers, and I produced a lot of albums. I embraced the technology. I saw it as a tool. When lots of drummers were complaining about drum machines, I went out and bought one.

I embraced technology through every phase. But I think we’re on the verge of a reverse renaissance; we’ve almost come full circle. There are a lot of indicators, including the resurgence of vinyl. And there’s no plug-in you can buy that duplicates four people in a room playing live together. You *can’t* simulate that.

**MD:** What was the key factor you provided that led you to be called back for countless sessions?

**Russ:** I’m not really sure. I guess I try to get along with people. I remember my mom and dad teaching me to be seen and not heard. I try not to be a squeaky wheel. And I think that transfers to the music somehow. It starts there; if you have that, there’s no tension and art can happen. Try to create a space where the musical *conversation* can take place. That may be the reason why people will take me on the road and have me in the studio as well. I would like to think that.

### Tools of the Trade

“I’m now playing a new DW custom series called Contemporary Classic,” Kunkel says. “It’s a more versatile version of the DW Classic shells that sound like older vintage kits. John Good and his DW team developed this for me to play, and I’m loving it!” Russ also endorses Paiste Formula 602 Classic cymbals, Promark sticks, and Evans heads.



# Foreigner's Dennis Elliott

by Robin Tolleson



"I was blessed to land a gig as life-changing as Foreigner," the London-born drummer Dennis Elliott says. "It was a band I totally believed in." Elliott played with the group for seventeen years, powering solid-gold tracks like "Urgent," "Feels Like the First Time," "Hot Blooded," "Waiting for a Girl Like You," and "Double Vision" with flair, soul, and efficiency. He also had a penchant for unexpected choices, like the series of fills at the end of "Cold as Ice," a top-ten single from the group's eponymous 1977 debut album.

Perhaps less obvious was Elliott's ability to keep the group's slow to mid-tempo arena rockers perfectly in the pocket. "The tempos and grooves to some of those songs can be a bear to play," the drummer says today. "It's much easier to play things up-tempo, but I think that's part of the beauty of those songs."

Elliott was encouraged by his father to play drums in their family band at a young age. By sixteen he'd earned a professional gig with the Shevelles, which was followed by a stint with the popular British club band the Ferris Wheel. At nineteen Elliott joined the highly regarded jazz-rock group If, with which he recorded a handful of albums over four years. A subsequent stint with the British rocker Roy Young led to a session with Ian Hunter; Elliott recorded the former Mott the Hoople singer's self-titled debut, including the hit "Once Bitten Twice Shy."

After the Hunter recording, Elliott found himself unemployed and in New York City. While he had to take work as a mechanic to

make ends meet, he met guitarist Mick Jones, himself marooned in New York following the dissolution of the Leslie West Band, at a jam session. "A few weeks later," Elliott says, "I got a call from Mick saying that he was forming a new band, and would I care to come down to Manhattan to play some songs and see what happens." That band became Foreigner.

"The songs were so good that I just felt comfortable with them," Elliott recalls. "In fact, I remember playing 'Feels Like the First Time' at that audition and thinking to myself, *I KNOW this song*. It felt like we'd been playing together for years. We'd never played live on stage together, and yet we were in the studio making this music that I just knew would do well.

"On our first tour," Elliott continues, "the album took off up the charts, and we were forced into a headline situation. That's wonderful news, but we only had the material from one album, which was about forty-five minutes, and we had to do ninety. So it was exciting times. The second album, *Double Vision* [1978], was an even bigger success, and the touring became even more demanding." A private plane helped simplify the travel, and, Elliott says with a smile, "The police were more than happy to assist us out of town."

According to Elliott, every song Foreigner recorded was treated as a potential single. "And why not?" he says. "There was always a lot of thought about structure and tempos, to make the song stand out."



Gregg Crockett



Vicki DiAddecio



Iona S. Elliott

Elliott walking off stage after guesting at a recent Foreigner show.

That thought process involved paying particular attention to the act of streamlining. "My playing with Foreigner on record can be very simple in approach," Elliott explains. "And in fact Mick has said on numerous occasions that he chose me as much for what I didn't play as for what I did. I think any drummer on this planet can play everything that I played on those albums with ease, but the question is, *would they have?*"

"Mick Jones and [singer] Lou Gramm were indeed the main songwriters in the band," Elliott goes on, "but I can tell you that some of those songs were anything but complete when I did the drum tracks. The drum tracks were laid down first, and I was usually finished with my part of an album within two or three weeks. But as the other instruments were added, those songs could go through transformations, and I often said that if I'd known how they would have ended up, I would have played differently. And in fact on many occasions we started from the top, as what was played originally was no longer relevant. But that's creating music, I guess. And this really only started to take place after about the third album. The songs were now being written in the studio, because we were touring so much and there was so much pressure to put out another album."

Those live shows were a constant highlight for the drummer. "There was so much energy coming from the guys," Elliott says. "To

be able to perform such a strong set for people and feel what they give you back is such a blast. I also really enjoyed it when we would soundcheck before a show. We would often get new ideas from just jamming. Mick would start off playing a riff, and I would jump right in, and many times I would come in at totally the wrong place. I could tell by the grimace on Mick's face that it was wrong. But you know what? Instead of stopping and telling me where the count should be, he would turn to anyone nearby and yell, 'Record this!' And many new ideas for songs can be forged this way. You just have to be open-minded. Having someone hit the 'record' button in those circumstances is the key to some really interesting riffs."

Elliott left Foreigner in 1993 and began devoting more time to wood sculpture, and he's had exhibitions in a number of galleries. "Our days seemed to be a continuous string of interviews, radio call-ins, in-store appearances, and TV shows to promote the latest single," Dennis says, "and I used to look forward so much to the evening, when we could just get on stage and play. All in all, it was a wonderful time, but very hectic. That's what it was like for the seventeen years I was with the band, and it takes a toll. I just felt I'd had enough, and it was best for me to stay home."

The door wasn't closed for good, though, and Elliott still sits in with the band from time to time. "We're all still good friends," he says, "so you never know what might happen in the future."



# Peter Criss on Peter Criss

by Billy Amendola

**In 1978, the four members of Kiss simultaneously released self-titled solo albums, a brilliant marketing move that pushed the already famous group further into the stratosphere. Though it's not considered a groundbreaking "drum record"—that was never the intention—*Peter Criss* neatly showcases its creator's love of soul music, horns, strings, background vocals, and hooks, and even makes a solid case for him being the best vocalist in the band. Here, with forty years of hindsight, the Cat Man reminisces about his contribution to Kiss's historic quadruple punch.**

When we were planning our solo albums, I knew I might never again get the chance to do what I wanted, with horns and strings and singing. I'm a soul singer; I grew up with James Brown, the Ronettes, the Rascals, Phil Spector, and the Motown sound. I understand now why the fans and even the guys in the band didn't really get it. It was far away from Zeppelin and Hendrix, which was what they were into. What I was doing maybe sounded a bit older. I wanted my solo album to be *me*. I did my best to get my voice to tackle every aspect of music, from soul to ballads. I loved the simplicity of the drumming on 'Don't You Let Me Down'—I borrowed the vibe for that one from Ben E. King's 'Spanish Harlem.' I loved the song 'Tossin' and Turnin' since I played it in my R&B cover band years before Kiss. I always liked playing drums on it, and that's why I wanted it on my album. It had some cool, unusual fills on it.

I think because I wrote songs, I knew when and where to lay out with a fill. I really learned that from singing. When we're younger we put fills anywhere, just to get that fill in. I'd emulate Keith Moon, and I was into Gene Krupa and all the jazz drummers. But the singing was always very important. To me Ringo was the king for playing that way—

and Charlie Watts and Hal Blaine. They knew how to not get in the way of the singer and the songs. To me, they were perfect drummers.

When I met [Kiss bandmates] Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, and Ace Frehley, they were full-blown rock 'n' rollers. They weren't really into horns or strings; it was mostly guitars. But I had already been on the scene in cover bands for ten years, playing every popular nightclub in New York City. So I was well accustomed to different styles of music. I still believe that music is a universe. I believe you should listen to all different kinds of music.

I really enjoyed working with producer Sean Delaney—God rest his soul—who was originally supposed to do the whole record. He wrote 'I Can't Stop the Rain' and a few others. We recorded at Electric Lady in New York City. Sean recommended Allan Schwartzberg on drums for the songs we coproduced. Allan was one of the most in-demand session drummers at that time, and Sean thought he'd be perfect on those particular tracks. And he is brilliant on them. We got some other heavy session guys as well, like guitarists Elliott Randall and John Tropea. I had no problem with having other musicians on my

record. Those were the best guys in New York, and I agreed with Sean. So I concentrated on singing and getting into the songs. And that's how it started.

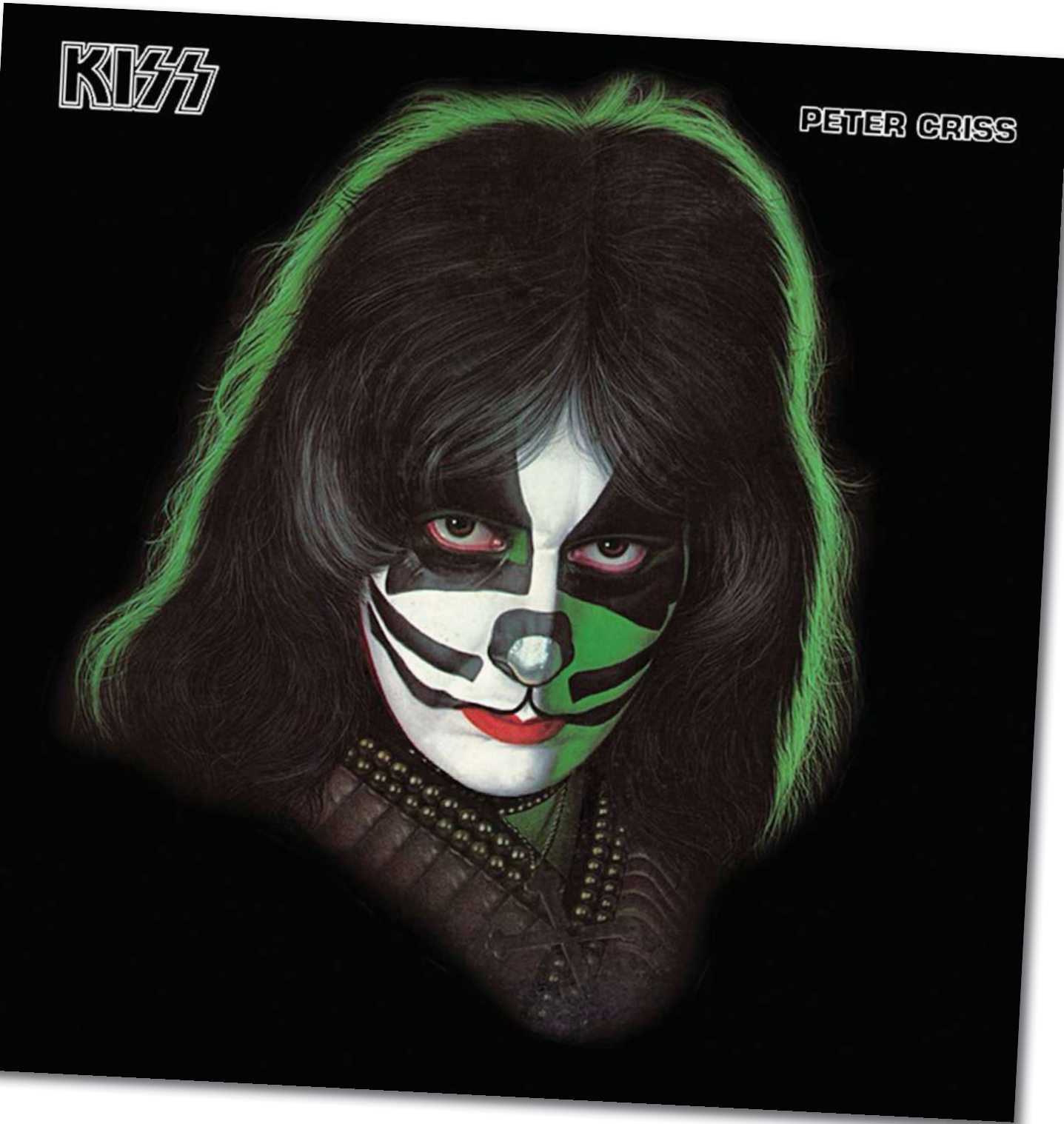
And then Sean left and went over to work on Gene's record, and shortly after, our manager, Bill Aucoin, introduced me to producer/songwriter Vini Poncia. I was familiar with some of the records he did with Ringo—we actually used Ringo's horn section on the album. We liked the same styles of music, so we went for it, and I fell in love with working with him. Not only was Vini a great producer, he was also a great songwriter and singer. Vini sang background on the album as well.

Right before I started my record with Vini, I was in a very bad car crash and I broke my fingers, my nose, my ribs... it was bad. I stayed in L.A., and when we started recording I played with those iron things they put on you when you break your fingers. But it was my first solo album and I wanted to play on it. At times it was painful, but a good kind of pain. I was using Pearl drums at that time, with my Zildjian cymbals.

I was extremely proud of that first solo record. I know it didn't fare as well as the other three at the time,

**KISS**

**PETER CRISS**



but it did go on to become a million-seller. I always felt like the George Harrison of Kiss—maybe I'd get one song on an album. I'd written some

of those songs years before, so I had a barrage of tunes ready to go that I didn't get to do with the band. So for me it was like, *Wow, I get to do MY*

*songs now.* I wanted the fans to hear it and think, *Hey, he's not just the guy up there with the makeup.*



**Criss currently endorses DW drums, Zildjian cymbals, Remo heads, and Promark sticks.**



# Rick Marotta

by Billy Amendola

**For the drummer, who'd built a sterling session and live career for nearly ten years with artists including John Lennon, Paul Simon, Jim Croce, James Taylor, and Steely Dan, 1978 was yet another super-busy year. In the studio, on the road, back in the studio, back on the road... it's no wonder the circumstances surrounding some recordings are somewhat vague to him today. That said, the studio star actually remembers quite a bit about the records he made that year; here he shares his impressions of a dozen.**

## Chaka Khan *Chaka*

Steve Ferrone was on most of this album, including the hit "I'm Every Woman." I played on the David Lasley ballad "Roll Me Through the Rushes." We were all doing so many sessions then. And I was touring almost that whole year with either James Taylor or Linda Ronstadt—honestly, I'm surprised I did as many records in '78 as you've come up with here!



really good record to work on.

This was one of the first albums on which I worked very closely with the artist. I made mistakes on it—it was a real learning process. I was learning how to produce vocals. But it was a great experience for me. Bryan

was so very specifically good—he's like a great character actor—and he had such character in his voice. He was so ahead of his time. Interesting songs, all great.

When Waddy came out, he produced with me, and then a few other producers came in. But Waddy and I really had a lot to do with that record. I even played the guitar solo on [the demo of], I think, "Same Old Blues," which Waddy had to learn. I was playing just about everything on that demo. Then all the "real" guys came in after the preproduction.

