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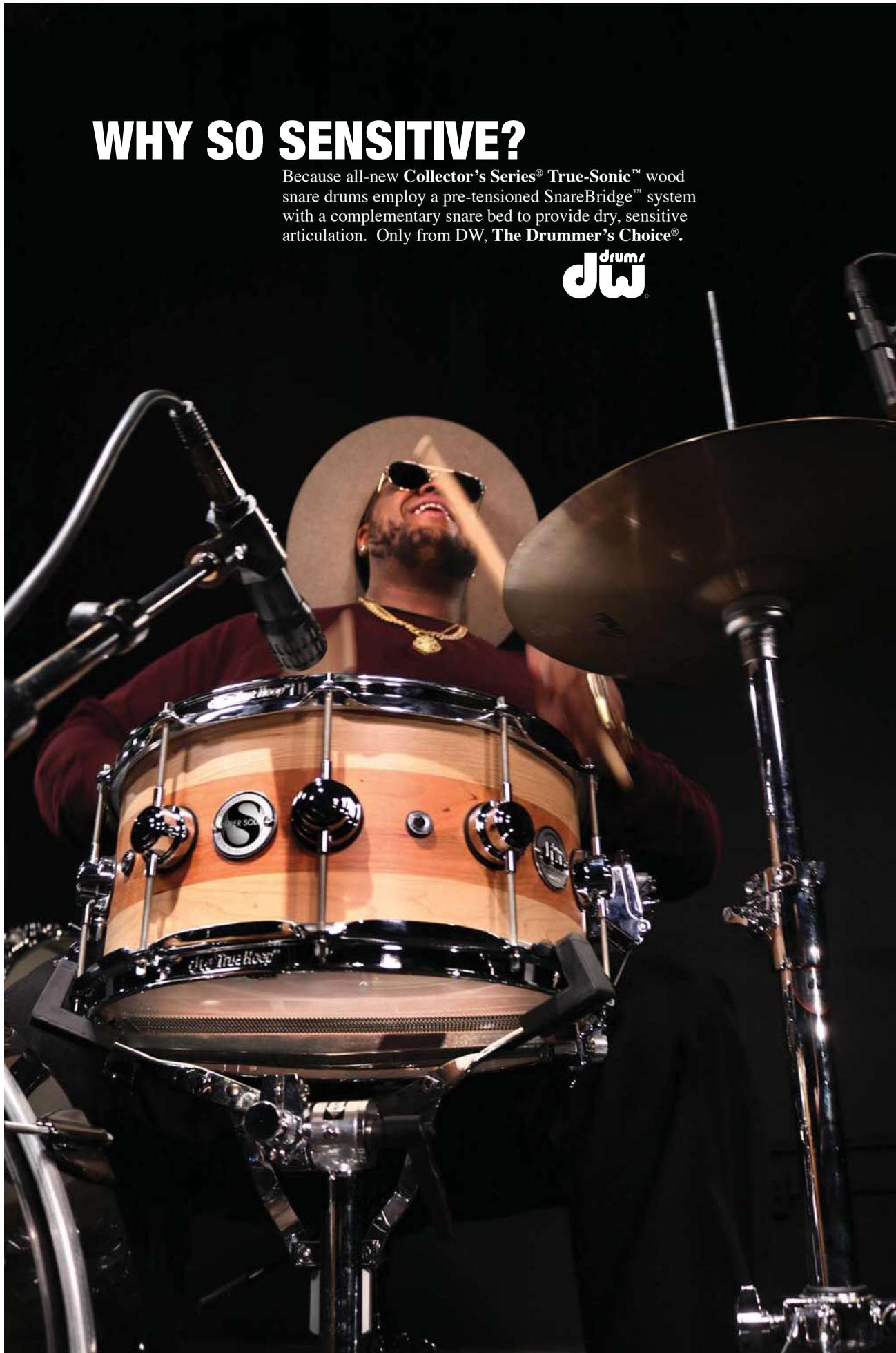
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**THERE'S EVERYTHING  
TO SEE & HEAR**



## BRANN DAILOR

For well over a decade, Brann Dailor has been the rhythmic force behind Mastodon and his drums of choice have always been TAMA. Brann's latest kit is a neon-coated artistic achievement; a percussive titan that detonates with color under the flare of stage lights, providing intense visual complexity to compliment Brann's creative energy with Mastodon. It's the perfect formula to excite the ears, as well as the eyes.

Custom Graphics: Dirty Donny Art

# Drum Journalism

Every once in a while when I'm trying to sound important in an editorial meeting, I'll pull out this line: "We can never forget that even though we're all drummers around this table, it's just as crucial that we're journalists as well." It's not a phrase you often hear, *drum journalist*. But at *Modern Drummer* we've always believed that it's imperative to think of our work in those terms.



In the drumming world we don't deal with issues of life and death like hard-news outlets do. But the principles of journalism, such as editorial independence and the pursuit of facts, should be followed no matter what the subject is. Sadly, not everyone in the drum media seems to feel that way.

Since *Modern Drummer* was established in 1977, a number of other publications have come on the scene. Some offer top-flight content. Others, unfortunately, have focused on things like gender issues, fashion spreads, or the past music-industry credits of its editor, all at the expense of historical accuracy and journalistic credibility. And as we speak, one publication is trying to convince readers that its decision to regress from a monthly to a quarterly is somehow good news. Gee, are there really so few great players and important concepts to talk about that you only have to check in with folks once every season? Our research certainly doesn't show that.

In the print world, taking editorial shortcuts, pandering to certain segments of the population, and fostering a cult of personality simply cannot substitute for the fundamentals of journalism, like fact-checking, concise writing, and having a dedicated, full staff of individuals with a multiplicity of viewpoints and experiences. Journalism, even drum journalism, can be rigorous work. There's maybe 50,000 words in an average issue of *Modern Drummer*, not to mention reams of often quite complex musical examples. That makes for a whole lot of opportunities to screw up each month! But by following the essential, time-honored tenets of journalism, we can feel confident that we're building each new issue of *MD* on a solid foundation.

None of this is to suggest that *Modern Drummer* is perfect. We make mistakes, just like all publications. I've certainly made some doozies myself over the years. What's important is to try to correct those mistakes when they do happen, learn from the experience, and continue to doggedly adhere to the principles of our discipline. It's what readers have demanded of us for more than forty years. We hope and expect that you'll still be demanding that of us forty years from now. Because you deserve nothing less.

**Adam Budofsky**  
Editorial Director



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**MODERN DRUMMER** magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 271 Route 46 West, Suite H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Fairfield, NJ 07004 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2018 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.** All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES:**

**MODERN DRUMMER Publications**, 271 Route 46 West, Suite H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004. Tel: 973-239-4140. Fax: 973-239-7139. Email: [mdinfo@moderndrummer.com](mailto:mdinfo@moderndrummer.com).

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. \$29.95, Canada \$33.95, other international \$44.95 per year. For two- and three-year subscription prices go to [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com). Single copies \$5.99.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:**

Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call 800-551-3786 or 815-732-5283. Phone hours, 8AM–4:30PM Monday–Friday CST, or visit Subscriber Services at [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com).

**MUSIC DEALERS:** Modern Drummer is distributed by Hal Leonard Corp., 800-554-0626, [sales@halleonard.com](mailto:sales@halleonard.com), [www.halleonard.com/dealers](http://www.halleonard.com/dealers)

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920.

**Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017** Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

**MEMBER:** National Association of Music Merchants, Percussive Arts Society

**MODERN DRUMMER** welcomes manuscripts and photos but cannot assume responsibility for them.

**MODERN DRUMMER ONLINE:** [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com)

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

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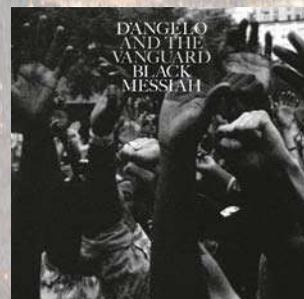
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# What's Your Favorite Hip-Hop or R&B Drumming Performance?



Acoustic drumming generally isn't the first thing that comes to mind when considering modern hip-hop and R&B album production. But when we took to Facebook and Instagram to ask readers about their favorite hip-hop and R&B drumming performances, plenty of gems surfaced....

My favorite hip-hop album is *Organix* by the Roots. It's a masterpiece of old-school hip-hop with jazzy vibes. Questlove made a work of art with those drum beats. The balance of sounds is also perfect. The backbeat of the snare is a blast, and the accents on the hi-hat frame the snare so well with the bumping bass drum. It just feels good to me. My favorite track from this album is "Common Dust."

**Luca Prodan Bossi**

Anything from the Beastie Boys' G-Son Studio era, but especially *Check Your Head* and *III Communication*. The drumming isn't necessarily fantastic from a purely technical standpoint, but it has such a groovy, raw feel that wasn't overproduced or pulled super tight to a grid.

**Adam Helm**

Any album by the Roots from between 1996 and 2006. Do you remember the spike in piccolo snare sales during that time? Every drummer wanted that Questlove and J Dilla crack back then.

**Jordan Manley**

*Voodoo* by D'Angelo. Questlove plays such a wide variety of grooves. It's pure ear candy the whole time. I love that record.

**Jeff Meloen**

*Live* by Erykah Badu changed my life when I first heard it. Charles "Poogie" Bell plays so incredibly laid back and tasty on that recording.

**Mathias Uredat**

My favorite hip-hop drumming album is *Do You Want More!!!!!!* by the Roots. Questlove's timekeeping and incredible snare sound really changed the way that I use my instrument in a musical context. Overall, this album sums up the Roots' recognizable, classic sound and street attitude perfectly. It's a must-have for every groove drummer.

**Ronald G.**

D'Angelo and the Vanguard's *Black Messiah* is definitely up there. It features a drumming trifecta with James Gadson, Questlove, and Chris Dave. Also, although he used a lot of samples, anything and everything J Dilla touched has a masterful, simple pocket and is so funky.

**Bill Fleming**

I spent an entire practice session learning *The Love Movement* by A Tribe Called Quest, including reverse engineering the sounds on my acoustic kit.

**T. Alex Budrow**

Without a doubt, the Roots' *Things Fall Apart*. The drumming on that record will be a point of study for drummers for decades to come.

**Kevin Mendes**

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

## Dropped Beats

In the Great '80s Drum Performances feature in the May issue, we stated that Iron Maiden's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was released in 1982; the album it appears on, *Powerslave*, actually came out in 1984. Thanks to reader Mike Snide for catching the error.

The photo of Jamie Oldaker appearing on page 31 of the May issue was taken by Phil Clarkin.

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# OUT NOW

## Ryan Pope on the Get Up Kids' *Kicker*

Wild drum tones, energetic grooves, and signature hooks fuel the eminent group's first release in seven years.



Favorite Sites and Sounds

Since their inception in 1995, the Get Up Kids have amassed somewhat of an underground yet diehard emo/pop-punk/rock following. And while they're not necessarily tethered to the band's sound and aesthetic, groups such as Coheed and Cambria, Fall Out Boy, and Blink-182 have each cited the Get Up Kids' albums—especially 1997's *Four Minute Mile* and 1999's *Something to Write Home About*—as major influences on their own output.

This past June 8, the Get Up Kids put out the four-song EP *Kicker*, the band's first release since the 2011 LP *There Are Rules*. As the band members juggle forty-something adult life more than twenty years after their formation, drummer Ryan Pope explains their writing process, considering each member's current commitments. "We've kind of been forced to work in these short jolts because of everyone's busy lives and schedules," he says. "When we get together, we try to get as much done as possible. Some of the songs on *Kicker* were recorded or worked on well over a year ago. So we've been waiting to get this thing out into the world for a while."

Pope opens the EP's lead-off track, "Maybe," with a driving quarter-note groove between the snare and open hi-hat that's amplified by the growling, almost distorted drum tones. Pope attributes *Kicker*'s snarling sounds to boutique gear the band utilized during their session at Fire and Ice studio in Baldwin, Kansas. "*Kicker*'s engineer, and one of our good friends, co-owns Coil Audio," the drummer explains. "So we had access to some really badass preamps. And we recorded everything really hot, so [the drums] were already breaking up going into the preamps. That was something we did initially while recording, but we also messed around with the sounds a little bit. I like to play around with drum tones that aren't typical. Also, when we handed it over

to get mixed, Jim Vollenhine put a little candy on there to help it growl a little more. But overall, on this one I think we wanted it to sound like how we used to make records—a little rawer and less polished."

The group self-produced *Kicker*, a process that, according to Pope, can have its ups and downs. "We've all worked together for so long, and we know each other so well, so we can butt heads a lot. It's kind of like having a lot of cooks in the kitchen. So it's a matter of everyone pushing and pulling. I think we're going to work with a producer on our next record, and it'll be fun to have someone to help put all of the pieces in line."

Although the Get Up Kids took a hiatus between 2006 and 2009, since 1999 the group has maintained a consistent lineup that includes vocalist and guitarist Matt Pryor, guitarist and backing vocalist Jim Suptic, keyboardist and vocalist James Dewees, and Ryan's brother Rob on bass and backing vocals. The drummer explains the dynamic that arises when mixing family into a creative environment. "You're hardest on the people you love the most, right? [laughs] I think it can be a total advantage to not have to tiptoe around someone you're playing with, and you can be really blunt about things. But of course that also can create tension, and you have to take the good with the bad. But I think it's way more positive than negative. Otherwise we wouldn't be doing it. But my brother is a badass bass player, so that really helps me as a drummer. Playing with a good bass player is everything." **Willie Rose**

**Pope plays C&C drums and Istanbul Agop cymbals, and he uses Evans heads and Promark sticks.**

## More New Releases

**Gruff Rhys** Babelsberg (Kliph Scurlock) /// **Adam O'Farrill's Stranger Days** El Maquech (Zack O'Farrill) /// **Amy Cervini** No One Ever Tells You (Jared Schonig) /// **Yob** Our Raw Heart (Travis Foster) /// **Bullet for My Valentine** Gravity (Jason Bowld)

# ON TOUR

## Andy Stack with Wye Oak

On stage with the powerful indie-rock duo, the drummer and musical alchemist does no less than manipulate space and sound in real time.



P.J. Sykes

Andy Stack is one of those “I’m not *really* a drummer” guys. You know the type: they’ll make a mark as, say, a killer guitarist, start playing drums on the side, and the next thing you know they’re blowing away every other kit player in town.

Stack attended Berklee College of Music as a bassist, but his natural musical talent allowed his drumming skills to catch up with his four-string chops pretty quickly. But there’s even more going on with the musician, who, a decade after his Berklee tenure, is on the road behind the skins in support of *The Louder I Call*, *The Faster It Runs*, the fifth album by the indie-rock duo Wye Oak. Alongside the band’s other half, vocalist and guitarist Jenn Wasner, Stack plays drums with his right hand while simultaneously playing bass lines and other textures on a keyboard with his left.

It’s a challenge for sure, but it’s all in a day’s work for Stack, who identifies more as a stage producer who manipulates sounds and colors than as a drummer bringing the flash. “The one-handed live situation is something that’s usually a way to adapt what I do on recordings and to figure out what the essence of the part is,” he explains. “It ends up feeling like when you’re drumming and you drop a stick. All of a sudden you have to make it work for a few bars with one hand—except I’m doing that all the time. [laughs] But realistically, it’s not just one hand. It’s also two feet and all these workarounds. Concurrently, you figure out what your brain is capable of doing on the left-hand keyboard and electronics side. For me it’s about figuring out how much I can do without disturbing the flow. When I got to the point where it was flowing—because I started as a bass player and the bass and drums are so intrinsically linked—it kind of felt like one

instrument, one engine.”