I might have used Syndrums on "Take Me to the River." Alan Spenner, who was in Joe Cocker's band from Woodstock, was on bass on that album as well. This was one of my favorites.

## Warren Zevon *Excitable Boy*

I played on "Lawyers, Guns and Money" on this one. That was a highlight for me, one of my favorite records I played on. I did a lot of work with [guitarist] Waddy Wachtel, who also produced that record. Mick Fleetwood played on "Werewolves of London." Jeff Porcaro played on "Nighttime in the Switching Yard." Russ Kunkel is on that album as well. [Note: Marotta also played on the track "Veracruz."]

## Bryan Ferry

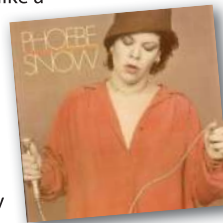
### *The Bride Stripped Bare*

This started out when they hired Waddy Wachtel and me to play on the record, which was recorded in Switzerland when Roxy Music was on hiatus [Bryan Ferry was Roxy's singer.] I went out, and Waddy was coming behind me after he finished up his previous projects. When I got there, I remember it was a mess—the traveling arrangements...and then I get there and they tell me Bryan had just broken up with his fiancé, Jerry Hall, who was leaving him for Mick Jagger. Then there was a problem with the rest of the players getting there. So I'm there all by myself for almost two weeks, and I just started playing all the different instruments and doing the arrangements. And then management said, "Listen, we'd like you to produce the record, being you have it under control." So I said, "Okay," and it was a



## Ralph MacDonald *The Path*

This was Ralph's second solo album. Ralph and I worked together all the time in the studio and live. He would always call to find out when I'd be in town to play on a few tracks. If I couldn't do it and Steve Gadd was available, he would do it. I always loved working with Ralph.



## Phoebe Snow *Against the Grain*

I remember this one. Liberty DeVitto also played drums on it, Ralph MacDonald was on percussion, and Richard Tee was on keys. Phil Ramone produced it. The songs I did were fun and interesting.

We did a version of [the Aaron Neville hit] "Tell It Like It Is" that might have been cut at these sessions. I did an arrangement of the song with Richard Tee, and I remember saying to him, "Let's do it in four." And then Tee and I came up with and sang all the background vocals with Phoebe. Unfortunately I can't find [the recording] anywhere.

## Herbie Mann *Brazil: Once Again*

I learned a lot from Herbie. He was a mentor kind of guy. On this record he brought in Brazilian players, and it was samba school for me. It taught me all about samba music. For some reason, he really liked my playing and we toured and did records together. When I was touring with Herbie, Tony Levin was on bass.

## The Jacksons *Destiny*

That record I remember very well! I played on [the Jacksons' comeback hit] "Blame It on the Boogie" and a few others, including a beautiful ballad. One of the producers on that record was Bobby Colomby, the drummer from Blood, Sweat & Tears. What I remember most about it was Michael in the vocal booth singing. All the brothers

## The Drummer Shuffle

One of the hallmarks of hit singer-songwriter albums recorded during the '70s—the kind that Rick Marotta made his bones with—is the presence of multiple drummers on one album. Jim Gordon, Jeff Porcaro, Steve Gadd, Russ Kunkel, Marotta himself—for fans of the artists they played with, it was always a fun exercise scouring the credits of the inside sleeve and seeing who played on each song. It begs the question, however: Why? "People thought it was because different guys played different styles," Marotta says today. "But most of the time when they shuffled drummers it's because some albums weren't all done in two to five tracking sessions in a row. And then guys would be gone on the road. On certain records—James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt, Warren Zevon, Jackson Brown, J.D. Souther—we went in and lived in the studio, which I liked at the time."



Rick Marotta (center) as he appears in the gatefold of Linda Ronstadt's album *Simple Dreams*, which he toured behind through much of 1978. The album, which was released toward the end of the previous year, spent five straight weeks at number one on *Billboard's* album chart, topped the magazine's country chart, and sold more than three and a half million copies in its first year, breaking the record for a female artist. From left: keyboardist Don Grolnick, road manager Don Forte, guitarist Waddy Wachtel, Marotta, guitarist Dan Dugmore, bassist Kenny Edwards, and Ronstadt.

were there too, and they're playing on it. And it sounded really good. And then on the talkback I hear someone say, "How's it feeling?" And one of the brothers stops and says, "Hold on! Michael, can you dance to it?" And Michael says, "Oh, yeah!" The talkback voice comes back on and we hear, "Okay, it feels good!" [laughs] I remember that Michael was very present and very much part of the recording. He did the vocals as we were running the tracks down. That was a good one.

**Baby Grand *Baby Grand***

I remember this one because [bandleaders and songwriting team Rob Hyman and Eric Bazilian] went on to form the Hooters. Rick Chertoff produced it. Many years later Eric wrote the Joan Osborne hit "One of Us." That's one of my all-time favorite songs.



because he was so meticulous. And he always had great players. Steve Gadd and I shared the drum chair on this one. [Marotta played on the track "Nite Creatures."] Ralph MacDonald was on percussion. Tom wrote out everything and then would say, "Play whatever you want." If it was [made] better he would say, "It's great—let's do it that way." If not, he'd be the first to say, "No, that sucks." And that was for all his records.

One of my favorites that I play

on that he produced is the Doc Severinsen album *Brand New Thing* [1977]. My brother Jerry and I cowrote the track "Chicken Chatter" with Tom. Some of those tracks are scary good. Anthony Jackson was on bass. He's one of the best bass players to ever pick up the instrument. Any time I recorded with Tom it was what I called very controlled chaos. He was really so good and so musical.

**Tom Scott *Intimate Strangers***

Tom's records were always highlights,

**Tools of the Time**

"In New York you used what they had at the studio," Marotta says. "I'd bring my own trap case, snare, and cymbals. I would use the toms and bass drum that were at the studio. For all the L.A. sessions, on certain records it was all my own drums—mostly Yamaha with Zildjian cymbals—especially when we were set up and staying at one studio to record until we were done. And we had cartage in L.A.; in New York it was much harder. We'd also have up to four sessions in one day in New York. In L.A., if we had two sessions in one day, someone was there to break down your kit and bring it over by truck to the next session and set it up. Or you had two sets that you always used."

Marotta still plays Yamaha drums and Zildjian cymbals, and he uses Remo heads, Regal Tip/ Calato sticks, and Zoom electronics.

on this album. I know I didn't play on the hit "Thank You for Being a Friend." I think that was Andrew. I used to curse him because he was a left-handed, non-sensible drummer and then I'd have to copy him and play it.



**David Spinozza**

*Spinozza*

Whenever I did a record with Spinozza, he would write out very meticulous

arrangements. But I worked with him so much on so many sessions, it was like we were in a band. Back then the studio musicians were like bands—same guys, every day, every session. We went on the road together, we made records together. Steve Jordan was on this album as well. Rubens Bassini was on percussion. It was recorded at House of Music in New Jersey, where we did the John Tropea and Deodato records as well. I first met Rubens when I played with Deodato. Rubens was great!

**Steve Khan *The Blue Man***

I played percussion on the track "An Eye Over Autumn (For Folon)" on this one. [Steve Gadd played drumset on the release; Gadd and Marotta split drumset duties on Khan's next album, *Arrows*.] Steve Khan is another one who would write out stuff. He would be very clear in his writing. But he was very receptive to input. Other guys, not so much. He always let me share my ideas.



# Heart's Michael Derosier Remembers *Dog & Butterfly*

by Patrick Berkery



Listening to the albums that put Heart on the map in the '70s, like *Dreamboat Annie* and *Little Queen*, it's clear the band members were students of Led Zeppelin—and that drummer Michael Derosier was the star pupil.

Derosier seemed to pour everything he learned from Zeppelin and John Bonham into 1978's *Dog & Butterfly*, grooving with a sweet pocket and flashing killer chops that probably inspired thousands

of drummers and another million or so air-drummers. Highlights include "Cook With Fire," which is teeming with four-stroke ruffs, stutter-step kick work, and lightning-quick licks, none of it shaking the foundation of Derosier's rock-solid feel. And Derosier's playing on closer "Mistral Wind" is positively insane. As the track morphs from an ethereal acoustic song to a menacing slab of proto-grunge, Derosier explodes, firing off 32nd-note snare fills and triplet-based





This shot was taken in Japan shortly before the waterlogged roof collapsed on Derosier. "The story goes that if not for the timpani breaking the fall," says Lizzy Daymont, guitarist with Derosier's current band, Heart by Heart, "Mike might have been killed!"

licks as the time shifts between measures of four and seven.

Of his stellar work on those tracks and others on *Dog & Butterfly*, Derosier says that, like Bonham did with Zeppelin, he was attempting to carve out an identity for his drumming within Heart's sound. "I used to talk about that philosophy quite a bit: creating a place in the band for the drummer," Michael explains. "As a teacher I always pushed that on students: 'Don't be afraid to speak up.' I don't know if a lot of people get it. I don't know if the guys I played with in Heart really understood it. The drums should fit the vibe of the song, but they should have their own place in the band. And Bonham had his own sound. That's why he stands alone."

The Zeppelin influence extended to the drum sounds on Heart's records from that era. There's a definite similarity between Bonham's room-y thwack and the tone of Derosier's drums on *Dog & Butterfly*. It's a classic sound that totally holds up. But forty years on, Derosier still struggles with some of the sonic details.

"Back then I wasn't happy with the way a lot of the stuff sounded," he says. "*Dog & Butterfly* was better, in some ways. It was a progression in terms of our approach to recording. But it was still a process where I went away from it being unsatisfied, with the drum sounds and overall. Some of the more overproduced qualities work for some of the lighter stuff, like the higher-pitched North toms I used on 'Lighter Touch.' It needed something like that to jump out at you a couple of times in the song. But I don't think we ever got quite aggressive enough on the other side."

Derosier's feelings are also mixed regarding one of Heart's most classic jams and the biggest

hit from *Dog & Butterfly*, "Straight On." He's happy enough with the playing, as he should be with such a fierce, fat groove that alternates between four on the floor and a straight 2 and 4, then morphs into a much funkier, syncopated feel for the outro jam. Yet Derosier feels that Heart's dalliance with dance music on "Straight On"—something that rock bands from Kiss to the Rolling Stones were doing at the time—was a bit calculated.

"I think we did a good, legitimate take on [dance/disco music]," the drummer says. "I do like that stuff, and [singer] Ann Wilson really liked that music. But at the same time I always felt a little cheesy and that we were jumping on a bandwagon. You have a certain amount of success, and you want to maintain that or expand on that, so you find yourself sometimes getting sucked into trends or fads. It was sort of like we were allowing ourselves to be drawn into that, instead of following our own path. You end up finding yourself being a follower. And that's part of the reason I got sick of the band after a while. I never felt like we were progressing and trusting our chemistry as much as we should have."



### Tools of the Time

For *Dog & Butterfly* Derosier says his best guess is that he was using a Gretsch kit—24" kick, 10x14 rack tom, 16x16 floor tom—with a 6.5x14 Ludwig Supraphonic snare and Paiste cymbals, along with some North toms.



# Bill Bruford

Over the previous decade he'd injected jazz and classical concepts into pop and rock music with Yes and King Crimson, in the process breaking down barriers to what drummers could achieve in progressive music scenarios. By '78 he was framing bold new musical vistas with his own self-titled project—but still having a go at “supergroup” potentialities with U.K. *MD* caught up with the famously deep thinker to find out...well...exactly what he was *thinking*.

by Adam Budofsky

**MD:** You've said that when you began to put together your own band, you had a strong sense of what you wanted to hear. Would you please be specific about what that was?

**Bill:** I think I was tired, perhaps, of vocal supremacists! What would blazing instrumentalists with jazz-level skills do if, broadly, they were given the run of the rock coop? Absurd, I know, but I wanted to import the skills of the jazz musician into rock and hear it all pretty loud, like Black Sabbath.

I'd sort of inherited a British progressive rock audience that seemed wholly unfamiliar with the jazz I'd loved and grown up with, and I thought, in my arrogance, I'd heave some of that on to them. I think I met Tony Williams going the opposite way. Much of the '70s into the '80s was very exciting, with a lot of jazz bumping into rock and the other way round, and no one quite sure about any of it. The three-chords-and-a-backbeat rock guys hated jazz harmony; moving the other way, the jazz guys were ridiculed by their peers for “selling out” and “plugging in”—remember that?!

Remember, too, the context: In '60s and '70s Britain, rock drummers were hopeless at jazz, and jazz drummers even worse at playing rock. The only guys straddling the two were the best of the older session cats—Bobby Graham, Ginger Baker, Mitch Mitchell, etc. More importantly, you weren't even supposed to *like* the opposite genre,



Dick Wallis



The Bruford band rehearsing, from left: Bill, bassist Neil Murray, guitarist Allan Holdsworth, keyboardist Dave Stewart

let alone want to play it. So the gulf between the two was well defined, huge, and considered unbridgeable. Seemed like a fertile place to break some taboos.

**MD:** What was your writing process in Bruford—what instruments were ideas conceived on?

**Bill:** Tunes credited to one person were usually conceived on that person's main instrument—Jeff Berlin's "Joe Frazier" on bass, Dave Stewart's "Land's End" on keyboards, including the newfangled polyphonic synths, my "Beelzebub" from drums. But perhaps that was an exception; most of my stuff came from piano, which I played just enough to get by.

**MD:** How finished were the compositions when you brought them to the other players?

**Bill:** Ranging from very sketchy, like "QED," to semi-definite—almost everything—to all but complete, such as with "Palewell Park" and "Travels With Myself."

**MD:** And how did Dave Stewart elaborate on your writing?

**Bill:** Very skilfully. Dave was the first of several great musicians I wrote with who didn't openly wince when they heard my ideas, but was good enough to take them and correct schoolboy errors, extend, extrapolate, put meat on skinny flesh. The growing composition probably had a strong or interesting rhythmic or metrical spine and a decent opening theme, but I tended to need help developing things. Memo to younger players: Nothing wrong with asking for help when you need it. I've always benefited from a close alliance with one other music inventor to bounce ideas off—Dave Stewart, then Django Bates, then Tim Garland.

**MD:** Was it ever the case with your early compositions that the time signature or rhythm came first and the melody followed?

**Bill:** Sure, "Beelzebub" was a groove first. The first group to play that was Rick Wakeman, John Wetton, and myself. I had the opening descending line but didn't know what to do next. We were working it up. Rick said, "Play the same thing backwards and upside down," a retrograde inversion. That worked, and then the A section repeats, to make a staccato ABA framework preceding the legato bridge. But I was short on compositional chops, certainly.

**MD:** Are there any of your songs from that era that led you to feel like you'd made some compositional leap? In retrospect, can you hear certain qualities in the music of this era that you would

successfully mine or expand upon on later recordings?

**Bill:** After a bunch of writing in the late '70s, I didn't really come back to it until the mid-'80s with the more acoustic, guitarless, jazz-inflected Earthworks. The compositional terrain had changed, although you can still hear bits of the group Bruford in Dave Stewart's production of "Pressure," for example, from Earthworks' first album.

The style of music invention for Bruford died with that band. Come Earthworks, all sorts of new tools appeared: electronic drums that could play notes and, later, chords and samples; MIDI and MIDI recording devices; saxophones; digital audio workstations; etc. We played with the toys that were around, very pragmatic, with style and genre of little concern. Did it sound fresh? Nobody else around was using electronic bass drum and acoustic bass at the time, for example, so that opened up possibilities. But I'm jumping ahead.

**MD:** Rototoms were a prominent sound in both Bruford and U.K., and of course in the music that you would make in the ensuing years. Please talk about that—your approach to tuning when you first started using them, what

## Drums in Transition

### 1976–1977

**Drums:** Hayman and Ludwig (natural wood finish)  
(natural wood finish)  
• 6.5x14 Ludwig Supersensitive chrome-plated snare  
• 9x13 Ludwig tom  
• 8x12 Hayman tom  
• 1616 Ludwig floor tom  
• 14x22 Ludwig bass drum

### Cymbals:

Paiste  
• 15" 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats  
• 16" Formula 602 Thin crash (2)  
• 11" 2002 splash atop one of the crashes  
• 20" Formula 602 Medium ride with sizzles

### Percussion rack

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador batters, Clear Diplomat and CS resonants

**Sticks:** Ludwig 5A

### 1977–1978

**Drums:** Hayman and Ludwig (natural wood finish), Remo Rototoms  
(natural wood finish), Remo Rototoms  
• 6.5x14 Ludwig Supersensitive chrome-plated snare  
• 14" and 18" Rototoms  
• 8x12 Hayman tom  
• 16x16 Ludwig floor tom  
• 14x22 Ludwig bass drum

### Cymbals:

Paiste  
• 15" 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats  
• 16" Formula 602 Thin crash (2)  
• 11" 2002 splash atop one of the crashes  
• 20" Formula 602 Medium ride with sizzles  
• 24" tuned gong  
• 20" 2002 China  
• 8" Formula 602 bell

**Percussion rack:** woodblocks, three Swiss bells, three untuned metal plates, 6" and 8" Rototoms, triangles, finger cymbals

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador batters, Clear Ambassador resonants, Pinstripe on Rototoms

**Sticks:** Ludwig 5A

### 1978–1980

**Drums:** Hayman and Ludwig (natural wood finish), Remo Rototoms  
(natural wood finish), Remo Rototoms  
• 6.5x14 Ludwig Supersensitive chrome-plated snare  
• 14" and 18" Rototoms  
• 14x14 Hayman floor tom  
• 22x14 Ludwig bass drum

### Cymbals:

Paiste  
• 15" 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats  
• 16" Formula 602 Thin crash  
• 17" Formula 602 Heavy crash  
• 20" Formula 602 Medium ride  
• 14", 16", and 24" tuned gongs  
• 20" 2002 China  
• 18" 2002 crash  
• 8" Formula 602 bell  
• 11" 2002 splash  
• 4", 6", and 8" Accent cymbals  
• 2" finger cymbals

**Percussion:** woodblocks, untuned metal plates, triangles

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador batters, Fiberskyn on Rototoms

**Sticks:** Ludwig 5A and 5B

problems they presented, and whether they suggested different ways of playing to you.

**Bill:** I can't remember quite how I stumbled across them, but I was always looking out for something the other guy didn't have. I immediately liked the bright clanging sound and the pitch-change possibilities.

Lloyd McCausland was out in L.A. with Remo Belli, and they were super-encouraging and helpful with the new instruments—though they knocked up the world's worst British-cliché promotional campaign, which I should sue them for. Unfortunately, the thinner the heads, the better and brighter the sound, so I went through a ton of heads rather fast until I found a compromise weight.

Hearing Terry Bozzio play his beautiful pitched drumset the other day, I think I had an idea of pitched drums, or at least more definitely pitched drumming, always in my DNA. I always thought drums could play tunes, but that was the [Max] Roach architectural thing. So later on a combination of Rototoms, boobams, and Simmons electronics gave me a workable hybrid, but timbrally very disparate and hard to handle, with which I could emphasize the melodic side.

**MD:** You've described Bruford as primarily rock musicians "buying into a jazz sensibility," and you brought Allan Holdsworth into U.K. partly as a counterweight to the pop orientation of John Wetton and Eddie Jobson. It seems like one of the challenges to both groups was

allowing the music to develop without too much concern for what bag it would fall into. Perhaps that level of concern depended on which musician you happened to be talking to. For you, though, were there certain approaches you consciously took, in terms of your drumming, songwriting, or even how you allowed Bruford to be promoted, to establish it one way or another stylistically?

**Bill:** Good question, difficult to answer. We had little or no concerns about whether our music would sell, believe it or not. Perhaps we should have been more concerned! But I had an open tab at the management firm, and they had a steady stream of back royalties from former groups that they could always bail me out with, so I wasn't given a budget, and didn't watch genres, "bags," or clocks. I was brought up with the idea that the music should always sound fresh, and, if not exactly new, then at least with clear blue water between your outfit and others. I didn't really hear too many

others playing "Beelzebub" or even U.K.'s "In the Dead of Night," so I figured we were doing okay. Why I drum, write, or allow myself to be promoted in certain ways is a function of past experience and pragmatics—what'll get the job done? What works?

**MD:** In the conclusion of your recent book, *Uncharted: Creativity and the Expert Drummer*, just out on University of Michigan Press, you emphasize that creativity is not a thing but a relationship among artists searching for some kind of meaning and understanding. Have those discoveries ever been concrete for you—in other words, were they ever in the form of lessons learned that made your future art-making easier, or more efficient, or more honest?

**Bill:** No, I had to step back out of practice to figure out the questions worth asking and get those kinds of insights. But working with a small group of initially disparate people, to help mold it into some sort of cohesive unit with a singular vision that speaks with one voice, was an ongoing fascination within the kind of music ensembles we had in that time period. Sitting in rehearsal rooms negotiating the next chord sequence or rhythmic maneuver in an act of collective collaboration is seen as too cumbersome and expensive now.

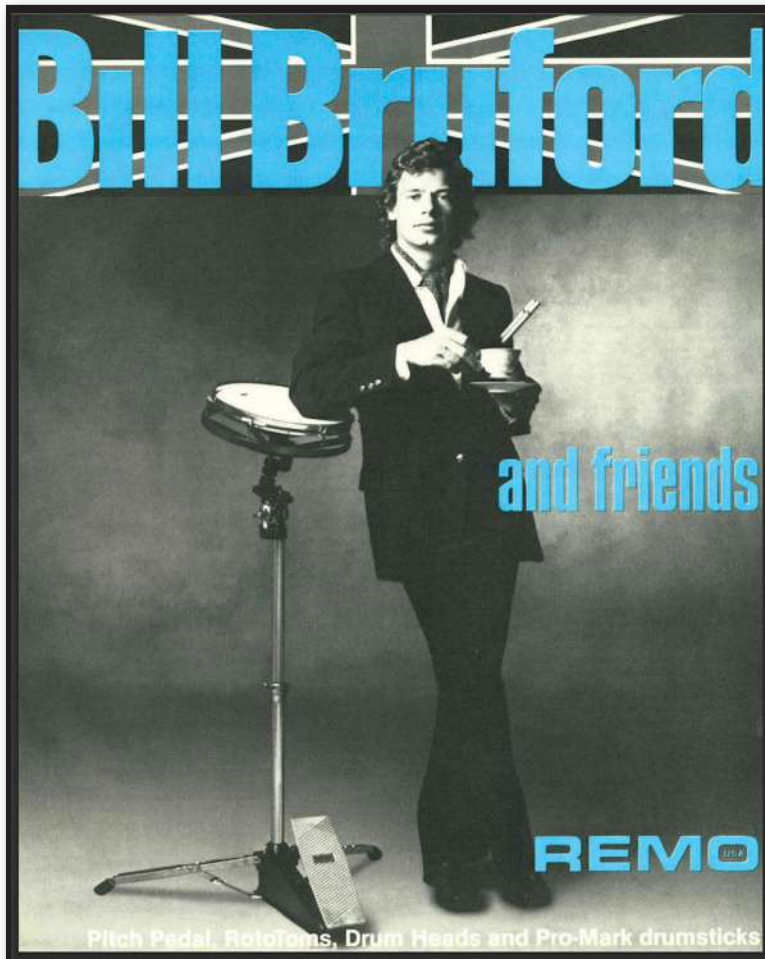
So you get a different kind of music—airbrushed and perfect. An early "relationship lesson" that I've cited before, but that's valuable to any precocious, overconfident beginner such as I was, is the idea that the music doesn't exist to serve you; you exist to serve the music. That was a light-bulb moment for me when I was starting out.

**MD:** At the time, and in retrospect, did/do the late '70s seem like a transitional time to you? While drum

machines had appeared on records previously, they and other electronic devices became so prominent in popular music within the next couple of years. Was anyone in your circle expressing concern or disdain in 1978 at the direction that electronics might be moving music into? And what was your attitude toward them at the time?

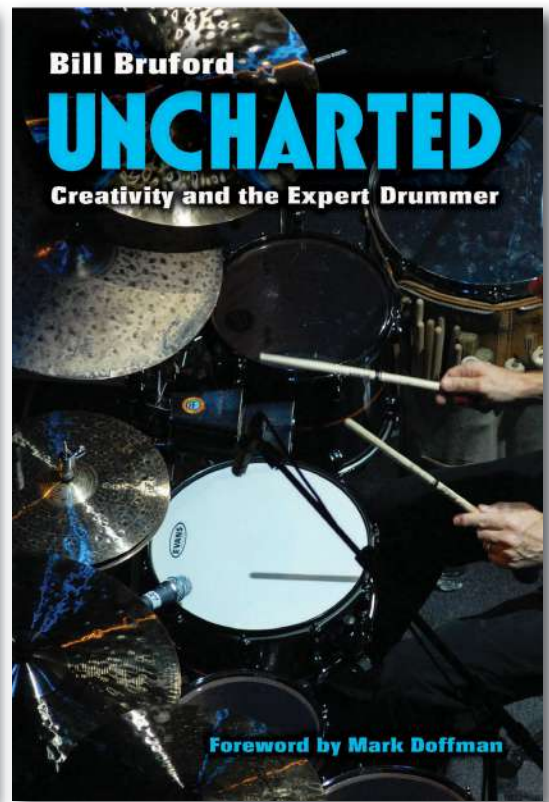
**Bill:** Needless to say, the Bruford albums and U.K. were recorded without a click. When Roger Linn showed up with his drum machine in the early '80s, I learned to play closer to clock time real fast. Until then I'd been on "orchestral" time: drummer as conductor. If the time felt better being a little quicker here or there, then so be it. So to my elderly ears, modern computer-based rhythms have a flavor of constraint, of not being able to breathe, a sort of metric suffocation.

Developments within the drum world have only accelerated exponentially in my lifetime, so my, or anyone else's, whole career has always been and probably will always be in a state of perpetual





**Active, Then and Now**  
 Bill Bruford appeared on two seminal albums in 1978: his debut as a leader, *Feels Good to Me*, and the first, self-titled album by supergroup U.K. This past year, the drummer saw the release of *Seems Like a Lifetime Ago*, an eight-CD box set of the Bruford band's complete work, as well as the publication of his book *Uncharted: Creativity and the Expert Drummer*.



change. The greatest change in the drum domain, for me, was less the arrival of clicks and electronics, more the arrival of the computer and digitization. Then things really started to fly. Added to which, music is now effectively free to the listener, with all the knock-on ramifications of that. I've written a fair bit in *Uncharted* about the tension between the performer and the oscilloscopic prurience of early automation and the sometimes domineering assumptions of the record producer, but almost anything someone of my age group has to say about the current scene is viewed with a degree of scepticism not always shared by contemporary players.

**MD:** What do you miss the most about the era of U.K./Bruford, and what do you miss the least?

**Bill:** It was an extremely productive era for me, with three albums and two children appearing over about two years, and just one

phone line in the kitchen. It was hard work, probably, but I don't think I recognized it as such. It was all write/rehearse/record/mix in the sixteen months between finishing with National Health in late 1976 and kicking off with U.K. in April 1978—I didn't play any live gigs at all in that period. We had the certainty of youth and way too high an opinion of ourselves. There was enough money around to have a business manager, tour manager, drum guy, and someone to do all that, unlike, say, Earthworks, a decade later, when I was pretty much on my own.

What do I miss the least? The late, great Allan Holdsworth's nightly assessment that it was all, basically, crap, and that he was the most crap of all.

What do I miss the most? The late, great Allan Holdsworth's magnificent playing.




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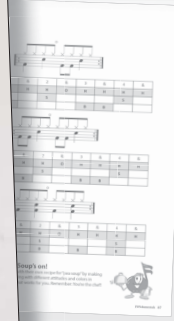
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# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BASS DRUM HEADS

by Michael Dawson

While drums have existed since the dawn of civilization, it wasn't until the 1950s, after the chemical corporation DuPont trademarked a new polyester film called Mylar, that drummers were presented with more ways to tailor their sounds via their choice of drumheads. (Prior to the invention of the synthetic head, calfskin was the only option.) In this article

and subsequent ones in a series, we're going to survey the various types of plastic-based drumheads available for each component of the kit to help you zero in on which models will get you closest to the sound and aesthetic you're trying to achieve. We start by focusing on the largest and often most important voice on the drumset: the bass drum.

## Single-Ply

The most open, resonant, and bright bass drum sounds are achieved with clear single-ply drumheads

(Aquarian Classic Clear, Attack 1-Ply Medium, Evans G1, and Remo Ambassador). Most single-ply drumheads are made with one layer of 10 mil film. Clear single-ply heads are great choices if you want a lively, full sound with a lot of ambience, sustain, and overtones, à la modern fusion great Keith Carlock. These heads provide the most versatility when it comes to modifying the resonance, attack, and timbre with tuning and muffling. The legendary drummers Simon Phillips and Dave Weckl also often rely on clear single-ply heads to achieve balanced bass drum sounds with rich overtones and clean attack.

Coated single-ply heads (Aquarian Texture Coated, Attack 1-Ply Medium Coated, Evans UV1 and G1 Coated, and Remo Coated Ambassador) produce slightly warmer and punchier sounds than their clear counterparts, because the coating makes the film vibrate slower due to the additional mass, which results in more



Remo Ambassador

emphasis on the fundamental pitch and lower overtones. Coated single-ply bass drum heads are ubiquitous for classic jazz sounds because they can be tuned high to produce a long, round tone that blends seamlessly with toms. A lot of '50s, '60s, and '70s rock, pop, soul, funk, and R&B bass drum sounds were made with coated single-ply heads, whether tuned high and open or low and muffled.

## 2-Ply

Most double-ply drumheads (Aquarian Response-2, Attack 2-Ply Medium, Evans G2, and Remo Emperor) are made with two plies of 7

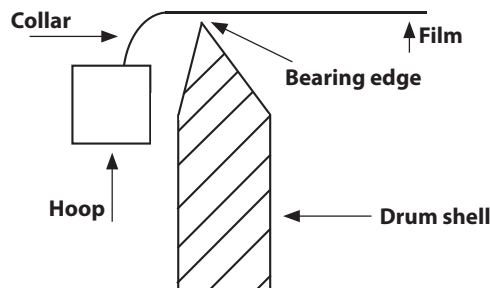


Evans G2

mil or 7.5 mil film. More durable than single-ply heads, 2-ply varieties also have denser attack, slightly shorter sustain, and fewer high overtones, while still providing a full, resonant voice. John Bonham's thunderous bass drum sound was created on a coated 2-ply batter head with a felt strip for muffling. These would be the ideal choices for players who crave the openness and versatility offered by single-ply heads but require more strength and deeper low-end response.