Live, the band produces a significant amount of sound considering their two-person lineup. To achieve this, Stack makes the most of technological advances. “I’ve started to incorporate Ableton into the setup,” he says. “I don’t want to be working with tracks. Even if it’s for my own ego, when I sit down and play I want to feel like I’m performing. I don’t want to feel like I’m tethering myself to some machine. So I’m triggering samples, and I do a lot of live audio processing, like splitting the hi-hat or snare mics and sending them into Ableton so I can dub stuff out. I’m also turning knobs or pushing faders to delay sweeps of my dubbed-out snare or hi-hat. And on the last couple of records, there are heavy compositional delays on the drums, with the same drum part copied an 8th or dotted quarter note later. So it creates a different version of the groove. I have to figure out how to make that work live.”

As Wye Oak’s music has gotten denser and more involved with each of its releases, Stack’s drumming has followed suit. *The Louder I Call*, *The Faster It Runs* has so much going on that the band will add a third member to fully flesh out the material in concert. “Adding a bassist doesn’t necessarily mean that now I’m just the drummer and my role is simplified,” Stack says. “I still end up playing one-handed. But rather than just playing bass parts, I’m acting as the producer or brain. I think about drum programming and what space the drums should occupy way more than what the pattern is.” **Ilya Stemkovsky**

**Andy Stack plays C&C drums and Istanbul Agop cymbals and uses Shure microphones.**

## Also on the Road

**Matt Cameron** with Pearl Jam /// **Carter Beauford** with the Dave Matthews Band /// **Rick Allen** with Def Leppard /// **Dave McClain** with Machine Head /// **Tommy Aldridge** with Whitesnake /// **Alan White** with Yes /// **Will Hunt** with Evanescence /// **Josh Eppard** with Coheed and Cambria /// **Mark O’Connell** with Taking Back Sunday





# Pete Lockett

**P**ete Lockett has traveled the globe countless times in search of new sounds and ethnic styles to interpret. The latest example of his approach is *Boom!*, a collaboration with Luis Conte where the two master percussionists seamlessly meld Indian, Cuban, American, and European rhythms in beautiful, harmonious symmetry.

Lockett frequently moves from vast arrays of ethnic percussion to an ever-evolving drumset. "I'm lucky because I get to play completely different setups in many different musical situations," he says. "Sometimes I can go out with just a set of tabla and my konnakol vocal cords, whilst other times I'll get session calls that require truckloads of stuff. I just did the soundtrack to Andy Serkis's *Mowgli* film, for example, where I filled the studio with tons of gear—lots of LP percussion and a dozen DW floor toms, including the great DW gong drum."

For his solo performances, Lockett tends to take one of two main approaches. "First, I might have a huge combined percussion and hybrid drumset rig. Alternatively, I could just use an extensive percussion rig." Whatever the scenario, Pete always carries certain pieces of gear he deems indispensable. "For the percussion rig, the new DW cajon pedal is something I cannot even shower without!"

## Indispensables

- DW cajon pedal
- Sabian Choppers
- Vic Firth Jazz and Rock Rakes
- LP FX djembe
- 12" hand kick
- Remo Muff'l control ring
- ATV aFrame
- DW Lowboy

he jokes. "It totally redefines the cajon pedal. The feel and mechanics are top drawer, and the beater is well positioned to leave room for your hands to play the front face."

Other items in Pete's must-have arsenal are his Sabian Choppers. "These effects cymbals sound

really great with brushes," he shares. "I use them as a kind of hi-hat substitute in my percussion rig."

Also vitally important in Lockett's gear bag are Vic Firth Jazz and Rock Rakes. "Because of the flat profile at the end of the shaft," he says, "they're great for cajons and frame drums. They're also a little stiffer than other brushes, allowing for better definition and attack." Pete has also become inseparably bound to much of his LP percussion. "In particular," he says, "the smaller FX djembe is a highly versatile drum that performs really well when played in a similar way to darabouka."

Within Lockett's hybrid drumset, his 12" prototype "hand kick" has become a vital component. "I also use the Remo Muff'l control ring in this rig," he adds, "which really helps me get the sound I want. And for electronics, the new ATV aFrame is a totally happening device. It's the only electronic instrument I've ever played from which you can get the definition and detail of an acoustic hand drum. It's an utterly fantastic instrument. And, last, but definitely not least, is the totally funky DW Lowboy hi-hat pedal. I pop a 10" Sabian splash and a China on there and it's killer."

When it comes to transporting Lockett's favorite gear, he salutes the great support from all of his sponsors who help make the supply of his must-have gear in foreign countries seamless and trouble-free. "Of course, sometimes you need to fly with lots of stuff," he adds. "My record was a trip to Hong Kong a few years back. It was about 440 pounds, which cost us something like \$10,000, as I recall. Not an ideal scenario!" **Mike Haid**

**Lockett plays DW drums, Sabian cymbals, LP percussion, and the ATV aFrame, and uses Vic Firth sticks and Remo heads.**



# AQ2

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The all new SONOR AQ2 Series drums feature 7ply all Maple shells, the new SmartMount isolation system, five exciting finishes, and bring some uniquely SONOR configurations to a new level of quality.

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# Noble & Cooley

## Walnut Classic Drumset

A new horizontal-ply shell construction from the original American boutique builder.

**In 1854, as the United States was on** the brink of civil war, Silas Noble and James P. Cooley ventured into the drum-making business in a farmhouse kitchen in Granville, Massachusetts. By 1873, Noble & Cooley was producing 100,000 instruments per year. As the present-day boutique drum industry continues to expand, Noble & Cooley remains a prominent player, focusing—as it always has—on delivering small-batch offerings with exquisite tones.

### From Snares to Kits

In 2016, Noble & Cooley introduced a run of walnut snares with an all-horizontal ply shell. Those drums, which were built using a technique N&C adapted after purchasing the designs and equipment of the Witt Percussion Company in 2015, were well received. “This marked the first time in the company’s history that Noble & Cooley made something designed by someone else,” explains N&C business advisor John Keane. The Walnut Classic drumkit we have for review is the drum maker’s first venture into building an entire set using all-horizontal 6-ply shells.

### The Specs

We were sent a three-piece kit consisting of a 9x13 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 16x22 bass drum. Sporting a stunning natural matte finish, the 6-ply American black walnut shells had 45-degree bearing edges with a slight round-over and were outfitted with black chrome hardware, including 2.3 mm triple-flanged hoops, Noble & Cooley’s symmetrical venting, and retro-style tube lugs that are designed to maintain alignment as shell pressure fluctuates with variations in humidity.

The toms had Remo Coated Ambassadors on top and Clear Ambassadors on bottom, while the bass drum had a Clear Powerstroke P3 batter and a non-ported Fiberskyn Ambassador front. The 9x13 tom included a rim-mounted suspension system equipped with Noble & Cooley’s patented CoolMount, which is a quick-release, screw-less aluminum mount that locks the drum securely into place on any standard L-arm without requiring wing nuts, memory locks, or other fasteners.

### The Sounds

The “wow factor” of this Walnut Classic drumset is undeniable in regards to its aesthetic beauty. Beyond its outward appeal, the kit also delivers a vintage-style tone sought after by drummers of all ages and styles. Horizontally oriented ply shells hold more tension because the timber is being bent around the entire circumference. That tension makes for a strong, stable shell, but it also increases the fundamental pitch a bit. Walnut is known for having a balanced tone with enhanced lows plus a mellow dryness.



The combination of the horizontal-ply construction and the American black walnut timber makes for a refreshingly simple sonic mix. Instead of a vast spectrum of sounds, it has very obvious sweet spots in the low, medium, and high tuning ranges that are easily discernible, both in terms of feel and sound. The drums also have a smoky resonance that gives them a particularly harmonious voicing in the higher register, producing focused tones with quick but even decay. At medium and lower tunings, the attack becomes enhanced and the lower frequencies are more prominent but contained.

### Create Your Own Classic

Custom Walnut Classic drumsets can be ordered with a variety of shell configurations, including standard-depth 10"-18" toms, 4.75"- or 6.5"-deep snares in 13" and 14" diameters, and 16"-deep bass drums with 18", 20", or 22" diameters. The drums can be finished in an assortment of gloss, sparkle, or matte options. Noble & Cooley offers factory delivery, which allows you to order a kit from your favorite drum shop, or you can pick it up at the Noble & Cooley facility, where you'll also get a tour of the shop.

**David Ciauro**



# Zildjian

## A Series 18" Uptown Ride and 12" New Beat Hi-Hats

Quick, articulate, and bright sounds for compact setups and electronic/fusion situations.

**While current trends continue to lean** toward bigger, darker, and trashier sounds, some drummers are looking for smaller, easy-to-carry cymbals that offer crisp, clean, and controlled tones for use in tighter, quieter clubs or in denser electronica-inspired music. Zildjian recently released two models to service the latter: an 18" Uptown ride (\$259.95) and a pair of 12" New Beat hi-hats (\$289.95). Both are within the company's legendary A series.

### 18" Uptown Ride

The 18" A Uptown ride, which is essentially a reworked version of the discontinued Breakbeat model, is a thin-rolled B20 cymbal that's unlathed on top and bottom and has a raw, natural finish. It's heavily hammered with golf ball-sized indentations deeply embedded across the entire bow. This cymbal is designed to deliver a super-tight stick sound with a medium pitch and very short decay. It also provides clean, controlled crashes that have a puffy attack and breathy sustain. The small bell has a clear and bright tone that's not overly loud. Players who dig the really dry, articulate ride sounds of modern jazz greats Jack DeJohnette and Joe Chambers will appreciate how far you can push this little ride without it roaring out of control. I can see this cymbal being a perfect choice for other dense and syncopated playing styles as well, including modern fusion, Latin jazz, hip-hop, and various forms of electronica.





### 12" New Beat Hi-Hats

I have a soft spot for small hi-hats, which harkens back to a period in the mid-'90s when Dennis Chambers' *Serious Moves* instructional video was on constant repeat in my house. Dennis used a set of Zildjian 12" Special Recording hi-hats in that video, and they were a perfect match for his lightning-fast rolls and multilayered grooves. The Special Recording hi-hats feature a medium-weight top and a medium-heavy bottom, which accounts for their wispy, controlled sound. To offer a more robust sound, Zildjian is now applying its tried-and-true New Beat formula (medium top over extra-heavy bottom) to 12" hi-hats.

New Beats are some of the most revered and versatile hi-hats in the world because of their clean, articulate stick sound, warm yet bright wash, and strong foot chick. These traditionally finished cymbals are symmetrically hammered by machine and have wide lathing grooves. Being just 12", they have a high pitch and super-fast, flashy bark. The stick attack is crystalline and quick, which helps articulate quick rolls with ultimate clarity. The partially open sound might be too chime-like for extended riding, but it has plenty of cutting power when needed. The foot response is also super fast and crisp. I found myself exploring a variety of open/closed patterns that never would have been possible on a set of papery 14s or 15s. Like the Uptown ride, the 12" New Beat hi-hats are an excellent choice for players who require ultimate articulation without sacrificing the clean, pure, and expressive tone that has made the Zildjian A series the go-to for so many different types of drummers throughout the years.

If you're interested in getting both the 18" Uptown ride and the 12" New Beat hi-hats, then you might want to check out Zildjian's City Pack box set (\$534.95), which also includes a 14" Fast crash.

**Michael Dawson**



# WFLIII

## Signature Metal and Classic Wood Snares

Uniquely designed drums that carry the legacy of generations of high-quality craftsmanship into a new era.

**For over a hundred years, drummers have known** and trusted drums bearing the names William F. Ludwig, Ludwig & Ludwig, and WFL. Quality has always been associated with products built under the watchful eyes of the Ludwig men. Now a third-generation Ludwig drum maker, Bill Ludwig III, has officially entered the market with WFLIII Drums.

Specializing in high-quality wood and metal snares, the new company aims to not only live up to the standards set by the Ludwig family in the past, but to raise the bar. For this review, WFLIII sent us two 6.5x14 snares to check out—a wood Classic series model and a metal Signature series. (Models with 5"-deep shells are also available.) The hardware is available in

chrome, gold, black, and red finishes. The drums share certain design aspects: hoops are 2.3 mm solid steel, amenities include 20-strand German wires etched with the WFLIII logo and a Trick GS007 multi-step strainer, and bearing edges are cut to forty-five degrees. All WFLIII snares feature ten lugs engraved with the company's "III" logo. Utilizing a twist on an old idea, the threading is built into the lug casing, which allows for a strong connection between the tension rod and the lug while removing the possibility of internal parts loosening and rattling over time.

The Signature series metal snare comes in a white sparkle finish. The shell is made from heavy 1/8" aluminum, and the inside is finished to match the outside. The snare beds are laser cut, and so is the unique air vent, which is cut in the shape of the "III" logo. The sound of this drum is fat, punchy, and full.





The Classic series wood drum features a beautiful 3-ply shell. WFLIII went back to an older shell design for this drum, with a ply of poplar sandwiched between plies of maple. This drum had a controlled tone that's warm and fat yet projects very well with a big sound. A 5-ply mahogany version is also available, and both models come with steam-bent maple reinforcement hoops.

I found that both drums fit nicely in many styles of music. They sounded comfortable at different tunings, but I really liked their tones in the mid to lower registers, where they produced punchy, vintage-like sounds. Snare sensitivity was excellent, as both drums responded well to even a light finger touch.

WFLIII snares are high-quality, American-made drums that are deserving of the legacy that inspired them. By combining different shell types with the various hardware options, you can create a custom drum to complement almost any configuration. Check them out at [wfliidrums.com](http://wfliidrums.com).

**Brian Hill**

# Zoom

## L-12 LiveTrak

A versatile digital mixer and multitrack recorder with five independent headphone mixes, an audio interface, and more.

**Zoom's new L-12 LiveTrak could be a game-changer.** The impressive unit boasts a digital mixer, a multitrack recorder, five independent headphone mixes, and an audio interface, all at the extremely reasonable price of \$599. We've been putting the L-12 through its paces for a couple months. Let's see how it performed.