## Pre-Muffled

Two of the earliest examples of drumheads that employ built-in muffling are the Remo Pinstripe and the Evans Hydraulic. Both models were designed to produce a shorter, deeper tone with minimal overtones.



## Anatomy of a Drumhead

Each manufacturer has different methods for creating its bass drum heads. But the basic components are consistent, the primary differences being the angle and depth of the collar, the width of the hoop, and the manner in which the film is secured within the hoop.

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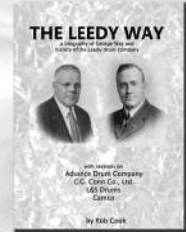


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## Bass Drum Heads

The focused-sounding Pinstripe features two plies of 7 mil film with a dampening coating placed between them around the circumference. The Hydraulic gets its trademark deep, fat sound via oil placed between the plies. Either of those heads (or Aquarian's Performance II) would be ideal for situations calling for a dry, thuddy, '70s-style kick drum tone.

Another '70s innovation was the Remo Controlled Sound Black Dot, which is a 10 mil Clear Ambassador with a large 5 mil dot

glued to the center.

This head was designed to increase durability without deadening the tone too much. A comparable head from Aquarian is the Classic Clear Power Dot.

The most versatile type of pre-muffled bass drum heads are those that make use of a single-ply 10 mil film and a 10 mil inlay ring at the outer edge to subtly dampen high-frequency overtones; models include the Aquarian Force I, Attack No Overtone, Evans EQ4, and Remo Powerstroke 3. These heads

are the preferred choice for live and recording drummers of all genres because they provide a great balance of punch, depth, and sustain. They can be played wide open for big, resonant sounds without excessive overtones, or they can be muffled with pads, towels, or pillows to produce tighter, punchier tones.



**Attack No Overtone**

The coated versions have a darker voice with shorter sustain, and models featuring a large center dot provide increased attack. There are also 2-ply versions (Evans EQ3 and Remo Powerstroke P4), which have sharper attack, shorter sustain, more focused low-end tone, and additional durability.

For players who prefer a tight, punchy, and "microphone ready" kick drum sound, but don't want to use additional muffling, there are several options from which to choose. Aquarian's Super Kick series features a narrow band of felt installed around the underside edge of the head. These are available in single- and double-ply versions, with or without coating. Aquarian has another series, Impact, that features a wider felt ring for even more overtone control.

Evans' EMAD series has interchangeable foam rings affixed to the top of the film and is available in single-ply, double-ply (EMAD2), and 12 mil (GMAD) models, as well as with clear, coated, UV coated, and vintage-style Calf-tone finishes.

Remo's Powerstroke Pro is similar to the EMAD, except that the foam ring is permanently mounted to the top circumference, while the Powersonic Clear and Coated is a 2-ply head with two bottom-side muffling rings and an optional snap-on damper pad that covers the bottom quarter of the head when installed. While these options provide the least versatility, they're ideal for getting a deep, dense tone with controlled sustain from any bass drum and with minimal tuning know-how.

### Vintage-Style

To serve drummers desiring the rounder attack, darker sustain, and natural look of calfskin drumheads, Remo created the Fiberskyn in 1975. These heads incorporate a laminate of polyester and fiberglass. The company later developed a treatment process for its Diplomat, Ambassador, and Emperor Mylar-based drumheads to introduce some calfskin-like character, called the Renaissance series. Evans' synthetic alternative to natural calfskin is the Calf-tone, and it features a 12 mil Mylar

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base with an additional layer of materials on top. (If you're interested in exploring authentic animal-hide drumheads, take a look at, among others, the Earth Tone calfskin series from Gold Tone Music Group and the kangaroo-skin models by Kentville Drums in Sydney, Australia.)

Aquarian utilizes a 7 mil or 10 mil single-ply head with a thicker, yellow-tinted coating to replicate the warm sound and natural look of calfskin. These heads are available with the company's standard collar (Modern Vintage) or with a slightly larger one (American Vintage) to accommodate older drums with inconsistent diameters. Double-ply versions are also available, with twin layers of 7 mil (Modern Vintage II) or 10 mil film (Deep Vintage).



**Aquarian  
American  
Vintage**

Aquarian offers a version of each of its calfskin-style models with a floating, vintage-style felt strip affixed to the

underside of the head. Similarly, Remo recently developed the Powerstroke Felt Tone Hazy, Coated, and Fiberskyn models, which have a floating felt strip built into the head in addition to the P3 muffling ring. The Evans Calfone comes in pre-muffled EQ4 and EMAD varieties as well.

### Resonant

One of the frequently overlooked yet crucial components of a bass drum's sound is the type of front head being used. A basic single-ply head (smooth or coated) will provide the most resonance, brightest overtones, and most perceived ambience, depending on how it's tensioned. A single-ply head with a built-in dampening ring (e.g., Remo Powerstroke 3, Evans EQ3, and Aquarian Regulator) will have a shorter decay, fewer high overtones, and a more focused, booming low end.

A 2-ply resonant (Remo Emperor, Evans G2, etc.) will bridge the gap between a single-ply and a single-ply with a muffling ring. It will have shorter sustain and fewer high overtones than a single-ply, but a more resonant tone than a single-ply with a muffling ring. Because of its mass, a calfskin-

style Fiberskyn or Calfone will achieve a similar effect to that of a 2-ply head, but with a bit more warmth. The Aquarian Vintage series and Remo Felt Tones with built-in felt strips will give the drum a rounder, shorter resonance with a balanced frequency response.

Some resonant heads come with pre-cut mic holes, including the Evans EMAD and EQ3 and the Aquarian Ported series. A small, off-center hole will have the least impact on the drum's resonance, while a larger center hole will mitigate sustain for a punchier sound. Solid resonant heads provide the fullest tones, but they can also give the drum a bouncier feel and will often make miking more difficult. To get a super-punchy and quick old-school, single-headed bass sound, Evans offers a mesh alternative (Retro Screen) that allows all of the air to escape the shell while providing the look of a solid front head.



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## Blake Richardson on *Between the Buried and Me's Automata, Part 1*

### Digging Into the Veteran Technical-Metal Group's Latest Offering

by Willie Rose

This past March 9, the seasoned progressive-metal outfit *Between the Buried and Me* released *Automata, Part 1*, the first of a two-part concept album that will collectively mark the eighth full-length for the band. Throughout the effort, BTBAM deftly tackles odd time signatures, juxtaposes brutal parts with serene melodic interludes, and pushes technical boundaries.

As he's done since joining the group in 2005, drummer Blake Richardson matches BTBAM's intense technical demands with a mix of agile independence, blazing chops, and odd-time dexterity. But it's the drummer's creative gusto that shines throughout, as he complements brutal riffs with inventive patterns not typically heard in the genre. Let's check out a few of the album's drumming highlights.



### “Condemned to the Gallows”

On the album's opener, at 3:08, Richardson sets up the bridge with this fill in 12/8. Notice how the left-hand lead facilitates the melody voiced around the toms. (130 bpm)

B L R L R L R L L R L R L R L I R L R L R L

Next Richardson breaks into this linear-inspired pattern in which he orchestrates sextuplets between the floor tom and bass drum. The right hand plays 8th-note triplets, and starting with the left foot, the drummer fills out the sextuplets with alternating double bass strokes in between the right hand's pattern. The left hand plays quarter notes on the snare and open hi-hat with occasional offbeat triplet strokes interspersed.

Richardson also peppers in this tom fill throughout the bridge. Starting on beat 2 of the first measure in the following example, he splits his hands and feet on the toms and bass drum in this repeated order: left hand, left foot, right hand, right foot.

While taking a look at the section as a whole, notice how the open hi-hat notes accentuate the vocals and guitar riff throughout the repeated six-measure structure.

### “Yellow Eyes”

At 1:53, after a blazing tom fill, Richardson plays this driving quarter-note pattern while accenting the guitar riff with the crash cymbal in the second measure. In the third bar of 17/16, a snare accent on what would be beat 3 of a 4/4 measure sets off the last eight unison hits between the kick, snare, and hi-hat. (95 bpm)

Next Richardson plays two beats of time before diving into a fiery fill between the crash, snare, and bass drum on beat 3. If you take a close look at the accents starting on beat 4 in the first measure, notice that they outline a three-beat 16th-note pattern. Richardson continues this phrasing throughout the rest of the figure.

Richardson closes out this section with some tricky cymbal-stack interplay before launching into another fill in 17/16. Again, try to isolate the accented snare on what would be beat 3 in a measure of 4/4, and think of the last grouping of 32nd notes as an independent two-beat phrase.



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

### “Blot”

At 4:21 on the album’s closer, Richardson orchestrates the 9/8 guitar riff with this unique hi-hat groove. Check out how he incorporates quick 16th-note triplets, hi-hat openings, and splash and China orchestrations to accent the phrase. Richardson also turns around the end of each pattern with a quick fill between a rack tom and snare in the second and fourth measures. (150 bpm)

Between the Buried and Me plans to release *Automata, Part 2* this coming June.

**Blake Richardson plays Tama drums and Sabian cymbals, and he uses Vic Firth sticks and Remo drumheads.**



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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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## Must-Know Grooves

### Disco, a Drumming Staple of the 1970s

by Jim Riley

In this new series we'll be taking a close look at some of the most influential, practical, and essential drum grooves of all time, studying a pattern's history and learning how to play it step-by-step.

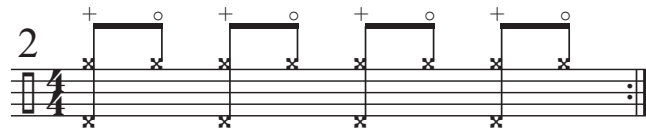
If you're serious about getting better at your craft, there's no better way to improve your marketability than by expanding your knowledge of musical styles. It's all about being able to answer "yes" when someone asks if you can cover a certain style. In many cases, it's not that the grooves are difficult to play—it simply comes down to knowing *how* to play them.

In keeping with the theme of this month's issue, let's dive in to a classic disco beat, which was all the rage in the late '70s. Even rockers like the Rolling Stones, Kiss, and Rod Stewart explored this style. But what was it about disco music that made people want to dance? The answer is the bass drum.

The classic disco beat has lured audiences on to the dance floor since the big band era, and it remains a staple in modern pop and dance music, among other styles. It uses what drummers refer to as a four-on-the-floor bass drum pattern. This simply means that the bass drum plays on every quarter note, as notated in Exercise 1.



Another characteristic unique to disco grooves is an offbeat hi-hat pattern, which typically opens on the "&" of every beat. Let's try it.



While putting the bass drum and hi-hat patterns together, note that your bass drum and hi-hat feet play in unison. Let's isolate the feet.



Next let's combine the open hi-hat pattern and the bass drum. Alternate between two measures of the isolated foot pattern followed by two bars that add the open hi-hat phrase.



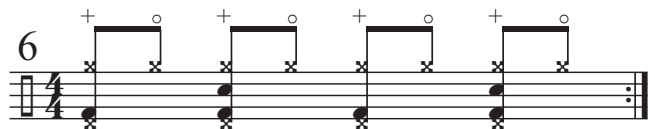
#### In This Lesson

What's a four-on-the-floor drum pattern?  
What are offbeat hi-hat openings?  
Which songs feature classic disco grooves?

Next we'll incorporate the snare. It's notable that the four-on-the-floor pattern was used in disco without the hi-hat opening on the "&" of each beat. On Rod Stewart's "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?" (which was co-written by the singer's drummer at the time, Carmine Appice), the following groove appears throughout most of the song.

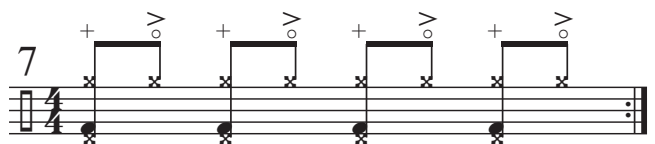


During the saxophone solo after the bridge, Appice opens the hi-hat on the "&" of each beat. By 1978, the year this track was released, this pattern had become the standard disco beat.



You can hear heavy doses of the disco groove in songs like Thelma Houston's "Don't Leave Me This Way," which features the drumming of James Gadson and won a Grammy for best female R&B performance in 1978. The tune opens with a rubato intro before jumping into the groove. Gloria Gaynor also followed this formula with her smash hit "I Will Survive," which features Gadson as well.

If you listen closely to these grooves, you can hear a clear accent on each hi-hat opening. To practice this, isolate the hi-hat and bass drum. Notice that the quarter-note bass drum pattern and the hi-hat accents cause the hi-hat hand and feet to play opposite each other, so spend some time getting comfortable with the coordination.



As you put this groove together, start slowly and practice with a click. If you have my book *Survival Guide for the Modern Drummer*, you can use tracks 88 (80 bpm) and 57 (116 bpm).

#### Disco Drumming: The Essential Tracks

**James Gadson** on Thelma Houston's "Don't Leave Me This Way" and Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive"

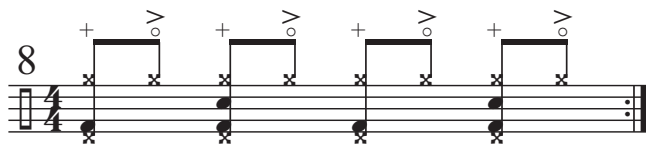
**Steve Gadd** on Van McCoy and the Soul City Symphony's "The Hustle"

**Carmine Appice** on Rod Stewart's "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?"

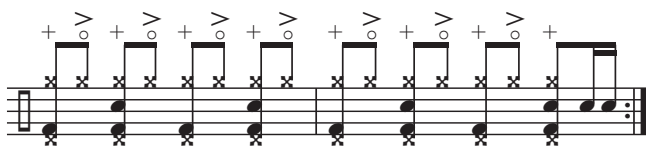
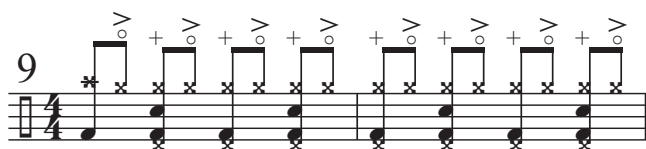
**Clem Burke** on Blondie's "Heart of Glass"

**Anton Fig** on Kiss's "I Was Made For Lovin' You"





Finally, let's add a simple but effective fill that can be used to frame the musical sections of any disco tune. When playing pop music, you don't have to reinvent the wheel every time you play a fill. Sometimes the simplest fills are best.



See you next time!



**Jim Riley** is the drummer and bandleader for Rascal Flatts. His book *Survival Guide for the Modern Drummer* is available from Alfred Music. For more information, visit [jimrileymusic.com](http://jimrileymusic.com).



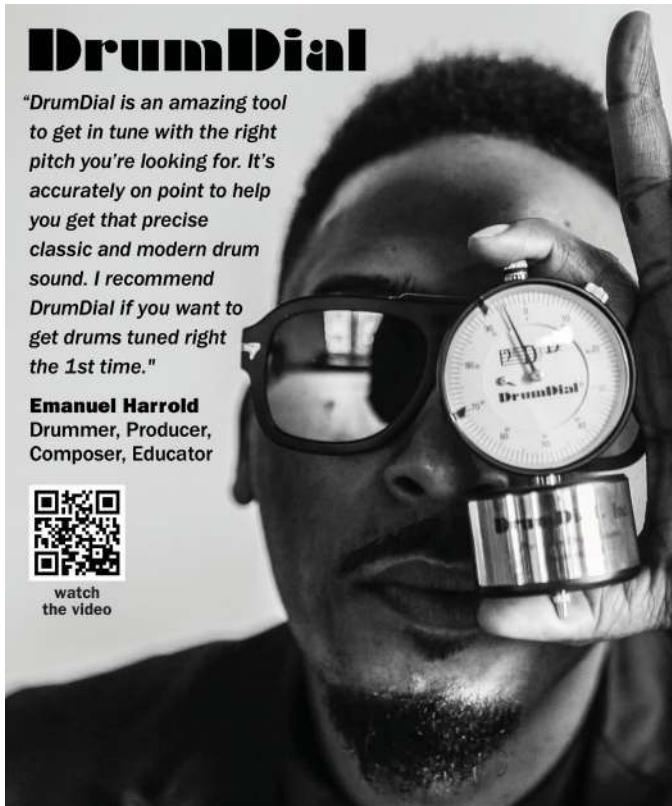
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## Five-Note Phrasing

### Part 2: Adding More Tension and Release

by Marc Dicciani

In this lesson we'll continue exploring five-note phrases within a 16th-note subdivision. To become fluent with these groupings, you need to internalize where the five-note phrase begins and ends.

To review, let's reinforce the ability to hear the starting point of each five-note grouping. Alternate between a simple quarter-note groove and the first two measures of a repeated five-note phrase. In the third and fourth measures of Exercise 1, only play the first partial of each five-note grouping while playing quarter notes with the hi-hat foot.

1

Now alternate between four measures of a quarter-note groove and four measures of the repeated five-note phrase.

2

Now we'll play some challenging patterns based on these ideas. In some of these examples, the bass drum and snare pattern repeats on every fifth 8th note, while in others the phrase repeats on every fifth 16th note. However, the hi-hat or ride phrases always comprise five 16th notes. Remember to alternate each four-measure pattern with a simple four-bar groove. It often helps to play quarter notes with the hi-hat foot to reinforce the pulse and center the placement of the syncopated patterns. The goal is to develop the ability to hear the quarter-note pulse without always playing it.

3

4

5

6

7



Instead of playing steady quarter notes to help place the syncopated rhythms accurately, we'll incorporate the hi-hat into the five-note phrase. This enhances the metric illusion and is much more challenging. To play these accurately, you'll need to feel the quarter-note pulse internally.



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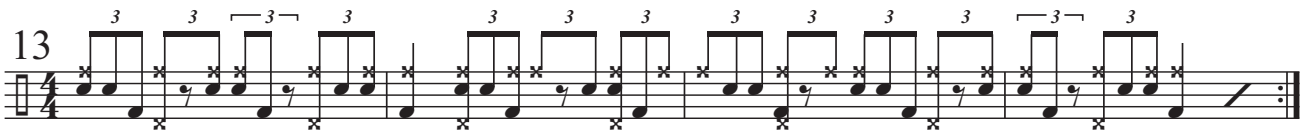


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## Rock 'N' Jazz Clinic



You can create hundreds of variations of patterns or fills using 8ths, 16ths, or 8th-note triplets in any time signature, tempo, and style. Here's an example using a jazz ride pattern while playing a five-note, 8th-note-triplet rhythm between the snare and bass drum.



These patterns can create some very interesting and complex rhythmic possibilities that will expand your ability to hear and play phrases that extend over the barline. Just be sure to use discretion when playing these types of ideas in a performance situation with other musicians. Have fun!

**Marc Dicciani** is the dean of the College of Performing Arts at Philadelphia's University of the Arts. He's played with Randy Brecker, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Jon Faddis, Pat Martino, Stanley Clarke, and Christian McBride, among others. For more information, visit [dicciani.com](http://dicciani.com).



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## Up-Tempo Studies

### Part 3: Comping with Quarters and 8th Notes

by Steve Fidyk

In this final installment on up-tempo endurance exercises, we'll focus on comping with quarters and 8th notes within a standard jazz ride pattern.

Try not to psych yourself out and get tense when someone calls an extremely quick tune on the bandstand. I know this is sometimes easier said than done. But as you work on this material to prepare for those musical moments, remember to breathe deeply, be patient with yourself, and progress through the exercises gradually.

In order to play fast tempos effortlessly, it's essential to remain as relaxed as possible and to accept the ride cymbal's rebound. As you condition your wrist, forearm, and fingers, try to relax your fulcrum and grip so you're not squeezing the stick too tightly.

As with the previous material in this series, find a tempo range where you can complete each four-bar phrase without getting fatigued. Be organized with your practice sessions. Keep a journal with your initial tempo, and time yourself to see how long you played without stopping. Record the results of each practice session so you can use them as reference points in the future. Find your breaking point on a daily basis, and try pushing a little bit beyond that tempo. As your endurance improves, increase the starting tempo.

Practice the comping figures in this lesson with the following jazz ride pattern.



Here are the quarter- and 8th-note comping patterns.





Once you have control of each exercise, try combining examples to create longer phrases. Also try playing these exercises with brushes, which will be more challenging because a brush won't rebound as easily.

**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](http://stevefidyk.com).

A large advertisement for Sound Partners. The background is a photograph of a drummer in a dark hoodie with a 'JAZZ' logo, playing a drum set in a dimly lit room with blue and purple lighting. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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## Introduction to Polyrhythms

### How to Play Odd Groupings, Part 1

by Aaron Edgar

**Polyrhythmic phrases contrast** with typical pulses. We can create polyrhythms by playing groupings that don't fit evenly within a typical subdivision.

For example, let's examine a 16th-note subdivision (four partials per beat). Playing every third 16th note over three quarter notes results in four equally spaced notes over three beats, which is a four-over-three polyrhythm. In Exercise 1, we'll explore this with a measure of 16th notes on the hi-hat. Play quarter notes on the bass drum to represent the three-beat pulse and bottom half of the polyrhythm. We'll play every third 16th-note on the snare to represent the four side of the polyrhythm, which is our contrasting layer.



Playing every fifth 16th note on the snare within the previous kick and hi-hat pattern results in a four-over-five polyrhythm, as notated in Exercise 2.



Each of the previous examples produced four equally spaced notes on the snare over our pulse. In Exercise 1, when playing every third 16th-note partial on the snare, the pattern took three quarter-note beats to resolve. Exercise 2 demonstrated this same concept within a five-note pulse. This formula works for any polyrhythm. It should be noted that these groupings can be used in any time signature, not just in meters in which the polyrhythms resolve evenly from measure to measure.

Let's explore this same concept within 8th-note triplets. Exercise 3 places every second triplet note on the snare, which results in a three-over-two polyrhythm. In Exercise 4, playing every fourth triplet partial yields a three-over-four grouping.



Now we'll stretch out our contrasting rhythm's spacing even further. In this next example, we'll play every fifth triplet partial on the snare in a measure of 5/4. This results in three evenly spaced accents over five quarter notes, or a three-over-five grouping.



Before we delve into different ways of voicing these rhythms, let's use this approach to focus on the most useful, or more common, polyrhythms.

We generally deal with 8th notes, 8th-note triplets, 16ths, 16th-note triplets, and 32nd notes for a total of five different subdivisions. When you break it down, any polyrhythm that we create within these subdivisions can be considered a syncopation of the original phrasing. Learning how to feel these syncopated rhythms effectively is key to being able to apply them in a musical setting.

Let's check out a few more rhythms. Exercises 6 and 7 utilize five- and seven-note groupings within 16th-note triplets, which create six-over-five and six-over-seven figures, respectively.



In Exercise 8, let's try incorporating two even groupings on both sides of the polyrhythm. We'll play every fourth 16th-note-triplet partial in a measure of 4/4, resulting in a six-over-four figure. This polyrhythm's name could be considered redundant, as it's actually a three-over-two grouping that's repeated. Notice how the accent pattern mirrors that of Exercise 3. To create contrast, it's most effective to use odd values within even subdivisions and vice versa.



One of my favorite polyrhythms is eight-over-three, in which we accent every third 32nd note in a measure of 3/4. A great way to get this started is by using a RLL sticking. In Exercise 9, your left hand stays on the hi-hat while your right hand plays every third note on the snare. Once comfortable with this pattern, experiment by moving your right hand around the set for some interesting variations.





In Exercise 10, we'll play every fifth 32nd note on the snare in a measure of 5/4. Again, let's assign a sticking (RLRRL) to make the contrasting rhythm easy to follow. Keep track of your right hand by playing one stroke on the snare and two strokes on the hi-hat with left-hand singles in between on a rim or auxiliary hi-hat.



You don't always have to start polyrhythms on beat 1, and you'll usually find more interesting rhythms when you experiment with these figures' permutations. Exercise 11 starts the three side of a three-over-five polyrhythm on beat 2 while incorporating a shuffle rhythm on the hi-hat.



You can also imply the pulse—you don't have to make it as obvious as we have so far with quarter notes on the bass drum. Exercise 12 embellishes the previous example to make our contrast layer feel musical rather than jarring.



For an extra challenge, try aligning the entire groove, including the bass drum and hi-hat, with the contrast layer. In a three-over-five polyrhythm, we accent every fifth 8th-note-triplet partial, as demonstrated in Exercise 4. In Exercise 13, we'll restart our kick and hi-hat pattern every fifth partial to replicate a displacement. The third and fifth bass drum notes have been added to make this sound less like a skipping CD.



The final example explores a four-over-seven polyrhythm. We'll start our contrasting layer—every seventh 16th note—on the “&” of beat 2. For fun, we'll also play every third 16th note on the kick for a second polyrhythmic element. This second layer doesn't resolve evenly within a measure of 7/4, so we'll embellish the end slightly. The combination of contrasting rhythms underneath a quarter-note accent on the hi-hats creates a unique groove.



Try the concepts in this lesson within your own ideas in the practice room. A great place to start is with a pencil and piece of paper. Pick a subdivision, pick your contrasting rhythm, and apply it to the set! Next time we'll dive deeper into how to apply these rhythms musically.



**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](http://moderndrummer.com).



## Do I Need a Fallback Plan?

### Part 1: Assessing Your Path

by Russ Miller

**Last time, I answered some** of the more common questions I get asked by other drummers. At the top of the list was whether to learn to read music. Another frequent question is about playing drums for a living and whether it's important to develop a secondary skill to fall back on if drumming doesn't yield enough income. There's a lot to discuss on this subject, so we're going to break it into two parts. This month I'll address the first part of the question.

#### Should I Do This For a Living?

When I do a clinic or speak at a college, I often talk about my love for golf and how I own nice clubs and take lessons, but how I know that I'm never going to be on the PGA tour. For a lot of folks, drums serve a similar purpose. You can play drums your entire life, get better, study, buy nice instruments, and play in bands, but never try to make it a full-time career. It's okay to just have fun playing your kit. Drumming is a great way to express the artistic side of your personality, especially if your primary occupation doesn't involve much creativity.

Not every musician has to be a professional. Playing occasional gigs can be a good way to supplement your income. But committing to making your drumming a full-time career

requires serious determination and honesty about your skill level and desires. You have to ask yourself, "Do I *want* to do this, or do I *have* to do this?" There's a big difference between those two questions. I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else, even though I have experience in architectural engineering and technical drawing that could have led to solid career options. I turned down jobs in those fields because I had a strong desire to play the drums. Looking back, that decision seems a little crazy in many ways. But I'm glad I followed my convictions. If you don't feel strongly that you can't see yourself doing anything other than drumming, then you might want to pursue an alternative career and keep music as a hobby or secondary source of income.

#### What If Things Aren't Working Out?

Unless you're blessed with a large inheritance, you've likely had times where you measured your level of success by the amount of money you've earned from your chosen profession. Some people choose their job solely on the possibility of financial gain. But what drives someone to be an artist?

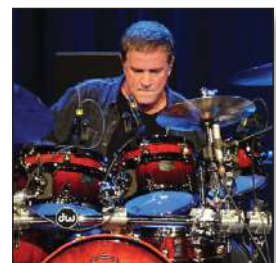
Society usually correlates success with financial gain. But you will likely never make good money in any career unless you can do something that other people can't. I also believe that no successful artist, athlete, or individual in any performance-oriented field ever focused more on money than on achieving an extremely high level of skill. Without tremendous focus, fortitude, and a strong work ethic, it's impossible to attain a high level of success in any field.

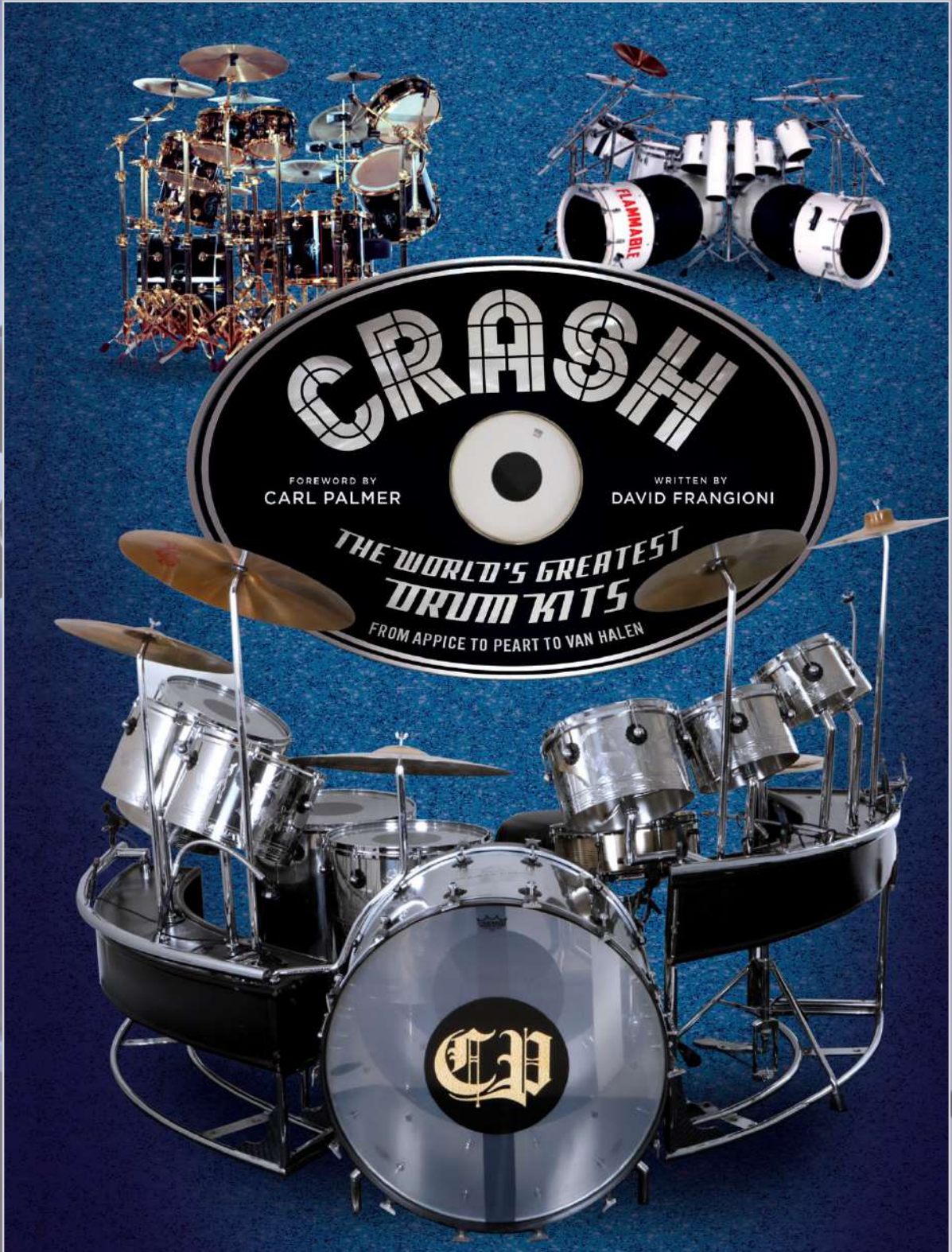
If you don't feel that you're getting any better as a musician, then spend some time being honest with yourself. Are you actively studying, developing, and practicing new ideas? If you're not improving, then all you need to do is start practicing. You *will* get better as long as you put in the effort.