### Features

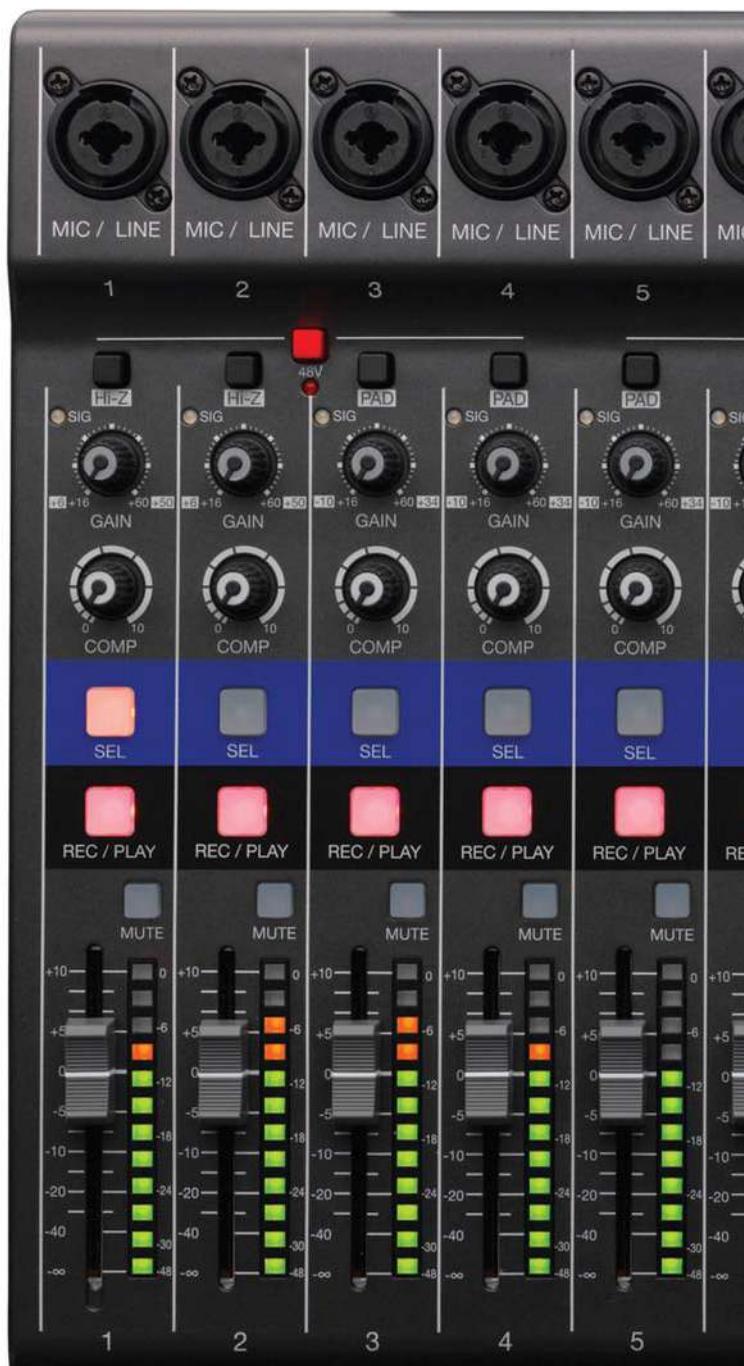
The Zoom L-12 has twelve input channels, including eight mono TRS/XLR combo jacks and two stereo inputs with quarter-inch and RCA connections. That means that with the proper cables you can record up to fourteen tracks at once. When you record directly to the L-12, it saves the files to a standard SD card, which can then be exported directly to a USB thumb drive. The unit also acts as a fourteen-in/four-out interface, so you can use it to record directly to your computer. The Class Compliant mode also allows you to record directly to iOS devices using multitrack apps like GarageBand. This mode still sends each individual track, so if you want to use the L-12 to send a stereo or mono mix to your iOS device when recording video, you'll still need an additional interface to connect to one of the L-12's outputs.

WAV files can be recorded at 16- or 24-bit depths and at 44.1, 48, or 96 kHz. Each channel includes a three-band EQ, and the mono channels also include a compressor. The mixer includes sixteen high-quality effects sends, including various types of reverb, delay, and room simulation. You can save and recall nine different mixer settings, which are called Scenes. These make adjusting between various performing, practicing, and recording scenarios very efficient. I play in different fusion and rock bands, and I was able to save a separate set of mixer settings for each and recall them with ease when we rehearsed or recorded new ideas.

Each of the L-12's five separate headphone/monitor outputs has its own volume fader, independent mix controls, and the ability to share the master mix. The independent mixes are sent without effects, so if you want to hear those effects, you'll need to enable the master mix for that headphone output. The mixer is fully operational from onboard control knobs and keys, which means that you don't have to dig through menus to utilize the board for live mixing.

### An Ideal Choice

Prior to the Zoom L-12, I used two eight-channel digital interfaces and a six-channel headphone amp connected to my laptop for rehearsals and recording. The L-12 has replaced all of that. I lost a few inputs, but I gained the ability to mix and record my bands in my rehearsal room without having to start up my laptop. I can provide each band member with a unique and independently controlled headphone mix and



adjust levels and effects with the onboard knobs and keys. I no longer have to deal with time-consuming problems like correcting latency or hunting through menus on my computer to change



levels and effects. Recalling the different mixer settings is quick and easy, and having the option to use the unit as a multitrack interface with my computer and iOS devices has opened up a lot

of additional options for recording. To see the L-12 in action, check out our demo video at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Miguel Monroy**



# Jimmy Paxson's Lindsey Buckingham/Christine McVie Tour Kit

**Fleetwood Mac guitarist/vocalist Lindsey Buckingham** required an electronic kit for his 2017 duo tour with bandmate Christine McVie, but that didn't stop Jimmy Paxson from applying his creative vision to the Roland V-Drums he chose to use. The drummer, who in the past has turned a suitcase into a drum and fashioned mannequin hands to hold cymbals, was intent on creating a dynamic visual aesthetic. "My goal was to create what I felt would best serve the gig both sonically and aesthetically," says Paxson. "We went with the Roland TD-50 brain, which is just unbelievable."

Paxson's drum tech, Brent "Panda" Cook, gutted each V-Drum and installed the components inside C&C shells to create the appearance of an acoustic drumset. "For the toms, we deconstructed one 10" PD-108 and two 12" PD-128s and rehoused their mechanisms in C&C shells to act as a rack tom and two floors," says Paxson. "The snare pad is their new PD-140DS digital snare, and we just left it alone. It weighs in at ten pounds and plays like a real drum, including sidestick and rimshots—a total game changer."

The bottom hoops on the toms are black wood and have abalone inlays to match the bass drum. The same Black Ice wrap Paxson acquired from DW for the shells was cut and glued to the front of the 20" bass drum, which isn't actually being struck. "The bass drum playing is actually done via two Roland KT-10 trigger pedals," Paxson explains.

Paxson chose Paiste Color Sound 900 cymbals, plus a few black 2002s, to fit the visual vibe of the kit while also providing the ideal sounds. "Given that the mesh-head kit is practically silent," Jimmy explains, "the slightly lower volume of the Color Sound cymbals served the stage environment quite well, and there was no drum bleed into the live mites."

Jimmy also found that using maple sticks improved his endurance. "I switched to an Innovative Percussion 5A maple," he says. "Hitting a mesh pad for long periods of time definitely feels different from hitting a [Mylar] drumhead. With the maple sticks I had no fatigue."

"There are several reasons I gravitate to electronic drums in live performance," Buckingham tells *Modern Drummer*. "First is the flexibility to tailor the sounds differently according to the needs and personality of each song. A second reason is that electronic pads allow for a much more contained stage. This provides a far more discreet set of source materials for the house engineer, and therefore more potential for a clean, detailed, and punchy live mix."

"I wanted this kit to be a work of art," adds Paxson. "Not only is it a pleasure to play, but it's also a pleasure to take in visually. And that was the goal."

**Interview by Brandy Laurel McKenzie**

**Photos by Jessica Alexander**



**Drums:** Roland V-Drums with C&C shells

- A. 5x14 Roland PD-140DS snare
- B. PD-108-BC 10" pad inside 5x10 C&C tom
- C. PD-128-BC 12" pad inside 5x12 C&C tom
- D. 8x20 C&C prop bass drum

**Electronics:** Roland TD-50 module, KT-10 kick trigger pedals, BT-1 bar trigger pads, JH Audio Roxanne in-ear monitors, Earthworks microphones, Clair Brothers subwoofer, Apple iPad running GigBook app

**Sticks:** Innovative Percussion Legacy Series 5A maple sticks, timpani mallets

**Hardware:** DW 9000 series rack and hi-hat stand, Ahead Spinal-G throne with two Jensen Low Rider seat shakers

**Percussion:** LP 6" triangle and 2" bell, Gon Bops Tumbao cajon

**Cymbals:** Paiste Black Color Sound 900 series

- 1. 16" China
- 2. 10" 2002 splash (black finish)
- 3. 16" Heavy crash with steel rivets
- 4. 6" 2002 Accent (black finish)
- 5. 14" Heavy hi-hats
- 6. 8" 2002 splash (black finish)
- 7. 16" crash
- 8. 20" Heavy ride
- 9. 18" crash
- 10. 18" Heavy crash with steel rivets
- 11. Stack consisting of a 16" Heavy crash (bottom), 14" Twenty Series Thin China (middle), and 12" splash (top)
- 12. 18" crash cut into a spiral using a plasma torch

**Heads:** Roland V-Drum mesh heads on top of snare and toms and Evans MX White resonants, Smooth White EQ3-NP bass drum batter and Black Ice custom front



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# Drum Wisdom

## Dana Hall

The drummer, composer, and director of jazz studies and ethnomusicology at DePaul University is all about seeking out true sources.

by Ken Micallef

**D**ana Hall is a seasoned musician who's manned the drum chair with such distinguished artists as Branford Marsalis, Ray Charles, Roy Hargrove, Joshua Redman, Horace Silver, Michael Brecker, Von Freeman, Nicolas Payton, Kurt Elling, Benny Green, and Frank Wes, among others. He's also been a member of the Terell Stafford Quintet and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. His approach to instruction is varied, deep, and firmly rooted in tradition.

The forty-nine-year-old has instructed students individually, in group settings, and in master classes at DePaul University since 2012. Originally a student of aerospace engineering at Iowa State University, Hall adjusted his sights and earned a jazz studies degree at William Paterson College (later, University). "In 1994, musicians encouraged me to come to Chicago," he tells *MD*. "I earned my masters at DePaul, and then entered the PhD program in ethnomusicology at the University of Chicago. I wanted to merge a professional practice with a teaching practice. In 2004 I got a job at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I taught for eight years there, earned tenure and was promoted to associate professor, and then took a position at DePaul in 2012. I was appointed the director of jazz studies in 2014."

Hall remains vitally active on the performing front. Recently he recorded with bassist Rodney Whitaker, and soon he'll release a new recording with his own group, spring, which features two trumpeter/percussionists and two woodwind players performing his original music, inspired by the chord-less ensembles of Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. Here he shares lessons learned on stage, in the classroom, and at the feet of giants.

**We live in wonderful times.** You can see a ninety-three-year-old Roy Haynes play an incredible solo and with great time, majesty, and mastery. The flipside is that I can ask a student to transcribe a solo, and they'll find it online with someone playing it in crappy fashion, lacking technique, control, dynamics, and musicality. Or a student can download a transcription that's wrong.

Faulty interpretation can become the model. The challenge is to fight through that misinformation, particularly when you're dealing with an oral tradition. When I was learning, I had to ask Keith Copeland or Billy Drummond or Kenny Washington. Or I'd write a letter to Jeff "Tain" Watts. You learned from the person by essentially sitting at his knee, as I did at the Chestnut Cabaret listening to Billy Higgins. You can't get that through a YouTube video.

**To adapt to trio versus big band drumming, I'm always looking at models for success in terms of performance.** The models [for drumming] are on the records. My models are the master musicians who don't approach those musical situations as if they're polar opposites. For example, when you mention playing in a trio and a large ensemble, the drummer who immediately comes to mind is Mel Lewis. He didn't approach playing in the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big band any differently from the way he might play with the Art Pepper + Eleven. He didn't approach a sextet or quintet differently from any other ensemble—he would play with the same level of sophistication, the same dynamic range, and the same dedication to the music.

Now, students might respond by claiming that in a large ensemble you have to play simpler and set up all the figures for the musicians

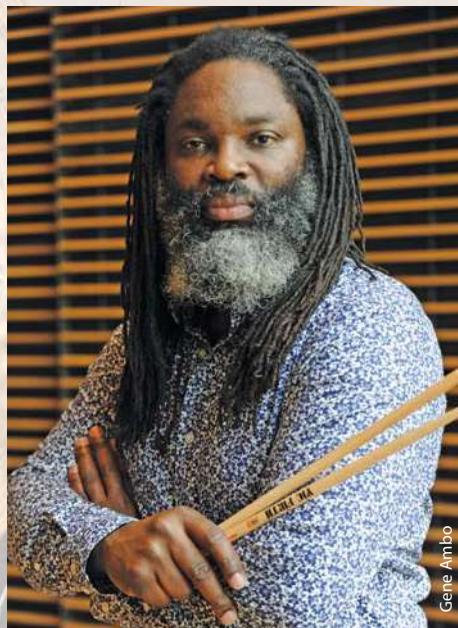
and keep everything in line. You do that in a sophisticated trio as well. In Bill Charlap's trio, Kenny Washington plays ideas that are full of dynamics, ideas that address all the hits, that are guiding and supporting Bill and Peter Washington. He's shaping the music with colors. It's the same thing. Or Jo Jones' trio with the Bryant brothers, or Bud Powell's trio with Max Roach or Roy Haynes. It's the same level of sophistication and approach to the music.

**If you're a drummer in a dance band and the people are dancing, don't change anything you're doing.** It's not important to play a bunch of hip drum stuff, to paraphrase Tony Williams. In a solo, what's important is following a particular thought to its completion.

Dancers are thinking about different ways of articulating. I'm thinking of the Nicholas Brothers or other great tap dancers; they're thinking about density and speed. Or doing a soft shoe where it's more legato. They're sophisticated. They have different levels of engagement in terms of the dance.

You find different ways of moving through a solo to reach its logical conclusion. Be open to exploring them. Dance is about feeling rhythm in nuanced ways. As drummers we are coordinating rhythms, often at simultaneous levels of time. When given a drum solo, we should explore levels of rhythm.

**If you want to learn how to play melodic solos, throw on a solo by Max Roach or Roy Haynes.** You can identify melody immediately. Take Roy's solo on Thelonious Monk's 1958 record *Misterioso*. Play "In Walked Bud," and you can hear how he immediately plays the



Gene Ambo

contours of the melody, the rhythms of the melody.

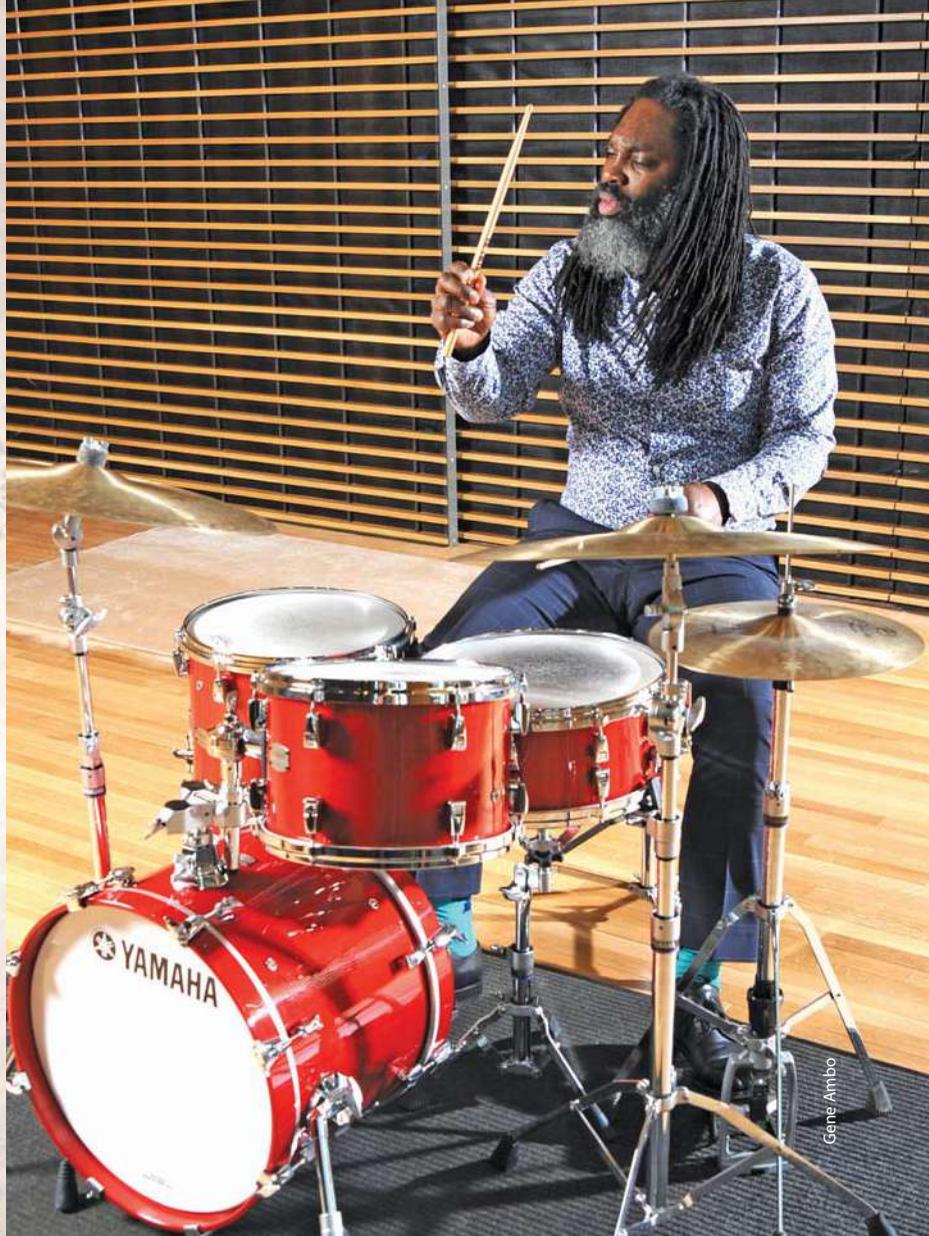
One of the entrance exams for DePaul at the graduate level is to play "Donna Lee" on the drumset. Show me the melody; show me the contours, because in the way you're thinking about the tune, you're not thinking about a drum rudiment—though we will get into that. You're thinking melody, which is the essence of this opportunity to take a drum solo.

**If a student asks how to build snare drum chops, Philly Joe Jones and Kenny Washington are a couple of my models.** We deal with Charley Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos* or Anthony Cirone's *Portraits in Rhythm*, among other sources. Cirone has different elements that address dynamics, phrasing, and using space. Wilcoxon is all rudimental solos; there are ways to explore those rhythms in a unified space. Then, you hear Philly Joe swinging them around the drumset. Find ways to manipulate them, invert the rhythms, take a little of this solo, of that solo, and play them on the snare drum and the drumset. We get into how particular Wilcoxon language appears in Philly Joe's solo on "Pot Luck" by Wynton Kelly, for example. Then the student realizes they need to have good hands to express their ideas, regarding the vocabulary.

**In my ethnomusicology classes we look at improvisational cultures around the world and subjects topical to areas of my own specialization.** I look especially at soul and jazz music, the African diasporic musics in America. Take soul music in Philadelphia: what makes soul music in late-'60s/early-'70s Philadelphia distinct from soul music in Detroit or Memphis or Muscle Shoals? Are those differences only sonic, or also rhythmic? How does the rhythm section function in those ensembles? Are those ensembles augmented by singers or other European classical music influences? Is there a spirit of improvisation?

**What makes my teaching approach unique relative to my contemporaries?** Rhythmically, we're all trying to do the same thing. What are the avenues for that? If we're talking about playing contemporary rhythms and ideas, and exploring a creative mindset, maybe Mark Guiliana's materials are good for that. If you want to develop comping ideas and move beyond someone like the great Art Taylor—maybe you want something more visual in your approach to learning—try some of John Riley's material. Method books are helpful. I also devise my own ways of transcribing ideas for my students.

**In my DePaul classes, every student gets an hour-long private lesson every week.** In master classes students perform transcriptions or a topic I assign, or they bring materials that we illuminate. Topics in master classes include fundamental ideas for creating solos, comping, critical listening, repertoire, and rhythm section techniques. In a jazz context I'll talk about playing melodically, developing themes, looking at motifs—rhythmic or melodic—about the relationship between drums and dancing, and about developing different ways of creating motion on the instrument.



Gene Ambo

**I'm not crazy about the Moeller method.** I think many students get hung up on technique as a concept rather than how playing music should feel and sound. If a technique doesn't feel and sound good, and doesn't have a practical application to a particular musical genre, I try to get my students to move away from labels and names and techniques and get to *the sound and feel*.

I've had lessons with Dom Famularo and discussed the ideas of Freddie Gruber. I look at the different touch on the kit of Max Roach and Billy Higgins and Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones; they weren't thinking about Moeller technique. It's not about the name of a method. It's about, What is the stroke and what is the motion? What are the mechanics of getting a fluid sound that feels like water, that has buoyancy and isn't stiff? I think you have to acknowledge technology...that recordings provide us with first-person resources... that method books can be helpful to visualize ideas that I'm orally transmitting.

Whatever I ask the students to do, I'm also doing. We're using contemporary and historic models, and we're linking the past and the future.

**Hall plays Yamaha drums and Zildjian cymbals, and uses Remo heads and Vic Firth sticks, mallets, and brushes.**



# Eric Moore and Michael Cavanagh

Last month we interviewed drummer **Marian Li-Pino** of the SoCal indie-surf rock band La Luz, who recently toured Australia alongside that country's progressive psych ensemble **King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard**. Marian, the good sport that she is, agreed to put on her journalist cap and report back on what drives this unlikely double-drummer-powered group.

**E**ric Moore and Michael Cavanagh have known each other since they were in their teens, playing in nurturing musical communities before finding success in the ornately technical and mosh invoking seven-piece Melbourne outfit King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard. Given the band's baffling album release pace (five were released in 2017 alone) and their penchant for odd meters and blazing tempos, it's difficult to imagine how one drummer can keep it all straight—much less two. Watching the drummers face off behind matching white C&C kits, devoid of flammings or lagging, one has to know: How do these guys do it?

**Marian:** Let's start with the fact that the band has two drummers. How did that come about?

**Eric:** When we started the band, Cavs [Michael Cavanagh] was the drummer and I was managing them. It was like a party band with basically all our friends playing, [and] I was doing percussion. As the songs got more evolved and better, I started drumming as well.

**Marian:** You've recorded a ton of complex material in the last year, which I imagine would take a lot of preparation. How long do you have with the material before it's recorded? Do both of you record at once?

**Eric:** Cavs mainly does the recorded drums. Even this last year when there have been double drums on albums, Cavs will record the initial track and then overdub his take.

**Michael:** We don't ever revisit anything that much, apart from the album we just released, *Polygondwanaland*. On some of the songs on that one we went over things three or four times. But mainly we all just jam.

**Eric:** It's pretty quick. These guys are pretty insane at getting shit down. They rehearse as a three-piece and then nail a track in a couple of takes and move on.

**Marian:** Eric, for the live shows, how much time do you have with the material before you have to play it out?

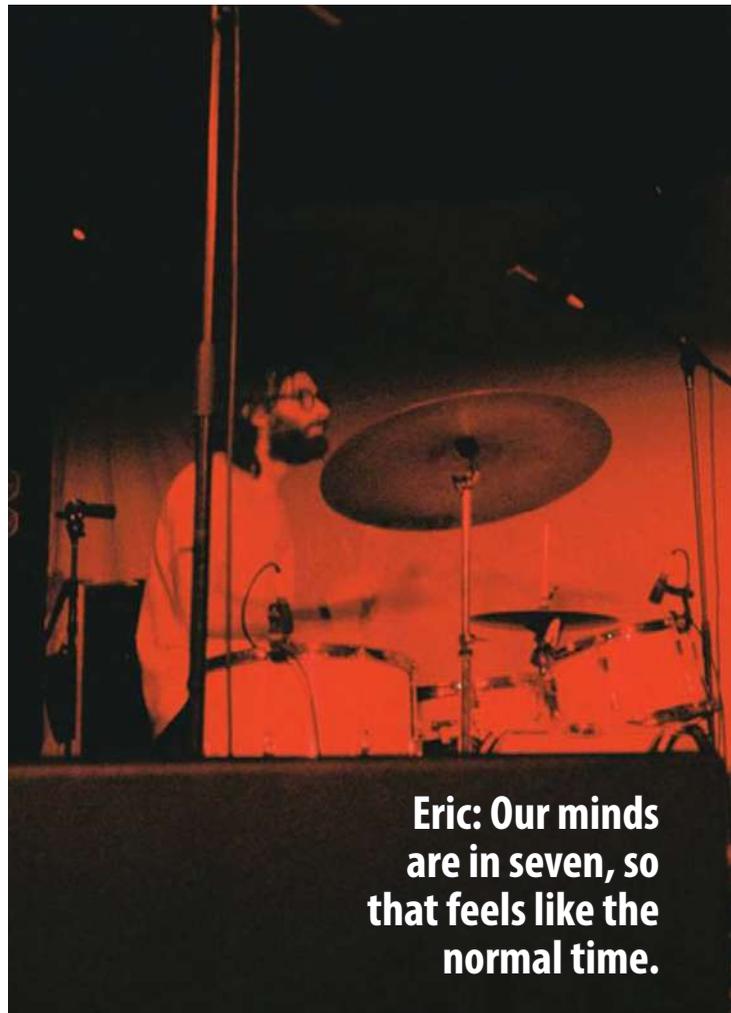
**Eric:** It's usually pretty last-minute. Half the time it's stuff that's fully recorded and formed before I even drum on it, so I listen to it as a song and get to know the structure. When we start rehearsing for a tour I just jump in and try to get it together.

**Marian:** That's insane! Do you two at least get to spend time together going through parts?

**Michael:** Not really, but that would be cool! [laughs] Most of our

practice is during soundcheck. We're like, "We want to try to do this song from this album." We've never played it before, but we'll run it in soundcheck over five or six nights, and when we're ready we'll play it. We haven't had that much time to rehearse at all this year.

**Marian:** Have your styles blended together over time? What are some issues you run into when playing in tandem?



**Eric: Our minds are in seven, so that feels like the normal time.**

**Eric:** I think I've definitely adapted to Cavs. We've been playing together for so long, I feel like I know what fill he's going to do. A lot of it's memory, and live it's definitely a visual thing. If I can't see him, it's pretty hard to play together. If we hear each other, it's real bad—like if we hear each other's kick it throws us off, because you think it's you but then it's out of time and you're like, "What's that sound?"

**Michael:** Yeah, we don't have each other in the monitor, or else it just throws us off.

**Eric:** Strobes just kill us, they always put them on in the worst and hardest moment in a song.

**Marian:** Your music is often in an odd time or has complex rhythmic approaches. I'm thinking of "Crumbling Castle" in particular. What's the toughest song for you guys to sync up to, or is that not an issue anymore?

**Michael:** It's definitely become less of a thing the more we've been playing. We've been doing all this weird time signature stuff for a while now. Playing in 4/4 now is kind of hard.

**Eric:** We were talking about this the other day—our minds are in seven, so that feels like the normal time. 4/4 feels weird.

But I remember a huge change or shift was definitely [2016's] *Nonagon Infinity*—learning the stuff live was like, *Holy shit, I've got to get better*. For me, the endurance thing of having to do 16ths the whole show was, like, impossible. I definitely struggled in the first couple tours, but then you just get better from touring, I guess.

**Marian:** During the song "Nuclear Fusion," I noticed that, Eric, you

## Tools of the Trade

Eric Moore and Michael Cavanagh both play four-piece C&C custom kits in white vintage gloss finish. Eric's features an 8x13 tom, a 15x16 floor tom, and a 14x20 bass drum; his snare is a 5x14 Ludwig Classic Maple in white marine pearl finish. Michael's kit features a 9x13 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x20 bass drum; his snare is a 1976 5x14 Ludwig Acrolite. Eric plays Zildjian 15" vintage hi-hats and a Dream 22" thin crash/ride, while Michael plays Zildjian 14" New Beats hi-hats, a Dream 22" Energy ride, and a Dream 22" Bliss crash/ride. Both drummers use Dixon stands, DW 5000 bass drum pedals (Michael's with a Vater Vintage Bomber beater), and Vic Firth sticks (Eric: 7A sticks and 5A mallets, Michael: 5A sticks).

hold down the 8th notes on the hi-hat, and Michael, you play the off beats. Are you going in a direction where more of this type playing will happen?

**Michael:** Yeah, we do that in a bunch of songs. There's another song, "Altered Beast Part IV," where we do that as well. It's really hard; it's probably one of the hardest things. "Nuclear Fusion" is slower....

**Eric:** ...and that was real hard as well. I always make Cavs play the inside out [off] beats, and I play straight. [laughs]

**Michael:** It's real fun but it's also really scary when it's coming up in a set.

**Eric:** When everything's sounding good on stage and you're playing

well, it's real sick. When you know it's like, rocking. But half the time it sounds really shit and you don't know what's going on. It's real stressful. [laughs]

**Marian:** When did you guys start experimenting with that?

**Michael:** It was a recording thing when we were doing [2017's] *Flying Microtonal Banana*. Stu [Mackenzie, King Gizzard's primary songwriter] had the idea that he wanted to pan the hi-hats hard left and right, so I did one kit normal and the second with the offbeats. It ended up sounding real sick in headphones, so it's an ongoing thing I've done for recordings and stuff.

**Eric:** That's the type of thing that we have to practice more. "Nuclear Fusion" [from *Flying Microtonal Banana*] definitely took a long time to get down—or, not a long time, but it took a bit more [effort]. And so then "Altered" [the nine-song suite of songs that appears on 2017's *Murder of the Universe*]—that was pretty hard.

**Michael:** We don't really rehearse that much, but when we do, we tend to just rehearse those bits. [laughs]



**Michael:** We've been doing all this weird time signature stuff for a while. Playing in 4/4 now is kind of hard.





# Mastodon's Brann Dailor Conformity Be Damned!

The last time we spoke to this month's cover star, Mastodon was putting the final touches on its latest studio album, *Emperor of Sand*. Since then the group has been romping across North America in support of the release, including a current run with Primus and upcoming dates with Dinosaur Jr. No, those aren't typical tour partners for a metal band. But anyone who knows Mastodon also knows that they haven't risen to the top of the rock heap by following the heavy metal handbook. Taking a short and much-deserved respite in Florida before heading off to Australia for the Download festival, their self-professed "outsider" drummer fills us in on these and other unpredicted events.

Call them metal, call them hard rock, call them prog.... One thing's for sure, none of those labels do the Atlanta-based band Mastodon justice. Mastodon are welcome interlopers who, after nearly twenty years, have morphed and blossomed into makers of a sound that is truly their own.

Drummer Brann Dailor is an integral part of this equation, bringing an atypical style of drumming to heavy music. Instead of using the bombastic low-end assault commonly associated with many forms of heavy drumming, Dailor employs a dynamic approach, relying more on a constant stream of ghost notes and fluidity in his hands to drive the band.

Mastodon's debut album, 2002's *Remission*, was a brutal onslaught of feverish instrumental intensity and guttural screams, with Dailor filling much of the space with blistering single strokes and hairtas. Since then the band has made massive creative leaps. While they've continually explored space, groove, and vocal melody, the men of Mastodon—Dailor, singer/bassist Troy Sanders, rhythm guitarist Bill

Kelliher, and singer/lead guitarist Brent Hinds—have never strayed from their natural tendencies to deliver the unexpected, and always via fierce musicianship.

And to be sure, nearly every Mastodon song features some surprising twist. This strategy can be risky, especially for a group like theirs that's risen through the ranks of metaldom, where the fear of alienating fans is often front-of-mind. But for Mastodon it's all about the here and now. It's a worldview that's made them heroes in the metal community and earned them respect outside the genre, including words of praise from the members of Queens of the Stone Age, Foo Fighters, Metallica, Iron Maiden, Rush, Tool, Dethklok, and Primus. And this past year their appeal has proven even more far-reaching than that. Since 2007 the group had been nominated for a Grammy award four times, and this year brought their first win, for the song "Sultan's Curse" from the critically acclaimed *Emperor of Sand*.

Could it be that the world has finally figured out what to make of Mastodon?