What if you aren't getting called for many gigs? Have you invested anything into your business? Did you build a website? Are you active on social media? Do you have nice photos and recordings of yourself playing drums? Do you go out to clubs to network with other musicians? If you're lax on any of those things, start focusing on them more.

The key to transitioning into a full-time music career is to define yourself as an artist first. In other words, if you work as a valet to pay rent while you build up your playing career, make sure you think of yourself as drummer who parks cars to pay bills rather than as a valet who wants to be a drummer. There's a big difference. We'll continue this discussion next time. See you then.

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





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



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





## SJC Custom Drums Heirloom Kit

The Heirloom kit combines custom looks with a warm, vintage tone. The 6-ply hybrid shells are made of mahogany, poplar, and maple and are finished in Custard Yellow. Handcrafted maple reinforcement rings work with vintage-style round-over edges to provide a full, punchy attack. The toms feature shallower depths (7.5x13 rack and 14x16 floor), which increases their responsiveness and gives the kit a distinct appearance. The bass drum hoops are finished in zebrawood.

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



## apulSoft apTrigga3

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



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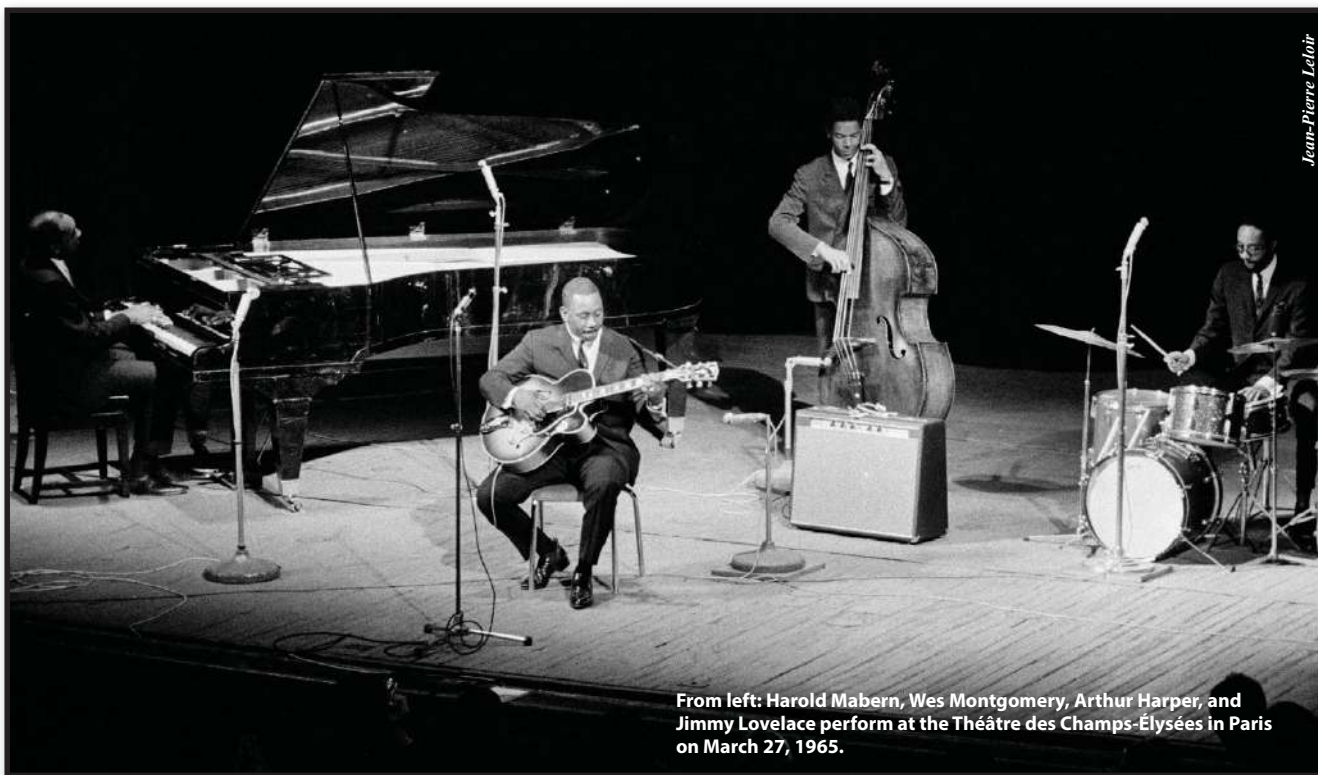
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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS



Jean-Pierre Leloir

From left: Harold Mabern, Wes Montgomery, Arthur Harper, and Jimmy Lovelace perform at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris on March 27, 1965.

### Miles Davis & John Coltrane

*The Final Tour: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6*

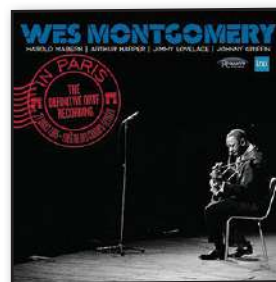
### Wes Montgomery

*In Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recording*

Two releases of fabled, much-bootlegged European jazz concerts are finally given proper treatment with remastered sound and impressive packaging/historical info.

The captivating four-CD box set *Miles Davis & John Coltrane, The Final Tour: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6* captures this classic pairing in March 1960 at a controversial turning point. Visiting Europe following the release of *Kind of Blue*, Davis brought along sidemen Wynton Kelly (piano), Paul Chambers (bass), **JIMMY COBB** (drums), and rising-star tenor man John Coltrane. But Trane—intent on leaving the group—joined the tour reluctantly, as he'd already migrated to a new concept. Once he began soloing on Miles' repertoire tunes, the crowd was jolted. Venturing into his then-avant-garde "sheets of sound" for extended stretches, Coltrane was a force apart—or perhaps ahead. Miles was miffed, as legend goes.

Cobb swings unflaggingly through the long numbers with vivacious drive and keen dynamics. When Coltrane dives into foreign waters, Cobb is right there—keeping it straight-ahead but spurring and commenting on the tenor player's free flow. It's peak Cobb; listen to his crisp brushes, building to sticks, while kicking Trane on the up-tempo Paris performance of "So What." Oddly, throughout the length of five concerts, Cobb is given no solo space,

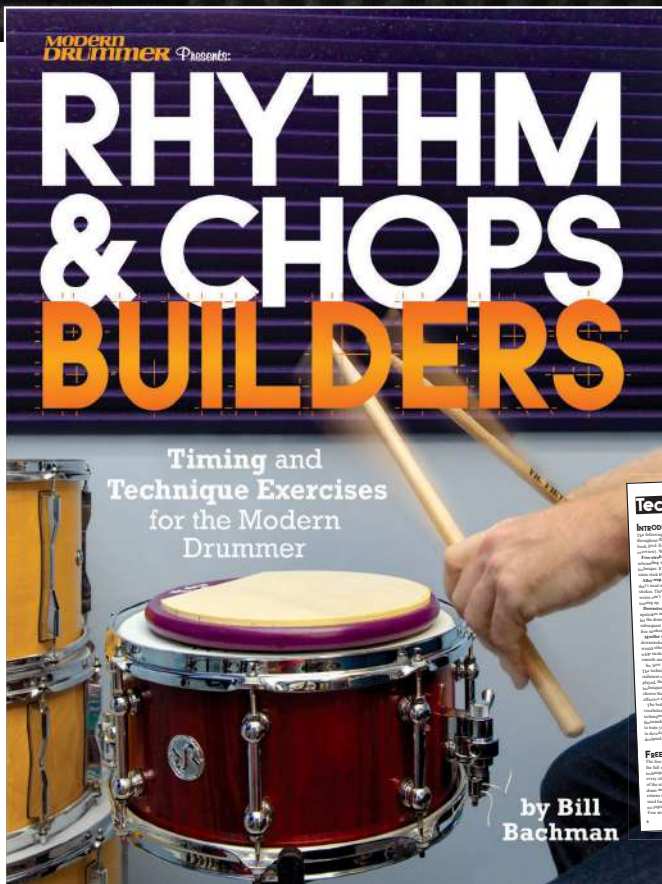


not even bars of trading. No matter—one of the most in-demand drummers of the era, Cobb didn't need to step up front to prove why. (Columbia/Legacy)

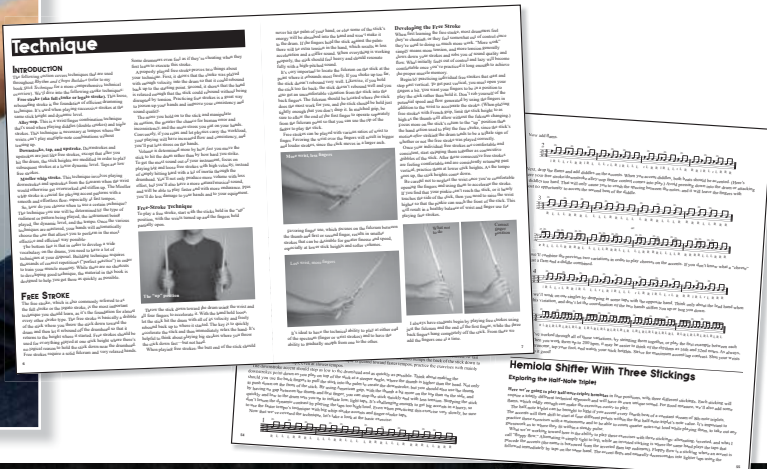
The double-disc *Wes Montgomery in Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recording* captures an exuberant, swinging concert from March of 1965 where the influential guitarist stretches out at length. Despite being released five decades later, this set is not a collector's afterthought; it stands strong alongside Montgomery's best albums. The percolating band features pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Arthur Harper, and drummer **JIMMY LOVELACE**, with guesting by tenor great Johnny Griffin.

Lovelace, with his nimble, energizing, bop-rooted drumming, is inspired and spontaneously responsive to everything around him. And on "Jingles" he launches some fiery eights, leading into a blazing solo chorus. Lovelace (1940–2004), who also recorded with George Benson and Junior Mance, remains underappreciated. This thrilling set is an ideal way to discover—or rediscover—this thoroughly swinging drummer. (Resonance) **Jeff Potter**

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## Into the Great Divide *Into the Great Divide*

**MIKE MANGINI** lends his considerable talents to a Dream Theater-esque guitar-hero concept record.

Guitarist Zack Zalon's prog release based on Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero's Journey* features narration, instrumental fireworks, and spot-on drumming from Dream Theater's Mike Mangini. The music surely does sound like that of the drummer's main gig, so parts are executed with the ferocity and skill of time already spent on the job. Mangini attacks "Chapter 1: The Crossing" with expectedly tight double bass and straight-ahead rock power. But check out the drummer's offbeat cymbal flavors underneath one of the guitar solos in "Chapter 3: Under a Bright Starry Sky," the slick, rim-riding groove he enters with on "Chapter 5: Challenge Accepted," and the machine-gun spray of drums on "Chapter 6: Dark Waters." This stuff is squarely in Mangini's wheelhouse, and he composes his parts to be fun and always supportive, framing each section with one cool idea after another. The drum recording is also big and warm, with none of those pesky vocals to gum up the works, so you get to hear Mangini's choices with clarity. (intothegreatdivide.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## Legend of the Seagullmen *Legend of the Seagullmen*

**Hard rock and tales of the sea, featuring Tool's DANNY CAREY.**

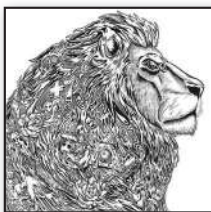
While we all sit around waiting for a new Tool album (it's coming, definitely maybe), drummer Danny Carey is keeping busy, you know, playing music, and his new project features his own idiosyncratic drumming and Mastodon guitarist Brent Hinds on a set of surreal metal sea shanties that are sometimes entertaining and sometimes less than consequential. Carey blasts away at "We Are the Seagullmen" with an intense galloping groove somewhere between a shuffle and a tribal war dance. Tom-toms figure prominently in "The Fogger," until things break down in the middle for a mini drum solo filled with big rolls and double bass phrases. Elsewhere there are up-tempo rockers like the title track and slower, dirge-like numbers such as "Rise of the Giant," where the drumming is possibly more conventional than anything Carey has ever done with Tool. Whether this music translates to a stage and becomes more exciting is left to be seen, and though the material isn't quite the thrill it could be, Carey plays with conviction, and it's obvious everyone is having a good time. (theseagullmen.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## Pop Evil *Pop Evil*

**Drummer HAYLEY CRAMER** propels the Michigan rockers into darker, heavier territory on their new self-titled album.

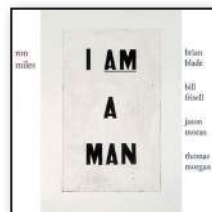
After joining the band during its final tour leg supporting the 2015 album *Up*, Hayley Cramer was asked to contribute to the writing sessions for *Pop Evil*, a decidedly more aggressive album than its four predecessors. Anthemic lead single "Waking Lions" is a perfect vehicle for Cramer's wide, smashing chorus groove and muscular double kick verse patterns. "Colors Bleed" and "Art of War" dive further into the rap/rock territory that's emerged on the band's previous few albums, and Cramer's rock-solid playing locks everything into place. Her roomy drum sounds, clever fills, and quick double kick punches on "Ex Machina" and swinging, syncopated groove in the chorus of "Nothing but Thieves" rise above the din, though her playing across the album's eleven tracks is rock solid. (Entertainment One) **Ben Meyer**