Interview by David Ciauro

Photos by Shay La'vee

## Outsider Art

**MD:** Where do you feel Mastodon falls in the realm of heavy metal?

**Brann:** We're an outsider band because we're really not rooted in any particular scene. We probably shouldn't be as popular as we are. We're kind of a gray-area band that floats between genres, and we're weird just being ourselves.

Heavy metal isn't really well represented at the Grammys, because they lump together all the subgenres of heavy music. It's a pretty healthy genre. So many bands have sprouted off of that main Black Sabbath tree, and [there are] so many talented musicians and incredible drummers.

Nobody I know is writing music to win a Grammy, especially not in heavy metal. If anyone in metal is—they're not doing it right! It's not like the Olympics, where athletes have a specific goal of winning the gold. It just comes down to writing riffs, having fun, and putting everything you have emotionally into it.

**MD:** Mastodon maintains genuineness *because* your roots aren't firmly planted in one sound. You seem more interested in what's happening at the present time, which speaks to how the band has continued to evolve.

**Brann:** We get bored of ourselves, and we like so many styles of music that we never want to give up an opportunity to represent one of those styles, whether it be Mahavishnu Orchestra or George Jones. We're not handcuffing ourselves to one style. If we like it, we go with it. We don't try to overanalyze and consider what fans might say or how they'd react, so we keep blinders on in that regard—if you don't do that, you sacrifice the honesty in your music.

For a lot of heavy metal fans—and I was like this too when I was younger—it's very important for the band you like to always be heavy. Heavy is just the place where we started as kids. The gang I belonged to in high school all had the long hair and jean jackets and worshipped Metallica, Iron Maiden, and Judas Priest. But as I got older, I embraced different kinds of music and wanted to incorporate that into whatever I was doing musically. For example, when I met Troy and Brent, they liked all this old country music that I was never exposed to as a kid. Growing up in upstate New York, I was firmly planted in the *no country music at all, ever* mindset, and what I did hear of it back then just didn't do anything for me. Now it makes sense to me and I like it.

**MD:** Mastodon albums have always been dense in terms of the number of notes and new ideas presented in a song. The early records like *Remission* were an earful. As the band has matured and progressed, the records have become even denser, but in a more considered and layered way. It can take several listens in order to fully grasp and appreciate what you're hearing.

**Brann:** Yeah, I understand that. I've definitely had that reaction when I've listened to some old prog or fusion records. For me, it's always been about playing busy, but over the years I've toned it down in certain places because to my ears now that's what feels right. I know that as a listener some music may seem crazy, but when you're the one creating it, it doesn't seem that way. We've been playing together for so long now that none of it sounds crazy.

## Puzzling It All Together

**MD:** Has a main idea for a song ever ended up being less central to the composition as the song evolved?

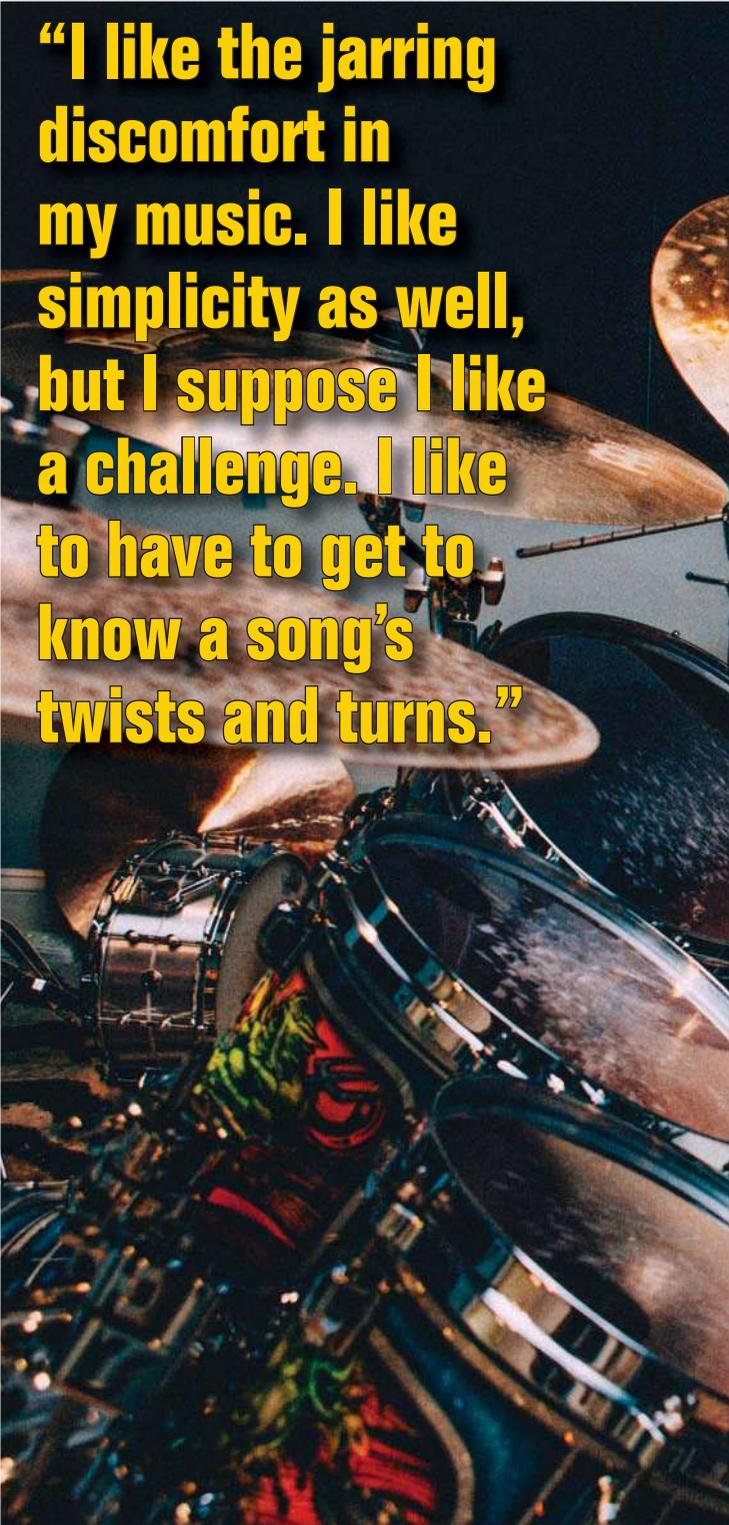
**Brann:** "Ember City" off of *Once More 'Round the Sun* has a riff in the middle that we jammed for a long time, thinking it was going to be the meat of the song, but it ended up being this short bridge. Sometimes what you think will be a focal point ends up as a momentary thing.

**MD:** Your latest single, "Toe to Toes," which also appears on the *Cold*

*Dark Place* EP, has great transitions and unexpected tempo shifts.

**Brann:** "Toe to Toes" took a full day of getting frustrated and working through the parts until it made sense. There are a bunch of riffs and feels in that tune.

I always enjoyed the puzzle of writing music, especially in the realm of prog. You can get weird with it and present something with a lot of parts that shouldn't naturally make sense together, but you can use the drums to help fuse parts. Some songs defy the odds of parts going together, but it's up to you to figure out how to



**"I like the jarring discomfort in my music. I like simplicity as well, but I suppose I like a challenge. I like to have to get to know a song's twists and turns."**

make contrasting parts and feels go together and somehow sound natural. It might be jarring for some people. Not everyone likes to be surprised when listening to music. They want steady beats. They don't want to think, *Wait, what's happening now?* [laughs] But I like the jarring discomfort in my music. I like simplicity as well, but I suppose as a player and a listener I like a challenge. I like to have to get to know a song's twists and turns.

**MD:** "Steambreather" from *Emperor of Sand* and "Blue Walsh" from *Cold Dark Place* both have deep pocket grooves. As the band has

progressively focused on vocal melodies, has singing changed how you think about your parts?

**Brann:** We choose who sings based on the sound of our voices, and whether Troy, Brent, or my voice will sound best for the part. The times when I'm singing tend to call for more straightforward drum parts. There's a song on *Once More 'Round the Sun* called "Aunt Lisa" that was really complicated for me to sing, so live I had to dial down some of the fills so I could sing it.

**MD:** How long did it take you to track *Emperor of Sand*?



**Brann:** It took me about four days, once we got the drum sounds. By the time we get into the studio, I've been playing these songs for so long, and I've put in the time to really know my parts. I go in and try to record like I'm playing a set. I pride myself on being able to play my parts start to finish, so I get as many versions as I can of me playing the full song. I don't like to rely on ProTools to comp parts. Though it does afford you some freedom while recording to go for it once in a while, instead of worrying about playing it safe because you want to make it to the end of the song without messing up.

**MD:** Going back to what you said earlier, it makes you appreciate all those old prog and fusion records even more knowing that was all recorded to tape.

## Q How do drums fit into your life when you have downtime?

**A** Sometimes I'm working on some new technique. Other times I'm working on songs I have to learn. Then there's free-for-all time that has no boundaries—it's important that I allow myself to go there once in a while too.



**Brann:** Yeah, right. Man up! Those guys were crushing it, playing the craziest stuff, and they weren't editing anything. Makes me think, *Do it, Dailor!* [laughs]

## Love You Live

**MD:** I've seen every tour since *Blood Mountain*, and the front-of-house mix sounds better than ever. Unless my ears were deceiving me, I was hearing some percussive elements like tambourines. Do you have a trigger on your snare to layer sounds?

**Brann:** Yes and no. I don't use triggers, but I really wanted to include the tambourine and some of the percussive elements I'd done in the studio because they were pretty prominent in the mix. Instead of using triggers or bringing a keyboard player on tour, we brought Bill's sampler pedal. We won't ever use the sampler for vocals or guitars, it's just for keyboard parts or percussion parts. There weren't enough percussion or keyboard parts to warrant bringing more people on tour with us right now. If we do get even more fusion/prog-influenced down the road and get more keyboard stuff going on, we may have to bring someone else on board.

Most of the keyboard work on *Emperor of Sand* was played by one of us or [producer] Brendan O'Brien. We wanted to bring those noises with us on the road, so I play to a click for those songs, and we sample those elements. We have our high moral standard of never trying to fool the audience with fake vocals being run, though. I think that's pretty obvious at certain points with us. [laughs] We're not the greatest singers. If our vocals were super pristine, people would know we're up to some funny business.

We have a great sound guy named Rob Lightner. We've gone through a lot of front-of-house people, and when you find one that's super talented, you need to do everything in your power to hold on to them. Rob's always trying to get better too. He cares deeply about his job and about the band. Between Rob and our front-of-house light guy, Mike Howe, who runs all the visuals, they're a dream team. They're always working together to make a better show. It's integral for a band to have people like that working with them to present the best live show possible. I always defer to Rob when it comes to my drum selection too. He loves drums and loves toms to be really loud and crystal clear in the mix. When I finally settled on the Tama Bubinga Birch drums, he told me I could never get rid of them because they sounded so good.

**MD:** Your kit sounded fantastic: lots of clarity, but still a very natural tone.

**Brann:** I've always taken a more '70s rock approach to drumming as far as sound and style. Marshall stacks began to take over, but all the drummers still had their left foot and snare hand rooted in jazz and big band. Guys like Billy Cobham were at the helm, playing with tons of raw power, but still having a jazz sensibility, playing over the bar and adding cool fills. Then there's people like Ginger Baker and Bill Ward, who were obviously at the start of hard rock and heavy metal, so they couldn't have had any influences in a genre that hadn't been created yet. They were creating the sound and style that *became* the genre.

## Emperor of Sound

**MD:** Your drums always sound natural in the studio too, which is counter to current trends in drum production in heavier music. What gear did you use to get your sounds for *Emperor of Sand*?

**Brann:** I mentioned last time we spoke that Heart's "*Barracuda*" was the inspiration for my drum sound on *Emperor of Sand*, and for *The Hunter* it was *Duke* by Genesis. For every album there's usually a sound I hear that's what I want to go for. But I never want to go full-on vintage and try to truly replicate old sounds; I simply want



to give the producers and engineers a focal point for the drum aesthetic of the album. [This time] I wanted it to be punchy and up in the mix, but still natural.

For the recording I used a Frankenstein kit. I love Tama, but when I get into the studio, there's usually nothing I won't use to try to obtain the best sound for the record. Especially when you're working with someone like Brendan, who's not at all concerned with endorsements. His philosophy is, *This process isn't going to go well if you're only going to let me use the gear you use live*. He knows what gear is going to work best from a recording standpoint, so I defer to him because that's his area of expertise. Plus, I'm *into* doing that. It's exciting to go in to the studio and play around with all this gear. I own twenty or more snare drums that I never play live, so I want to get a chance to try them out in the studio.

The primary snare on *Emperor of Sand* was a 6.5x14 Dunnett Classic Titanium. I also used a Dunnett 2N snare—I believe on "Show Yourself"—but we tried a bunch of different snares and recorded a few songs, and we seemed to come back to the Titanium almost every time. The toms were Fibes maple drums from '91 or '92, which I used on *Crack the Skye*. Brendan specifically asked me to bring those along. And we used a Tama Bubinga Birch floor tom, as well as old Gretsch and Slingerland kick drums, I believe both from the early '70s.

The cymbals were all Meinls. I used the Benny Greb Sand ride for a lot of the songs, my Ghost ride for a couple songs, and a lot of Byzance Vintage models as well. The darker, sandy stuff really seemed to work well for the vibe of these songs.

## Black Light Beauties: Dailor's Live Setup

**MD:** You just got a new tour kit, which looks insane. Tell us about what inspired its design.

**Brann:** Well, it's obviously a Tama Bubinga Birch kit, or else Rob Lightner would have killed me. [laughs] The artwork is inspired by old blacklight posters from the '70s. One tom has the grim reaper, another has a Medusa head with snakes, another has a wizard with a staff commanding a seven-headed hydra monster, and the next one has the kraken from *Clash of the Titans* riding a chopper. And the kick drum has giant cobras and skulls and a girl with Attila the Hun and a black panther. All the paint is blacklight sensitive, but it's all on automotive sparkle flake as well; that surrounds the blacklight paint, so it looks like an old van or motorcycle tank from the '70s. My drum riser will be surrounded by blacklights, so at certain points in the show I can turn them on and let the kit do its thing!

**Drums:** Tama Starclassic Bubinga Birch custom painted by famed San Francisco artist "Dirty" Donny Gillies

- 6.5x14 Starphonic snare
- 8x10 tom
- 9x12 tom
- 10x13 tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 18x22 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Meinl

- 15" Pure Alloy hi-hats
- 18" Byzance Vintage crash
- 20" Byzance Jazz Medium Thin crash
- 22" Byzance Jazz China ride
- 21" Ghost ride

**Hardware:** Tama, including an Iron Cobra double pedal

**Sticks:** Vater American Hickory 5B wood-tip

**Heads:** Evans, including G2 Clear batters and G1 Clear resonants and an EQ4 bass drum batter

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## Brann Dailor

### Of Setlists and Speed Trials

**MD:** Will you be playing anything from *Cold Dark Place* on the next leg of the tour?

**Brann:** We'll do "Toe to Toes" for sure—we've got that pretty well worked up at the moment. We've got a lot of songs now. I think we've written over a hundred songs as a band. We've been trying to have more of them in our [sets], and on the Primus tour we're hoping to have two different sets so we can switch songs out. We've done tours where we'll add a song or take one out, but this tour is two solid months, so in order to keep everyone sane, we need to change it up.