## Ron Miles *I Am a Man*

**Given the amount of space for interpretation in cornetist Ron Miles' beautiful compositions, BRIAN BLADE is a perfect choice to occupy the drum stool.**

On *I Am a Man*, Brian Blade plays the bits between the road signs with remarkable intention and execution, reminiscent of his own Fellowship group as well as one of leader Ron Miles' earlier projects, the DJQ20 featuring Ginger Baker. Guitarist Bill Frisell, pianist Jason Moran, and bassist Thomas Morgan join Blade in gracefully unwrapping each song. The opening title track takes a jaunty and joyous funk turn, while the bombastic freeform intro of "Darken My Door" leads to a relaxing soundscape in 7/4. Drums subtly shade the cornet on "The Gift That Keeps On Giving" while providing rhythmic fire underneath Miles' long tones. And with his energetic support on "Revolutionary Congregation," Blade reminds us—as if we need reminding—that he knows when to listen and when to react. (Yellowbird) **Robin Tolleson**



## TAKING THE REINS

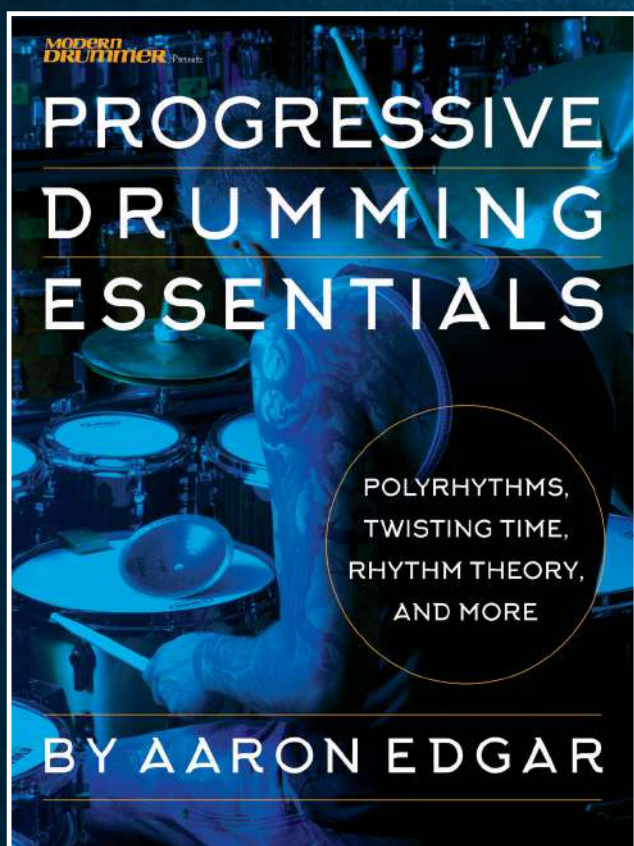
### Ilios Steryannis *Bethany Project*

**A Toronto-based drummer/composer leads an ambitious and exuberant session, exploring the music of West Africa, his own Mediterranean roots, and American jazz and funk.**

On *Bethany Project*, drummer Ilios Steryannis keeps a firm grip on multiple styles and shows an ear not only for conducting the group's dynamics from the kit but for pulling choice sounds from the drums. The equally versatile supporting cast features a strong voice in alto saxophonist Sundar Viswanathan and rhythmic energy from percussionists Larry Graves and Adam Hay. A guanguancó in 7/4 lets the ensemble crackle, before the sizzling 7/4 funk of "College Street Knowledge" gives the leader a chance to show off nifty drum chops over the stop time. Steryannis is equally at home navigating the 11/8 grooves of "Mombasa Lisa" and "Alek's 11" and the 21/8 rhythm of "Mangambe," and mimicking the sly vibe of two musical heroes on "ScoJoe." (iliosjazz.ca) **Robin Tolleson**



# Play More PROG



**SECTION 1: FUNDAMENTALS**

**PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ODD TIME SIGNATURES**

When you count phrases like groups of 7/8, 6/8, 5/8, 4/8, 3/8, 2/8, 1/8, you're counting in odd time signatures. You can count in odd time signatures in a variety of ways. It's not just about the number of beats in a phrase, it's about the feel of the phrase. It's about the way the beats are grouped together. It's about the way the beats are grouped together.

**Quarter-Note Meters**

Let's take a look at quarter-note meters. We'll start with 3/4. This is a common time signature. It's a 3-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second and third beats are eighth notes. This is a common time signature. It's a 3-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second and third beats are eighth notes.

**8th-Note Meters**

Let's take a look at 8th-note meters. We'll start with 3/8. This is a common time signature. It's a 3-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second and third beats are eighth notes. This is a common time signature. It's a 3-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second and third beats are eighth notes.

**12/8 Time**

Let's take a look at 12/8 time. This is a common time signature. It's a 4-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second, third, and fourth beats are eighth notes. This is a common time signature. It's a 4-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second, third, and fourth beats are eighth notes.

**15th Note Meters**

Let's take a look at 15th-note meters. We'll start with 15/8. This is a common time signature. It's a 5-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second, third, fourth, and fifth beats are eighth notes. This is a common time signature. It's a 5-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second, third, fourth, and fifth beats are eighth notes.

**SECTION 6: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON POLYRHYTHMS**

**PART 1: TWO OVER THREE**

Let's take a look at 2 over 3. This is a common time signature. It's a 5-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second, third, fourth, and fifth beats are eighth notes. This is a common time signature. It's a 5-beat phrase. The first beat is a quarter note, and the second, third, fourth, and fifth beats are eighth notes.

**Section 6: A New Perspective on Polyrhythms**

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

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

## 2017 Sydney Vintage and Custom Drum Expo

Australia's finest craftsmen shine among celebrated international mainstays during a day of exhibits and performances.

International drum enthusiasts gathered at the Factory Theatre in Sydney, Australia, this past October 8 for the third-annual Vintage and Custom Drum Expo. Local and international drum companies, including many Australian brands not readily available in stores, housed their wares throughout two auditoriums. Exhibitors provided short demo sessions to describe the unique features of their drums and accessories, artists presented impressive clinics on a dedicated performance stage, and a display of special vintage drums was curated especially for the event.

The Expo's founder, Australian drummer Andrew Habgood, explains to *MD* that his goals for the show included "showcasing the leading international and Australian percussion instruments and the people who created them, right alongside the vintage drums that influenced and continue to shape current drum-building trends.

"In Australia," Habgood continues, "we're fortunate to have so many wonderful native timbers that are quickly becoming popular across the drumming world. The first wave of Australian drum craftsmen, such as Drouyn and Drouyn, Brady, and Sleishman, impressed the international community with their skill and unique-sounding drums. Today there are even more talented and passionate custom builders coming to the fore who are using Australian hardwoods, metals, and acrylics. What's very exciting is that drummers worldwide are embracing local Australian products and taking them out on the road."

The expo featured renowned local builders such as Evetts, JPP, Gas, Red Rock, Sia, Kentville, and Pansini Percussion. Brands new to the event included Metro, Swan, and Geo. H. Way Australia. Sleishman, one of Australia's longstanding innovators, displayed its patented Twin bass drum pedal and free-floating suspension system. JPP showcased several marvelous segmented shell drums that were made from woods such as bubinga, Osage orange, red box, sapele mahogany, and tallowood. Red Rock demonstrated a



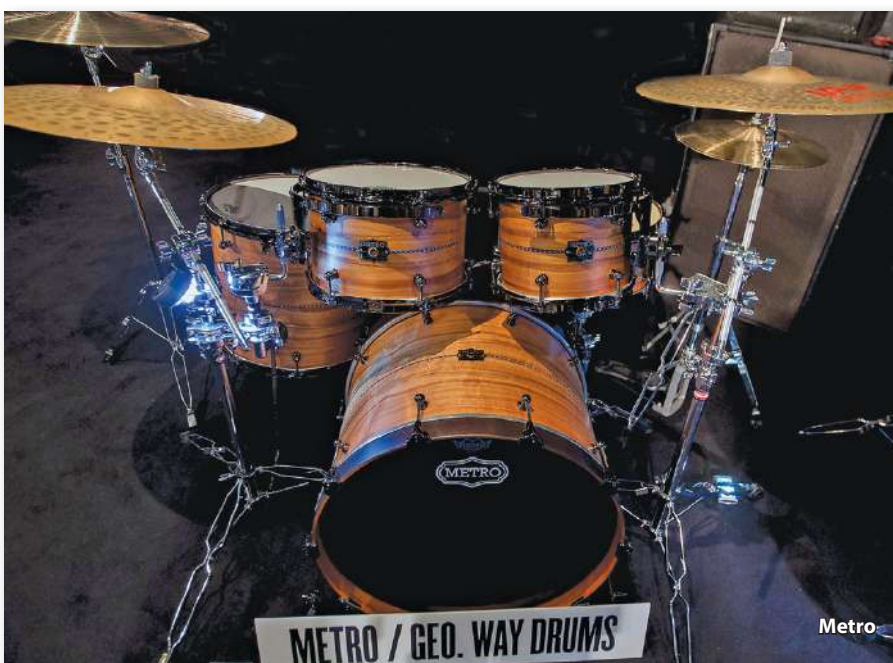
fabulous series of stave shell drums, which includes the jazz-g geared Heritage and versatile National lines.

The drum craftsmen Ronn Dunnett and Paul Warry of Geo. H. Way Australia displayed a beautiful 10-ply bamboo snare. Warry, who's also at the helm at Metro Drums, introduced that company's Stratasonic models, which feature a vertical grain veneer throughout the entire shell. Gas and Pansini each displayed stunning acrylic drums, Sia showcased hybrid stainless-steel/stave drums, and Evetts had on hand 3mm aluminum- and brass-shell drums.

Exquisite vintage drums included a masterfully restored 1936 Leedy "Oriental Pearl" Full Dress kit complete with a Chinese tom and woodblocks courtesy of Kentville Drums' Steele Turkington. A set of North drums was on display, as well as some classic Ludwig and Rogers kits.

Leading international manufacturers at the event included C&C Australia, Craviotto, DW, Pearl, Pork Pie, Sakae, Sonor, Tama, Truth, Crescent, Istanbul Agop, Meinl, Murat Diril, Zildjian, Evans, Promark, PureSound, Q Drum Co., Tackle, Humes & Berg, Protec, SKB, TRX, Lowboy Beaters, Rodrigo, Fat Barry Brown Brushes, and A&G hand-painted drumheads.

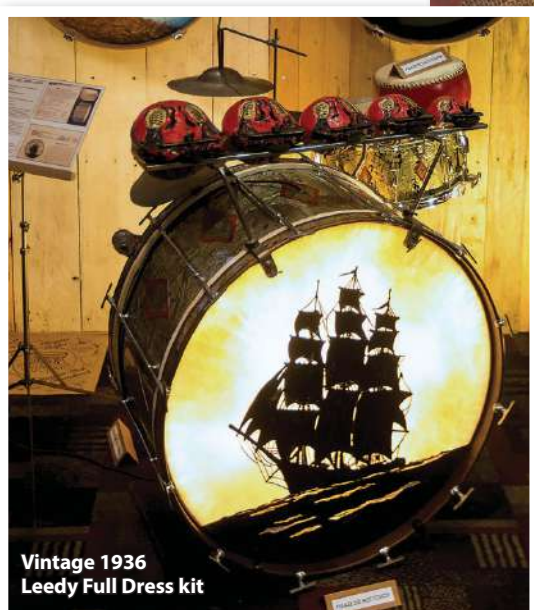
The clinics featured superb performances by the Australian drummers David Jones (Don McLean, educator), Dave Goodman (Dave Goodman Quartet, Trioflight), and Jackie "Jimmy" Barnes (Jimmy Barnes, Lachy Doley Group). During the demo sessions, patrons were entertained by a number of local drummers, including Nic Pettersen (Northlane) and Alex Dumbrell (Caravãna Sun).



Metro



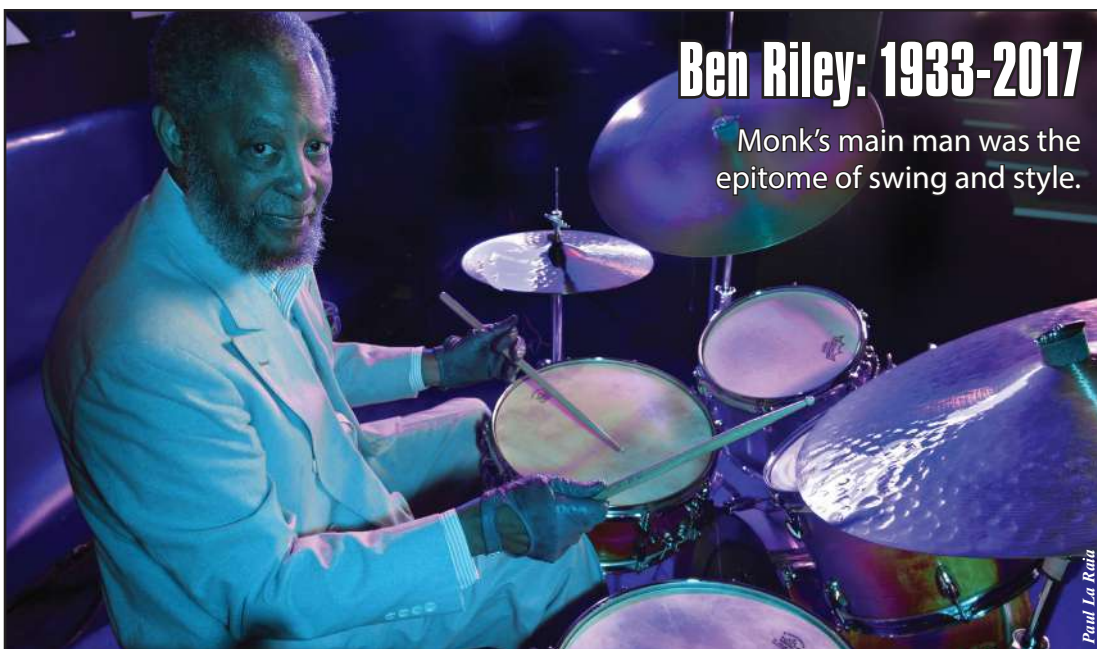
Sia



Vintage 1936  
Leedy Full Dress kit

The 2017 Vintage and Custom Drum Expo proved to be a tremendous success. "The 2015 expo was our inaugural event and was well received," Habgood says. "We had a majority of exhibitors returning this year, plus some new brands. I've been fortunate to form close relationships with the craftsmen involved. Throughout the year, many of them have forwarded ideas or suggestions for future expos. Our primary concern moving forward was to have more control over the sound levels in the main hall. With the backing of all of the exhibitors, we trialed a no-free-jamming, 'one stick' rule. I think this worked out well, so we'll likely continue the practice." Plans are already in the works for the fourth-annual show later this year.

**Story and photos by Bob Campbell**



## Ben Riley: 1933-2017

Monk's main man was the epitome of swing and style.