**MD:** When you have such a deep catalogue to choose from, how much planning is required in regards to letting your front-of-house crew know what's coming, since you do have three lead vocalists and a ton of song-specific visuals?

repetitively, it can happen. It's something that I've definitely improved at over time. When I was younger I'd blow through songs and just have no idea. But now I've calmed down and I'm more aware. When I feel like a song is slow, I'll know that I'm likely fine and that the song is at a nice relaxed tempo.

### Extra Credits

**MD:** How did your synth-metal band Arcadea come about? You released your self-titled debut album last summer; do you plan on doing any live shows?

**Brann:** I did the album with my buddy Core [Atoms]. We grew up together in Rochester and played in the band Gaylord together. He moved to Atlanta eight or nine years ago, and about three years ago he told me he'd written some songs on a microKORG



**Brann:** The lighting guy has every song programmed, so we can't just start calling audibles on stage like we're Bob Dylan or something. The videos aren't a hundred percent synced up, because I don't play to a click for every song, but we're pretty consistent every night.

**MD:** Do you ever listen back to shows to compare the songs that are to a click against those that aren't?

**Brann:** Some nights the non-click songs may be a bit faster. Sometimes at the end of a tour, my tempo perception gets a bit off, and I'll listen back and be shocked at how fast I played a song. Usually I'll remember thinking that while we were playing it, it actually felt slow. It's a strange mind thing that happens with drummers. I'm not sure it happens much with guitarists, but we drummers sometimes get speedy. The downside, of course, is that the songs tend to lose the pocket that needs to be there. But when you do something so

synthesizer but didn't know what to do with them. I dug them and added my thing to them, and the album is what that sounds like. Mastodon is obviously my main focus, but I would love to do some Arcadea shows one day.

**MD:** You've also spent some of your downtime filling in for Fred Armisen on *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. How did that opportunity come about?

**Brann:** I've done that three times now. Fred is the drummer of the 8G Band, but he's often off doing a multitude of projects, so they started getting fill-ins. I think they had Jon Theodore a couple of times; he may have been one of the first drummers to do it. One of the producers of the show, Eric Leiderman, started reaching out to some other drummers he dug, and it's kind of become a thing.

I was pretty nervous to do it the first time, so I called Jon for some advice and he



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## Brann Dailor

said that it's so much fun. You go in to NBC each day around noon, meet in this small room with people in the band, and write five or six pieces of music that you'll play on the show that night, which are for the walk-on segments when someone gets introduced by Seth. So when they write these pieces of music, they record them too, and they'll play a little bit for you in your ears right before the guest is announced so you know what to play and you don't have to worry about memorizing anything. Each piece is only about ten seconds long. The only tricky thing is the timing when the guest sits down. There's a sweet spot where you want to end, which is about one second after they sit down. You don't want to end before they sit, and you don't want to still be at the beginning of a bar just as they sit so now they're waiting for you to finish. That's totally awkward. But you need to always end on the 1, and end with some form of fill, so you have to be very attentive.

**MD:** How do drums fit in to your life when you have downtime?

**Brann:** The longest I ever want to go [without playing] is about a week and a half. Then I get antsy and just need to play the drums. I don't feel right. I get disjointed and depressed, and I don't like that feeling. I'm in Florida right now, still celebrating from the Grammys. I play just about every day, even if it's just on a pad. My kit is in my basement back home.

I'll start each morning by grabbing some coffee and heading to the basement for a few hours. If I happen to have a long time until I have to be doing Mastodon stuff again, I simply try to learn stuff I can't play, whether it be some jazz technique or a song I always wanted to learn how to play. With YouTube now, it's great because there are so many incredible drummers giving free lessons, so I take advantage of that. There's always something to learn.

I have different modes. Sometimes I'm working on some new

technique, and that's very focused. Other times I'm working on songs I have to learn [to record] or play live. Then there's free-for-all time that has no boundaries, like a little kid that doesn't have a band and doesn't care about playing music more than just playing for the love of the drums. It's important that I allow myself to go there once in a while too.

If I'm getting ready for a tour, it's more about conditioning, and I'll play for two or three hours straight as hard, fast, and heavy as I can so that my stamina is way past what I'll ever need for a show. However, no matter how hard I try, I can never seem to bring the intensity level in my basement to that of a live show. There's something about being in front of an audience.

**MD:** I've seen videos of you practicing in your rehearsal space both alone and with the band, and you're able to play your parts rather quietly without losing your intensity. Is that an intentional part of your practice routine?

**Brann:** When I'm working on something that's new to me, I always want to build toward something. So I start quiet and keep it like that for a long time. For example, I'll work on quads or triplets and start really quietly until I can build these dynamic swells and be able to fully control them. Then when I get comfortable, I'll start moving them around the kit. Those dynamic swells remind me of the ocean. I concentrate a lot on transitions and creating crescendos. In Mastodon, it's up to me to bring all those riffs to life, and it's up to me to create transitions and crescendos that allow the songs to move and work and pop where they need to.

## Affirmation

**MD:** What did winning a Grammy mean for the band?

**Brann:** We'd been nominated three times prior, starting back in

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## Brann Dailor

2007 for "Colony of Birchmen" off our *Blood Mountain* album. That was a huge shock!

At that point in time, the Grammys were the furthest thing from our minds. We were on tour in Europe with Tool, who'd also been nominated that year, when the first nomination was announced. I had the flu, so after we'd played our set, I went right back to our bus to sleep. I remember waking up to a hand reaching into my bunk clutching this little Nokia phone and saying, "Brann, it's *Rolling Stone*—they want to get your reaction to being nominated for your first Grammy!" I think I said, "I'm really sick...but that's cool!" That was certainly a thrilling moment for us

as a band. We went to the awards that year, but we lost to Slayer.

I guess winning meant more to me than I thought, because this time, when they announced, "Sultan's Curse"—Mastodon!—it was totally shocking. I can't really explain the feeling. I knew the words they were saying, and it all sounded familiar, but it still took a moment to register. It seemed like an unattainable thing. It's definitely turned into being about much more than winning for one song. That's what gets nominated, one song. But the way we look at it is like, this is for twenty years of scraping and clawing our way through the metal scene to get to where



we are today.

**MD:** The Grammy is symbolic of the journey. But you said at the beginning of this interview that receiving one was never the goal.

**Brann:** Our goal has always been the same: to make ourselves happy with the music we write and feed our primal need for honest artistic expression through music. We'll always be excited about what we've accomplished, but also looking forward to what's coming next. We want to be as thoughtful and inventive as we can, push ourselves as musicians and elevate our friendships, pay homage to our loved ones that have either fallen or can't enjoy the fruits of life as they want to, and just try to write music that means the world to us and then share it with our fans.

Getting the Grammy was validation for all of our work over our career, and even for my grandparents and parents who were musicians before me. For me, it all hit too, because the awards ceremony was on my sister Skye's birthday, and she passed away when she was fourteen. When I told my mom about the nomination and she found out the Grammys were on Skye's birthday, she said, "Oh, you're going to win!" I don't really believe in that kind of stuff, but it made me think of her. Every tragedy that anyone in the band has ever faced has manifested itself in a Mastodon song or lyric. Our collective trials and tribulations are wrapped up in them, so winning that Grammy was a huge thing for everybody.

Mastodon is like a rose garden, and every song is a different rose that we've been caring for for twenty years. But for some reason this one rose, "Sultan's Curse," is the one that's had the Grammy bestowed upon it. But that rose symbolizes all the roses in the garden. It's for all the beautiful roses we grew together. The garden is still there, and there are new plants and bushes, and new buds that are appearing, and we're going to continue to tend to those and make them as beautiful as possible and add them to the collection.



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# Mark Colenburg

The jazz and hip-hop drumming ace adds a new book and live DVD to an ever-growing list of recording, touring, and publishing credits. Here we get a glimpse into his surprising journey.

Story by Willie Rose

Photos courtesy of Hudson Music

Mark Colenburg sat in a St. Louis church congregation with his family—around the age of two or three, by his recollection—fascinated by his cousin's playing behind the kit during a service. "I was in the audience, and I wanted to go up there and play," he explains. "Someone walked me up to the stage, and I was sitting next to the drums. I was super excited. My cousin put me on his lap and had me hold the sticks. He kind of guided me, and I played the song. And I thought, *I can't believe I'm doing this. I'm the drummer, and I'm playing right now.* After the song was over, he sat me down on a chair next to him. And I was just on cloud *one hundred* because he let me play. From that point on, I was gone."

It might be hard imagining, or flat-out remembering, where we were as drummers around the age of two or three years old. But Colenburg's experience—and curiously, his passion for a specific instrument as a toddler—started him down a path that would include jazz tutelage at New York City's New School university, a breakout touring gig with the hip-hop artist Common, and numerous recording credits with established rap and R&B artists such as Maxwell, Q-Tip, and A Tribe Called Quest, among others. The drummer has also toured and recorded with the Robert Glasper Experiment, appearing on the genre-pushing, crossover-jazz group's *ArtScience* and *Black Radio 2* records and a 2018 DVD compilation of select international performances, *Robert Glasper Experiment: Live*. Most recently, Colenburg released his first educational book and video package, *The Beat Matrix Unlocked*, which offers his perspective on modern hip-hop and R&B drumming. Considering the drummer's enviable feel—which treads between a Roy Haynes- and Elvin Jones-inspired swing and the dirty, lilting drum patterns you might find on a J Dilla or

D'Angelo record—it's no wonder his work is in demand on stage, in the studio, and in the shed.

Colenburg grew up in St. Louis, and he sang and played violin and saxophone in school music programs while maintaining his drumming passion in church. Once drums became available to him in his eighth-grade program, his opportunities burgeoned. "I did everything I could get my hands on," Colenburg says. "I did jazz band, concert band, symphonic band, marching band, drum corps, and All-Suburban and All-State competitions. I actually won All-Suburban and All-State. I was all the way in."

While steadily ingesting a diet of gospel drumming game-changers including Gerald Hayward, Michael Williams, Mario Winans, and Joel Smith, a curiosity bloomed that would eventually lead Colenburg to jazz. "I wanted to learn more about the sound I heard," he explains. "When I heard Joel Smith and Mike Williams play rolls on the hi-hat, I was trying to figure out their sound and technique and where they got it from. Everything I'd already learned, I had gotten from somebody else. So where were *they* getting it from? That thought process led me to drum corps.

"But it wasn't enough," Mark continues. "Drum corps was so orchestrated. I thought, *Music can't just be that, because that doesn't help me learn how to make decisions.* So it led me to jazz. Jazz drummers would be playing something, and then suddenly they'll do some slick roll or pattern. So I went through those channels in school, and once I got to eighth grade, that's when I really transitioned from a gospel guy to a full-fledged jazz player. In my mind, I was *supposed* to be a jazz musician. And that's what I eventually went to New York to strictly do."

We pick up with Colenburg as he explains his transition from New York-based jazz hopeful to hip-hop guru.



**MD:** In New York, how did you break into the professional world?

**Mark:** It was happening while I was at the New School. Everybody was there—Robert Glasper, Casey Benjamin, Keyon Harrold, Marcus Strickland, E.J. Strickland.... It was just a huge hang. But I was doing gigs here and there and was working too.

But starting off, I didn't work with any "names." It just went from doing these gigs, and then my first big break was the Common tour. That was out of left field for me. At that time, I'd heard hip-hop and was familiar with the music. But I'd never played it on the drums.

**MD:** Wait, what?

**Mark:** Yeah, I'd never played any hip-hop or played for a rapper. I never did *anything* like that. When I got to New York—and keep in mind that my history was playing for church—jazz was everything to me, and I even went through this fusion period. I wasn't just limiting it to a straight-ahead style. I was open to whatever—the Chick Corea Elektric Band, Vinnie Colaiuta, John Scofield...anything.

So when I got to New York, at the time there was a thing where if you play anything but straight-ahead, the jazz scene didn't validate you. They didn't look at you as being a valid jazz drummer.

**MD:** Around what year was this?

**Mark:** It was in the early 2000s. But that mentality still hovers to a certain degree today. It feels like if you're not playing with the "jazz cats" and swinging, the jazz heads would still have that attitude.

But around the early 2000s, that attitude was even stronger. So I wasn't trying to showcase my [gospel] side then. But people heard me and said, "He can play other stuff. He doesn't just play jazz." So people were asking me to play some other jungle or groove music. And I didn't know that they were even thinking about hip-hop. The New School also had a gospel choir for a season, and I played in that. And it was the younger people who were hyped about the other music outside of jazz.

So because of that, when Common was looking for a drummer, there were a lot of people in the scene that said, "You should call

## Colenburg's Setup

### Drums: Yamaha Recording

- Custom
- 5.5x14 snare
- 7x14 snare
- 8x12 tom
- 15x16 floor tom
- 18x22 bass drum

**Heads:** Remo, including Coated Emperor X batters

**Sticks:** Vater Manhattan 7As

### Cymbals: Zildjian

- 15" K Special Dry hi-hats
- 21" K Special Dry crash
- 19" K Special Dry crash stacked on a 16" Kerope crash
- 20" K Oriental Crash of Doom
- 18" Avedis crash

**Electronics:** Yamaha DTX sample pad, Native Instruments Maschine Mikro production system, and Arturia samples

Mark. He can play jazz, but he can play other stuff too. He'd be a good fit." Keyon and Robert were already working with Common, and they recommended me.

**MD:** What was the Common audition like?

**Mark:** It was crazy. We got to certain songs and they said, "Play that Dr. Dre beat. Play this Jay-Z groove. Play the pattern that's on the radio right now." And I didn't know it. I'd say, "Man, I haven't heard it." And they said, "What! How're you going to play hip-hop if you don't

**"Vibe comes from being able to relate to different feels, being able to know what you like, and being able to see how someone else vibes to things."**





know these songs?" [laughs]

But I won the gig because I did my research. Before I auditioned, I needed to find a live drummer that plays hip-hop. I knew about Questlove, who I was a fan of, and he was the only person I'd seen play this music live. So I was listening to all of the Roots albums, and in particular their live album, *The Roots Come Alive*. I wanted to see how he translates a recording to a live hip-hop performance. And the record that I did on tour with Common was one that J Dilla predominantly produced, *Like Water for Chocolate*, and Questlove was on that too. So I was really studying that.

When I played, I think they could hear the vocabulary and thought I had a good feel. It might have been those two things that made me stand out. The other drummers were great, but I think some of the language's aesthetics weren't being translated.

**“When I got to New York, if you played anything but straight-ahead, the jazz scene didn’t validate you.”**

After the audition was over, I felt horrible. When I got to the beats that are on the radio that I didn't know, the drummers who were auditioning came up to the drums and sang the beats to me and told me how to play it. *At the audition*. [laughs] I was so embarrassed. I didn't think it was going to happen. But when I got home, it was late at night, and I got a call from Common. And he asked me to go on the road with him. So that took me into an era of studying hip-hop intensely.

**MD:** You mentioned J Dilla produced *Like Water for Chocolate*, and you reference his name in the *Beat Matrix Unlocked* often. Would you consider him a main influence on your playing during this period?

**Mark:** I wouldn't necessarily say "main," but I would say huge. With the book, I wasn't specifically trying to put the focus on him per se. I was just trying to highlight concepts that I heard from him, along with



## The Official Drums of Mark Colenburg

Yamaha artist since 2013, Mark Colenburg has a style that is complex and intricate, atypical and effortless. Alongside top-shelf, groundbreaking musicians such as Robert Glasper Experiment, Common, and Mos Def, Mark is able to pull phrases and notes out of the music that you wouldn't otherwise hear. The textures in his playing create a musical voice that is completely unique, and to watch Mark's creativity and musicality behind the set is nothing short of inspiring.

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## Mark Colenburg

other producers. But overall, he's definitely a huge influence. He didn't have any musical limits, and he paid so much respect to all the different ways that music is expressed. He could take any genre or nuance and keep it in its element and turn it into a creation. And that's what I learned from him—how to be creative. I look at him as a jazz musician.