Jazz drumming great Ben Riley died last November 18. He was eighty-four. Although best remembered for his high-profile 1964–67 tenure with the iconic pianist Thelonious Monk, Riley enjoyed a fruitful six-decade career supporting a lengthy roster of jazz luminaries, including lasting associations with Alice Coltrane, Abdullah Ibrahim, the tenor team of Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis and Johnny Griffin, the New York Jazz Quartet, bassist Ron Carter, and pianist Kenny Barron.

“The one word that personified Ben is *swing*,” Barron says. “He had an incredible cymbal beat, just so smooth. He had a great sense of humor and was an incredible dresser; he had *style*.”

In addition, Riley worked with Junior Mance, Andrew Hill, Ahmad Jamal, Stan Getz, Roland Hanna, Eric Dolphy, Woody Herman, Kenny Burrell, Duke Ellington, Walter Bishop Jr., Sonny Stitt, Billy Taylor, Kai Winding, Nina Simone, Carmen McRae, Jim Hall, Milt Jackson, Ray Bryant, Chet Baker, Red Garland, Ricky Ford, Bill Barron, Mary Lou Williams, Ravi Coltrane, Hank Jones, Barry Harris, Barney Kessel, Bobby Timmons, and many others. As heard on a discography exceeding 300 titles, Riley was a drummer of irresistible energy, inventive coloration, melodicism, dynamics, and spontaneous flexibility.

Riley was born in Savannah, Georgia, on July 17, 1933, and moved to New York City with his family at age four. Harlem’s Sugar Hill district was fertile ground for absorbing the sounds of jazz, inspiring Ben to take up drums in his early teens. He soon frequented local jams and gigs.

In 1954, following army service, the drummer returned to New York. Married and with a child on the way, he took a job as a film editor but was quickly bored. Riley’s wife encouraged him to allow himself a year to take a shot at being a full-time musician. “I haven’t looked back since,” Riley told *MD* in 2005. By 1956, he was an established pro, working with pianist Randy Weston and other name leaders.

Often praised for his clarity of sound, dynamics, and cymbal touch, Riley credited his experiences in small lounges where drummers—crammed alongside diners—were forbidden to use sticks. He aimed to beat the house rules via technique. “My touch came from that,” he told *MD*. Barron adds, “He wasn’t a loud drummer; he kind of

*simmered*. The water would still be boiling, but he would simmer.”

Riley’s cachet rose with his stint alongside Sonny Rollins. His elegant drumming can be heard on the tenor giant’s classic 1962 album *The Bridge*. Riley cited the saxophonist for influencing his sense of phrasing and coloration. He fondly recalled a night when trumpeter Freddie Hubbard attended a Rollins gig. Pulling Riley aside, Hubbard said with a grin, “What are you doing playing melody?”

In 1964, Riley received what he initially thought was a crank call, instructing him to hurry down to Columbia studios to record with Monk. During the session, Monk never addressed the drummer. At pack-up time, he asked Riley if he had a passport, because “they were leaving for Europe on Friday.”

Without any rehearsal—which he soon learned was the norm—Riley premiered with Monk at London’s Royal Festival Hall. His uncanny bond with Monk was captured on numerous Columbia releases including *Underground* (1968), a set demonstrating Riley’s quirky playfulness that complemented the pianist’s eccentricities so well.

After playing with Ron Carter’s group, Riley and bandmates Kenny Barron and Buster Williams (bass) worked extensively as a trio. Monk alumnus Charlie Rouse (sax) joined in, and Sphere was born. Debuting with the LP *Four in One*, Sphere released seven fine Riley-fueled discs between 1982 and 1997. Riley also appeared on many of Barron’s own albums, including *Green Chimneys* (1983), where he’s heard driving in peak form.

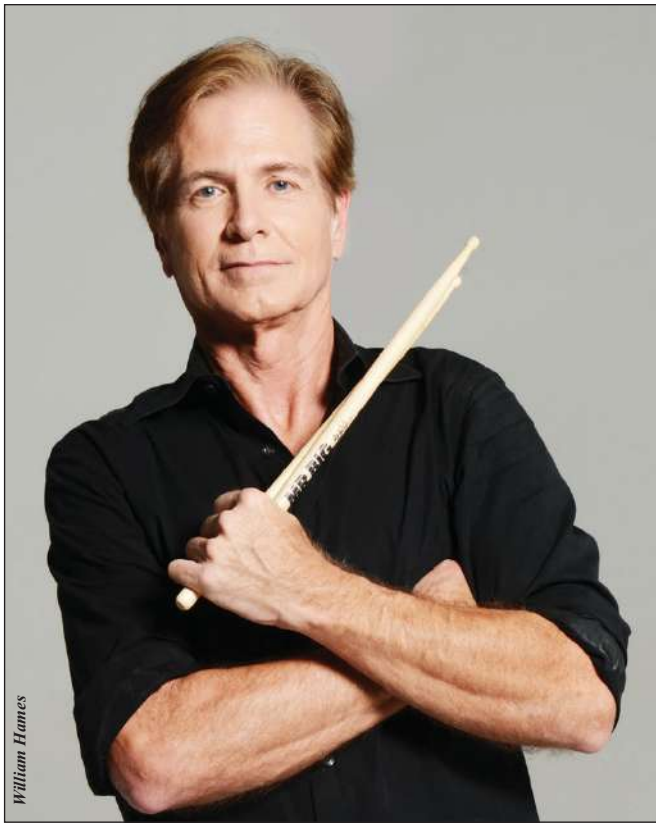
It wasn’t until later in his life that Riley stepped forward as a leader, with the trio outing *Weaver of Dreams* (1996), followed by *Memories of T* (2006) featuring his Monk Legacy Septet, and the quartet date *Grown Folks Music* (2012).

Although the soft-spoken Riley was an inventive soloist, he stressed that he cared most about accompaniment. As Kenny Barron notes, “He was really all about support.”

With every artist Riley supported, his drumming emanated vibrant joy. Explaining to *MD* why he loved music, he said, “We’re only trying to give somebody a moment’s pleasure, and I don’t think there is anything higher than that.”

**Jeff Potter**





## Pat Torpey: 1953-2018

The soul of hit-makers Mr. Big.

This past February 7, the drummer, backing vocalist, and founding member of the hit hard-rock band Mr. Big, Pat Torpey's passed away from complications of Parkinson's disease. He was sixty-four years old.

Before forming Mr. Big in 1988 with bassist Billy Sheehan, guitarist Paul Gilbert, and vocalist Eric Martin, Torpey played with a number of artists, including Belinda Carlisle, Ted Nugent, and the Knack. The drummer recorded six studio albums with Mr. Big before the group disbanded in 2002. Its hits during this period included "Alive and Kickin,'" "Just Take My Heart," and the breakthrough smash "To Be With You." The band reunited in 2009 and went on to release *What If... and ...The Stories We Could Tell*; 2017's *Defying Gravity* featured Matt Starr on drums due to Torpey's health issues.

Torpey released two solo albums internationally—1998's *Odd Man Out* and 1999's *Y2K*. For more information, head to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

## Z'EV: 1951-2017

Pioneer of solo percussion.

The pioneering artist, percussionist, and poet Z'EV—born Stefan Joel Weisser—passed away in Chicago last December 16. Z'EV sustained a career principally as a solo percussionist. He sometimes collaborated with others, including the avant-garde guitarists Elliott Sharp and Glenn Branca, but solo performances were the main vehicle for his music between the late 1960s and his passing. As a pioneer and prominent figure of the late-'70s to early-'80s wave of industrial music, Z'EV explored innovative styles of percussion as a performance art. He wrestled on stage and in galleries with raw materials like plastic, titanium, and steel while also incorporating more conventional drumming techniques. His real achievement, however, was "catacoustic" performance, in which he would create and sustain harmonic environments through his percussion that would enable him to effectively "play" the room in which he performed.

Z'EV lived from gig to gig, flying all over the world to explore and bring his sound to new audiences. As such, he went long periods without really having a home. He retired in the '90s for a period while he took care of his mother until her death. But in the 2000s he returned to the road with new fervor and played more shows than he ever had before. There are abundant videos on YouTube of his performances, and a documentary film about his art by filmmaker Ellen Zweig, *Heart Beat Ear Drum*, was released in 2015.

Z'EV performed thousands of shows and recorded innumerable

albums both as a solo artist and in collaboration with many other musicians of note. A heavy smoker for years, he contracted COPD and was in a slow decline due to inhibited breathing that forced him to alter his performance concept and execution in recent years. After he sustained injuries during a train derailment while traveling to Chicago in 2016, his health precipitously declined.



Z'EV could legitimately make the claim of being the first artist to make a living as a solo percussionist—and doing so on his own terms, in an unconventional manner that had never been seen before and will likely never be seen again. He was a first-class artist, a genuine thinker, a good friend, and a collaborator with many musicians, me included. He had an indelible influence on countless players, composers, and artists in many diverse genres, as evidenced by his impact on the solo artist and drummer Scotty Irving of the Clang Quartet. "Z'EV was a mentor and

friend," Irving tells *Modern Drummer*. "His influence on me and many of my other influences is beyond words. He's one of the first people I ever saw who performed with non-instruments, and his one-man shows partly motivated me to pursue his same path."

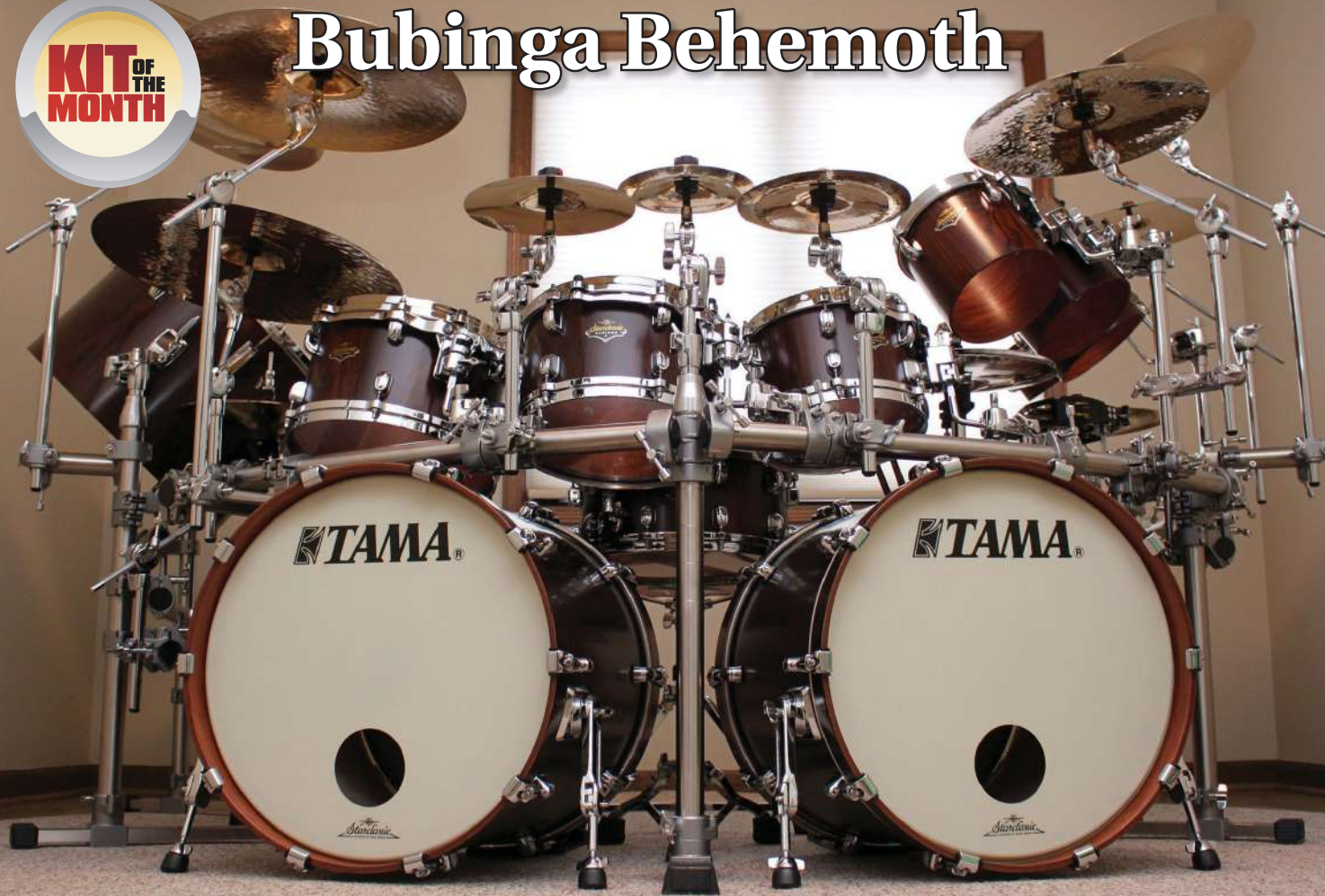
Many who saw more limelight than Z'EV did in his time are deeply in his debt. He was a true original and shouldn't be forgotten.

**Karl J. Palouček**





# Bubinga Behemoth



**Drummer Matt Flacche, based in Marlton, New Jersey,** custom-ordered and built this month's monster setup, a 2017 Tama Starclassic Bubinga kit in satin natural cordia finish. With previous appearances in the September 2003, July 2007, and January 2009 issues, this marks the fourth time one of Flacche's sets has been featured as *MD's* Kit of the Month. The drummer feels that this particular outfit is his finest creation to date.

The set is composed of fifteen drums: a 6.5x14 snare, three rack toms, three floor toms, four concert toms, a 20" gong drum, a 13" timbale, and two 20" bass drums. An array of Zildjian crashes, rides, and hi-hats, as well as various Sabian effects cymbals such as splashes, a China, and three Max Stax cymbal stacks, round out the kit.

Flacche explains that he still maintains a big sound with two smaller bass drums. "The 17x20 bass drums sound like cannons with Evans EMAD batters and ported resonant heads—there's no additional muffling needed," he says. "The rack toms are shallower depths, but they have plenty of punch and resonance as well."

All of Matt's previous kits included either 6" concert toms or

Octobans. This time he decided to incorporate four 8" concert toms instead. "The concert toms are slightly more melodic, louder, and easier to strike, and they have a wider tuning range," the drummer explains. Tama also made a custom 13x13 floor tom with legs for the kit. "The three floor toms sound so nice together," Flacche says.

Flacche trimmed the tubes of a Tama Power Tower rack to clean up the assembly. "I was apprehensive about cutting stainless-steel tubing," he says. "But with a quality hacksaw and bench grinder, cuts were easily made and cleaned." While positioning each cymbal, the drummer created custom stainless-steel wings on the rack that allow him to avoid oddly positioned boom arms. Tama also removed the legs from an Iron Cobra hi-hat stand so Flacche could fit the stand next to his left kick pedal.

Flacche added a removable tuning station outside his rack as well. "To achieve rich tone, it's important to tune rack toms while they're mounted," he says. "No matter what drum brand or mounting system, rack toms take on stress when positioned. Any tuning done while the drum is on a table or floor will change once the drum is mounted."

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

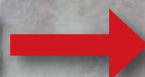


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