**MD:** How do you learn from different producers' feels or vibes?

**Mark:** When people think of a producer, they might not think about the actual person. They think of some board or drum

machine. You say "producer," and they think "studio" and "technology." But those things are just the medium. That's not the core of what's happening. It's literally a person and their ideas, mind, and vibe. You do hear the technology, but I was hearing the vibe of the person. And every producer is different. To pick up on that, I kind of step out of my vibe and try to hear and feel what's being presented to me in its most honest form.

If you watch a producer listen to their own music, and you watch how they move their body and nod their head, you'll see how they feel it. Some producers have more

of a round movement; some have more of a quick staccato, short-fast movement. But you'll see their vibe and see how they think it should feel musically. Dilla had his vibe. Kanye West, you'll see him rock to music, and he has a certain kind of style, and it feels a certain kind of way. Q-Tip, you hear his stuff and it feels a certain kind of way. It all starts from what they're hearing and how it feels. The whole vibe just comes from being able to relate to different feels, being able to know what you like, and being able to see how someone else vibes to things.

**MD:** Live with Robert Glasper, you occasionally play longer, one-handed ride patterns at fairly brisk tempos. Is there anything that you work on to develop speed or facility?

**Mark:** For speed, that's repetition. It's almost like lifting weights. But you have to keep pushing. And the more you do that, the stronger you get.

Facility to me is more about vocabulary, phrasing, and understanding sounds. When you get into that world of facility and phrasing, a lot of the technical stuff goes out the door.

My favorite drummers are the least technical, so to speak. Roy Haynes might say that he never learned rudiments. Or Elvin Jones, who didn't do a lot of single-stroke rolls or stuff like that. Jack DeJohnette, who's super musical and has chops, expresses it in a way that's not coming from an analytical approach. But they all have so much to say.

I appreciate the fact that someone can play fast. But when I hear phrasing, facility, statements, and orchestrations, those things blow my mind. It really says a lot about the player and what they have to say musically.

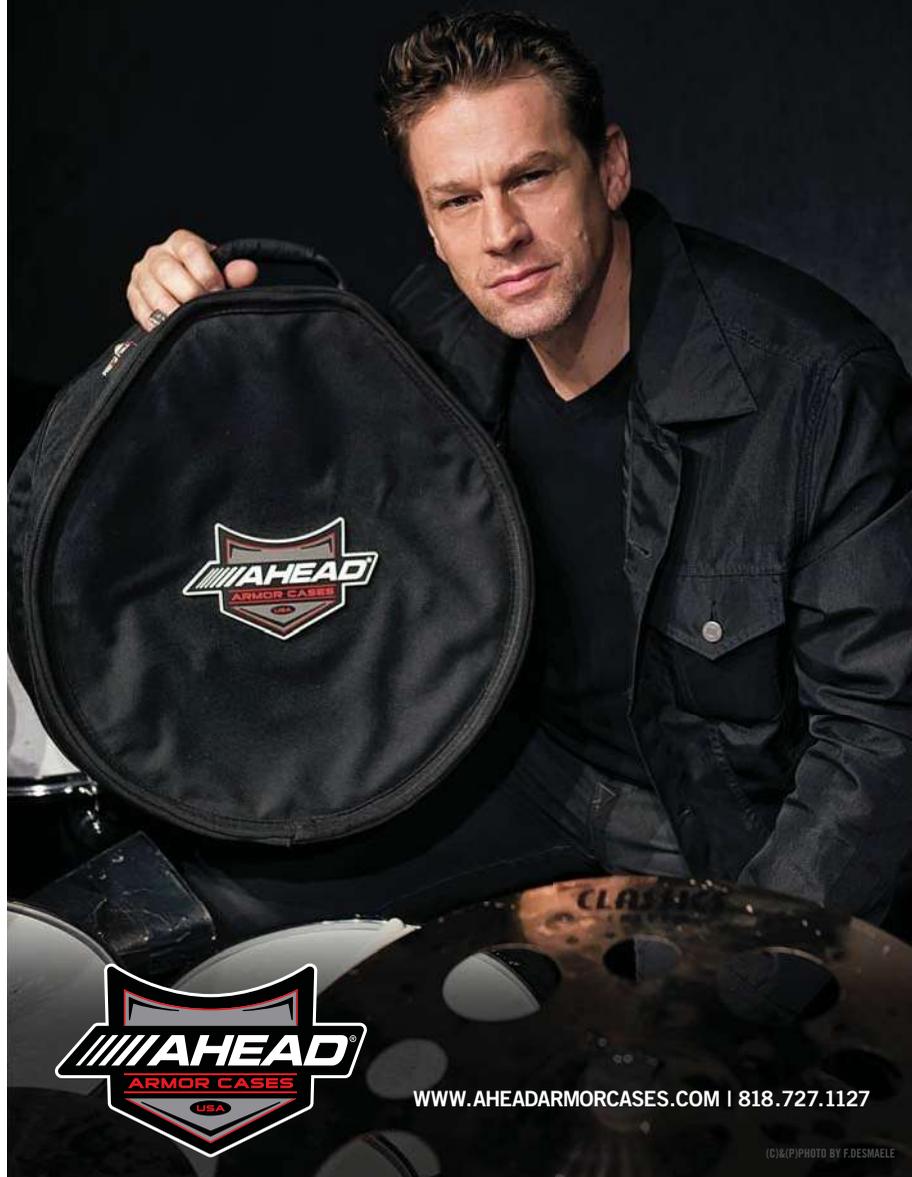
So to work on that, transcribe and try to hear basic phrases. Then try to hear the musical conversation from a basic standpoint. Once that's happening, try to expound on that conversation. The drummers I mentioned were masters at understanding basic conversation and expounding on it. They could play forever, and it'd never get old.

**MD:** Is there any specific exercise you work on to develop technique?

**Mark:** I use combinations of a bunch of techniques. It won't be only my fingers or my wrist. My arms or back may be involved with how I'm doing certain things.

With a push-pull technique, I use combinations of that movement. Tony Williams had his way of doing it. And Jojo Mayer and Johnny Rabb have different ways of doing it. So I consider that and try to

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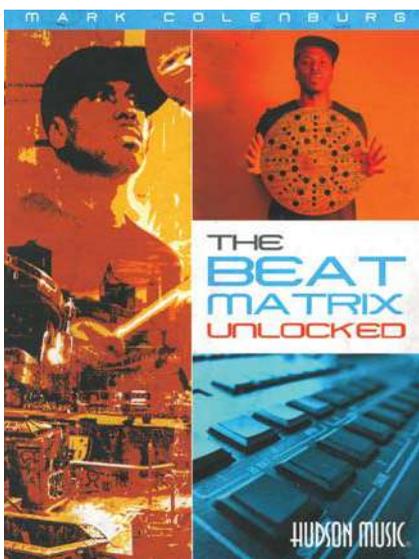
(C) & (P) PHOTO BY F. DESMAELE



combine it all.

But it gives me so many options on how I can execute that technique. The whole thing for me is not just to be able to play fast. I like to be able to learn a technique, and then in a performance be able to play it and have it serve a purpose.

**MD:** Would you consider the book a summary of what you've learned since entering the hip-hop world?

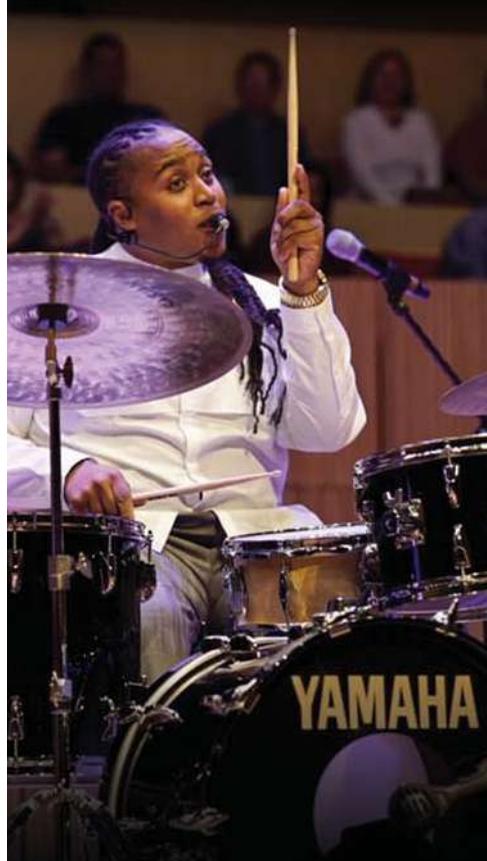


Colenburg's recent book, *The Beat Matrix Unlocked*, explores concepts used in creating beats in hip-hop and pop drumming and programming. "There are musical connections between church and jazz, church and hip-hop, and jazz and hip-hop," he says. "And the book kind of culminates in how it all connects."

**Mark:** Kind of. But when I look back, I literally look back at everything. When I got that Common gig, I was relating to hip-hop and jazz from a gospel perspective. In gospel there are a lot of shuffles. It's not jazz in the traditional sense, but that was the feel. Once I started playing jazz, I thought, *Oh, it's like a gospel shuffle*. So I just took that feel and applied it to swing. And when I first got to New York and started gigging, people said, "Man, you can swing." But I was just thinking about gospel.

And the same thing happened with Common. I was listening to Questlove and J Dilla. But I remembered playing some of those grooves and feels in church. The way that I naturally hit the drums, I was still referencing it to what I played in church.

So the book is kind of a culmination of all of it, because from day one I was piecing everything together as I was going. There are musical connections between church and jazz, church and hip-hop, and jazz and hip-hop. And the book kind of culminates in how it all connects. You'll hear Questlove on a record start playing some swing kinds of things in a hip-hop groove. Or you'll hear J Dilla incorporate jazz elements in a hip-hop groove. They were kind of conceptually utilizing and understanding how certain kinds of languages merge together. So that kind of validated what I was picking up.



## The Official Drums of Jamison Ross

A Yamaha Artist since 2014, Jamison Ross defines what it is to be a multi-instrumentalist. His vast knowledge of all styles of playing, from jazz to fusion to funk, has made him a first-call drummer, composer and vocalist for artists around the world. When he is behind his kit, Jamison brings a warm and room-filling groove to everything he plays, and as a Grammy-nominated solo artist, he continues to push himself and everyone he performs with to even greater musical heights.

Get to know Jamison here:  
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# Jamison ROSS

It's All Connected

Story by Jeff Potter

Photos by Alex Solca

In 2009, Jamison Ross participated in the prestigious Betty Carter Jazz Ahead program, an educational residency for promising young jazz artists. Among the notable artists serving as auditioners/panelists was vocalist Carmen Lundy, who approached the nineteen-year-old drummer. But rather than offering educational guidance, Lundy extended her hand and asked, "Do you have a card?"

"I'd just rushed out to Kinko's the day before," Ross laughs. "I gave her that card with *so much* joy. She called me two weeks later for my first European tour—my first time on the road with an artist. I didn't even have a passport yet."

From that turning point, Jamison's swinging and frequently funky drumming earned acclaim with a succession of name jazz artists. And then he upped the ante, launching the "secret" weapon waiting in his arsenal: his exceptional, soulful voice.

That talent came as a surprise windfall to his current label, Concord Jazz. Ross was awarded that record contract upon winning the famed Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Drums Competition in 2012. Concord initially thought they'd signed a gifted drummer—which they most assuredly did. But the musician's 2015 debut disc, *Jamison*, featuring his dynamic dual talents—as well as compositional strengths—also earned the drummer a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album.

Now, with the escalating success of this year's follow-up release, *All for One*, Ross's close-knit piano/organ/guitar/acoustic bass/drums quintet has embarked on a year-long itinerary that will span the U.S., Canada, India, Japan, and Europe.

In addition, Jamison occasionally drums with the jazz-funk collaborative Snarky Puppy. He's toured intermittently with the band since 2015 and will be recording the unit's next studio album in August.

Ross grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, immersed in music at his grandfather's church. "I was singing, playing organ, playing the drums—just playing whatever needed to be played," he says. "As I got older, I fell in love with the drums, and that became my focus."

The animated drummer speaks with a quick cadence. And one topic that repeatedly lifts his voice to impassioned peaks is the value of education. "My mom put me in situations that would inspire me, beyond the church," he says. "I already had the natural ability, but she wanted me to legitimize myself with education and knowledge. And that's how jazz came into play."

Jamison attended the Douglas Anderson High

School of the Performing Arts, where he helmed their topflight jazz ensemble. Traveling to New York to compete in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Festival and Competition in 2006, the band seized first prize, a victory captured in the documentary film *Chops*. "That was huge," says Jamison. "A light went off in my head, like, *Bro, I want to do this for the rest of my life!*"

The great pianist Marcus Roberts, who also hails from Jacksonville, caught wind of the budding local talent and reached out. "He wrote my mom a beautiful letter persuading her to let me come to Florida State University," Jamison recalls. "He wanted to teach me; that was really special. At FSU I started diving into the whole vocabulary of the music, which really refined my concept and how I sound today. I was diving deep into the entire jazz lineage, starting with Warren 'Baby' Dodds and Zutty Singleton."

Following college, Ross continued to tour and record with Lundy and landed a scholarship at the University of New Orleans that allowed for him to maintain his touring demands. His freelancing eventually expanded to dates with Marcus Roberts, Ellis Marsalis, Billy Childs, Cecile McLoran Salvant, Jon Batiste, Henry Butler, and Jon Cleary. "Moving to New Orleans to attend school was the best decision I ever made in my life," he says, "because of the music I fell in love with there."

A bandleader singing from behind the drums is a rarity, especially in jazz. And possessing both talents at such high levels makes Jamison remarkable. His drumming encompasses a wide spectrum of jazz history, cored with a groove informed by soul, R&B, and the blues, all with a generous spicing from his current residence of New Orleans. His soulful, fluidly phrased vocals and melting-pot compositional concept also embrace the same multi-influences.

On a recent gig at Manhattan's Jazz Standard club, Ross mounted the stage wearing a sharp-fitting white vest with his long dreads bundled behind. Welcoming his audience with a beaming, warm smile, he counted off a funky opener. The groove was instantaneous and deep, sparked by Jamison's passionate voice and infectious drumming. But most impressive was the way the two elements integrated in an effortlessly independent yet inseparable flow.

"I focus on melody," Jamison stresses. "You always hear me talk of melody before rhythm. You can't get either/or. You can play rhythm and it might be spot-on. But the *combination* of both is what makes music."

**MD:** How did touring with Carmen Lundy at a young age influence your playing?

**Jamison:** My college undergraduate time was an intense study. And at the same time, I started touring with Carmen. She opened up my entire brain in regards to playing the drums. She brought me back full circle. When you get out in the modern jazz circuit, all the music is not swing. But when you're studying music in a college setting, you do tend towards the traditional part of it. And I do like that; it was a key part of my development. But Carmen freed me. One night she screamed at me on the bandstand—because I was being conservative. I was in my head; I was being a "student." I was being that guy who had checked out a ton of records and knew what I was playing. But I wasn't *embodying* it like the way she felt I could.

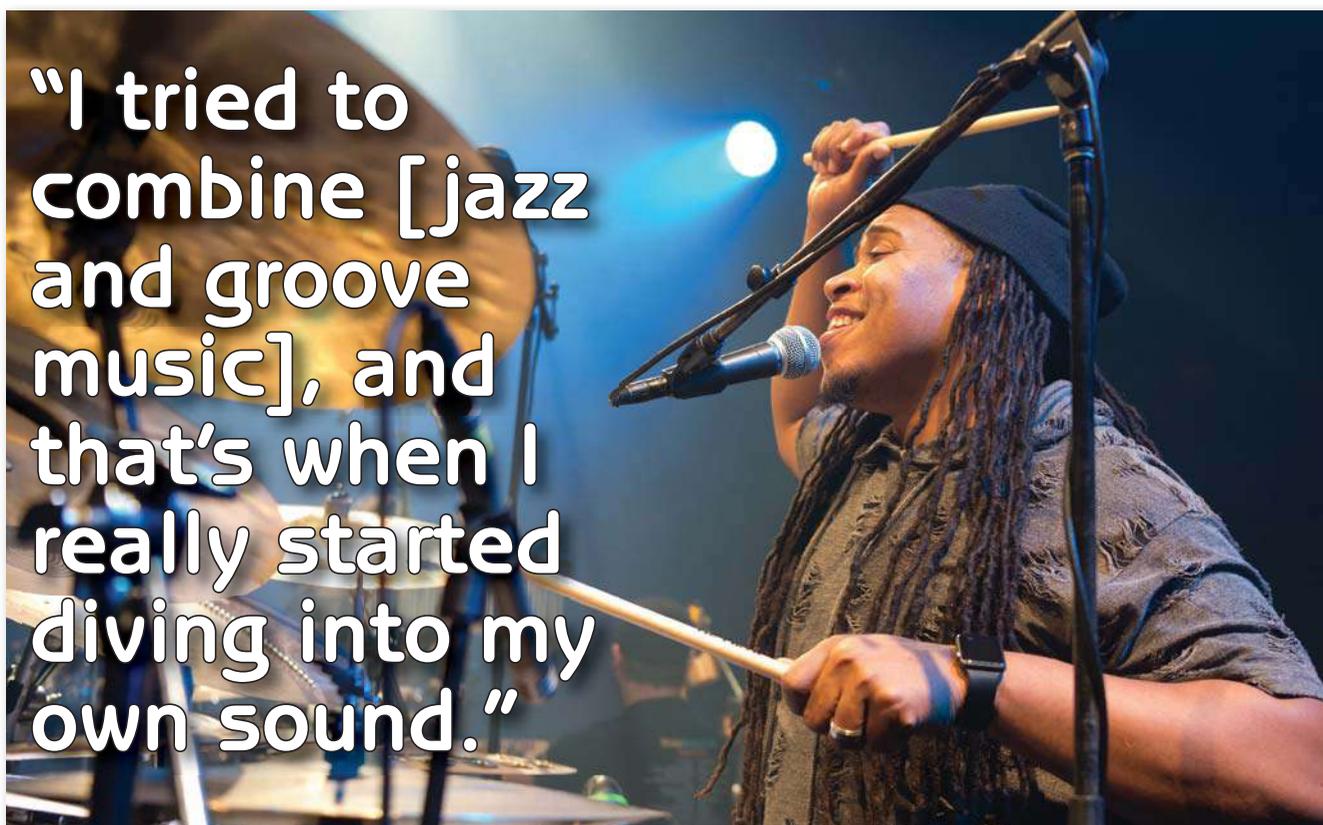
You have to bring your *own* approach so you can create your own concept of the music. She was trying to get me to do that. I

that influences my swing sound. And it's probably why I can go back and forth and play a lot of different styles of music.

**MD:** Your adopted hometown heavily influenced your music.

**Jamison:** When I got to New Orleans, I was thrown into this world of music that I'd never heard before. My introduction to New Orleans had been through listening to and playing traditional jazz music. I started to play traditional gigs around town, including Preservation Hall. In New Orleans, a jazz gig is so different: you could be playing "Stompin' at the Savoy" and the next tune could be "Feel Like Making Love." That's the kind of city it is. It opened me up, a cat like myself who was already on the brink of so many things I could pull from.

I started working with the bandleader Jon Cleary, a phenomenal songwriter and R&B artist, and that was pivotal to the music that I do now. In fact, I just did a new album with him that's coming out next year. I already had perspective about the jazz music going on in New



"I tried to combine [jazz and groove music], and that's when I really started diving into my own sound."

never forgot that night when she said, "You've got to open up. Play what you *hear!*" We were playing modern music that needed more than just a traditional approach. I literally started going back to the drawing board with her music; I tried to remember how I first fell in love with music—which was actually *not* jazz. It was pure fun grooves, from gospel, from R&B, from my native upbringing in music. So I tried to combine the two, and that's when I really started diving into my own sound. That's when I started to realize that I didn't have to forget all the things that I grew up playing just to play this music. That's the downfall of a traditional program: you can easily become the jazz police.

**MD:** Once you found your style and embraced your roots, how did that specifically affect your jazz drumming?

**Jamison:** It gave me purpose and insight into how to play music. It wasn't that I had gospel in my music. But there was a certain foundation in the groove. Soul music, and Afro-American music in general, is based in the groove, and that is probably the one thing

Orleans. But Jon opened me up to the R&B perspective—which, to me, is all the same, actually: your R&B drummers, the Earl Palmers and Smokey Johnsons of the world—they were swinging too! That's what's deep. That's what put the hot sauce on my entire concept. I realized, "I don't have to prove anything; I can just play exactly what I hear. And things started to open up musically for me.

**MD:** You were called to record Dr. John's *Ske-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit of Satch*, alternating tracks with Herlin Riley. Now that surely must have given big local cred to an "outsider."

**Jamison:** Exactly! I started to get street cred as being a part of the city. That's why people can't tell the difference now whether I'm from New Orleans or Jacksonville. It's just now that I'm trying to make the *distinction* that I'm from Jacksonville, because I respect New Orleans and all the wonderful musicians who are actually from there. However, all the names you can think of in New Orleans—I've now interacted or probably played with them. From Kermit Ruffins to Irvin Mayfield to George Porter, I've played with them.

## Tools of the Trade

Jamison plays a Yamaha Absolute Hybrid maple kit with an 8x12 tom, 14x14 and 15x16 floor toms, a 14x20 bass drum, and a 5.5x14 Recording Custom steel snare drum. His Sabian cymbal array includes 15" Artisan Elite hi-hats, a 24" Apollo ride with six rivets, a 22" prototype with one rivet, a 21" prototype crash/ride, and a 20" Legacy Ozone stacked with a 10" Air splash. He uses Remo heads, preferring coated Emperors for tom batters, clear Diplomats for tom bottoms, a coated Ambassador on his snare, and coated Poweronsics for the bass drum. He uses Vic Firth 5A Barrel Tip sticks, Heritage brushes, and T3 timpani mallets.



**MD:** On your live appearances and also on your first disc, you feature a segment where you sing with your drumming. It's an organic "duet" that's quite beautiful. How did you develop that?

**Jamison:** It started when I was in a practice room in my house, using mallets. I was always a melodic player. I used to sing my drums solos, and I still do today. When I take a drum solo, I sing it, I put melody to it. And the reason is that I was a guy who used to hate drum solos—because nobody would be able to follow along. It was one moment in a set where you would either go bombastic and wow the crowd or have to find a way for people to follow along melodically—like a Max Roach approach. That's the genius in drum soloing.

My professor, Marcus Roberts, knew I could sing. He asked me, "Why don't you sing your solos?" When I started doing it, I started to get this really cool phrasing of my own. That's my secret. When you put me next to any drummer, you will really notice it because I'm actually putting *melody* to my playing. That's what's giving my rhythmic concept a lot of motion.

Also, when I toured with Jon Batiste, he would have me go on stage by myself to sing and play drums. We spent two years together in bunks on the road during 2013 and 2014, and he guested on my record. Jon wanted someone in his band who could do multiple things. I was playing drums, keyboards, and singing. I had the biggest rig!

**MD:** Singing from behind the drums while playing with a band is difficult—keeping the drum groove centered while being free vocally.

**Jamison:** The reason I'm able to do it so freely is because I don't think about it as the drums being one locked groove. I think about its relationship with the singing—a parallel of rhythm and melody. It's one big connected string, like chromosomes.

**MD:** Tell me about that knockout New Orleans-influenced groove you play on the Allen Toussaint tune "Mellow Good Time," from *All for One*. It's tricky keeping that fluidity.

**Jamison:** The way I like to approach that groove is about how I'm using the 8th-note concept. The snare being on beats 2 and 3 makes the groove sit on the "opposite side." What ties it in is the hi-hat pattern. The snare and bass drum are simple, but the hi-hat makes it crazy. I'm going in between a straight versus a swung 8th. Kind of a

boogaloo—like [Lee Morgan's] "The Sidewinder" with Billy Higgins. But I'm taking that concept and putting it on the hi-hat, making this swampy, funky groove.

**MD:** When you won the Thelonious Monk competition, what set you apart from the other finalists? You didn't necessarily go the flashy route.

**Jamison:** I didn't. I wasn't going to do it at first, and I give my wife a lot of credit for pushing me. I'd just come off the road. And, you know, competitions can be weird. When I made the final list and went to Washington, D.C., I was trying to figure out which approach to take.

Now, I know the landscape of the drumming out here. And let's just say, my generation is very quick to skip a large part of tradition and get right to creating something new. I know that's pretty prevalent. So I thought, "This is a jazz drum competition—so let me *explore* jazz." So I played "Bye Bye Blues" very traditionally. I started it in an old 1920s Paul Barbarin or Louis Barbarin manner—open snare drum, no hi-hat. Then I went into swing and took a traditional-approach solo on the rims of the drums. But then I played "Beatrice," a very modern tune, and I opened up from that perspective. After that, I played "Rhythm-a-Ning"—everybody had to play a Monk tune. Some drummers approached it in an esoteric way. But I played the melody on the drums. Some judges took it as being a traditional approach. But no, what I was really doing was just accessing the tradition and the *range* of where jazz has taken me.

On the finals night, I played "Magnolia Triangle," which is a James Black composition. I played it because I knew it would pay homage to James but also a part of drumming that is forgotten about a lot of times. I also played an original composition of mine, "Shrimp and Grits," which has a soul-jazz concept to it. Mixing the soul/jazz, that was my concept. I thought, *If I'm gonna go down swingin', I'm gonna go down SWINGIN'!* And I did; I was totally myself. I just tried to stretch the entire imagination of jazz lineage in drumming.

The *New York Times* said that I was the guardian of a hybrid new tradition. And I love that. I don't want to be seen as stagnant or a guy that's "traditional"—that's not my thing. But I *am* a person who upholds the things that I believe in musically. That's the truth.



# Mark Sheppard

of Robyn Hitchcock and His L.A. Squires

Story by Adam Budofsky

Photos by Michele Shiers

Long before he conquered film and TV in things like *The X-Files*, *Supernatural*, and *In the Name of the Father*, he witnessed the birth of London punk and participated in its fascinating aftermath. Now he's come full circle, playing drums with his old boss Robyn Hitchcock. It's been one wild ride.



It's a balmy January evening, and at the back of an Italian restaurant nestled in a southern California strip mall, Mark Sheppard is telling the story of how he came to be the drummer with the psychedelic pop institution the Television Personalities, a band that became famous in the late '70s for their quaint yet cutting mini-dramas dappled with British pop-culture references. The settings of TVP's songs—the bustling streets and teen hangouts of London that Sheppard came up in—seem a world away from sunny suburban Anaheim and the corporate convention known as NAMM that's brought him and *Modern Drummer* together. Yet the scene is somehow fitting for an interview with a man who's experienced the emotional and financial extremes that a lifetime in entertainment can lay on you.

Like most of his stories—and he's got a lot of stories—the names of people and places fly by fast, the details are conveyed with color and ample italics, the fast-forward and rewind buttons are regularly depressed, and the tale ends with either a punch line, a lesson learned, or both.

"My dad rented a room in Annie Ogden's house," Sheppard begins. "She was the floor manager of [the TV music-chart show] *Top of the Pops*. I was like ten, twelve years old. There were two brothers, Danny and Nick Woodgate. Nick played guitar and Danny played drums. Danny had an Ajax kit with a Beverley snare, and I wanted to be just like him. He was a couple years older than me, and went off and started a band called Madness. I bought that kit off him.

"I ended up living in a place near the London Drum Center on Portobello Road, near the railway arches where the Sex Pistols played. A very multicultural area. I started hanging out in the drum shop and working there on Saturdays.



I eventually saved up 415 pounds—a lot of money in 1976—and bought a '76 Gretsch kit, 20/12/14, with a brass Gretsch snare. It had the drum key that went into the octagonal badge. Weighed a ton.

"This was the era of singles," Mark goes on. "We used to hang outside record shops to try to get access to bands. We were outside Chrysalis Records once and Debbie Harry of Blondie threw 8x10s and badges and buttons out the window to us. And Stiff Records was in Camden, and that's when you saw Madness and Elvis Costello. And this is what I wanted to *do*. But I never played drums in the shop, never touched a practice pad, because people like Billy Cobham would come in. So I was this drummer who never played drums very much. It was this weird thing where I wanted to learn but didn't know how to ask.

"But I'd met a kid at school and moved my drumkit into his attic. We started our first real band there. His brother was older and played keyboards, and he had a friend who knew Dan Treacy of TV Personalities, and I ended up in the band. I was fifteen and suddenly I was with Dan, [keyboardist] Ed Ball, and [guitarist] Joe Foster, who were older than me. Dan lived in the tower block on the S bend of the Thames, and he'd recorded the single '14th Floor'—because there was no 14th floor—'Part Time Punks,' and 'Where's Bill Grundy Now?' which were topical and everybody loved.

"I don't think we rehearsed that much," Mark says. "We just made records like 'I Know Where Syd Barrett Lives,' me singing out-of-tune

background vocals, speeded up and bounced to four-track. Then we did a John Peel session, which was one of the greatest things I've ever experienced in my life. [Peel was a BBC radio deejay and the most important tastemaker in British pop music.] The session was produced by Buffin, the drummer in Mott the Hoople. I remember reading an article in a magazine years later, and he couldn't remember what band it was. But he remembered that the bass player had leapt over the drumkit to try to kill the drummer. That was Joe Foster having an argument with me!"

Peel's support of TV Personalities enabled them to play important venues like the Hope and Anchor in Islington and the Greyhound on Palace Road. "It was like what the New York Dolls did in New York," says Sheppard, referring to the legendary band that many credit with inspiring the entire American punk scene. "We *owned* it. And everybody you knew made a record."

In addition to TVP's first full-length, *... And Don't the Kids Just Love It*, Sheppard recorded the debut solo albums by Nikki Sudden and Jowe Head of the legendary art-punk group Swell Maps. These were sterling credits to have on your punk-rock résumé, no doubt, but not the type that made you rich. "It was always living on the dole and never thinking you'd get a real record deal, something *big*," says Sheppard, who was known to most at the time simply as Empire.

Among the more popular bands on the nascent London punk scene was the Soft Boys, featuring the gifted guitarist and songwriter



Robyn Hitchcock. "I'd seen the Soft Boys live and thought they were incredible," Sheppard recalls, "and then I bumped into Robyn at the bar at one of his post-Soft Boys shows. I was sixteen and a half. I said, 'I want to play in your band.' Six months later I was playing with him.

"Robyn's an extraordinary person," Mark continues. "He was about twenty-eight but seemed so much older. He had a wonderful mono player, and I played him the first TV Personalities album. He always found me very high energy."

It was a demanding time for the senior musician, who was trying to establish his solo career and find his own voice outside of the Soft Boys, and the seventeen-year-old drummer didn't take well to the pressure of playing on a higher level. "I was nervous as hell. It wasn't fun, and I thought it was because I wasn't very good. I felt like the bass player didn't want to play with me, and that I was out of my depth. To get rid of some of that I started drinking quite heavily and

## Tools of the Trade

Onstage with Robyn Hitchcock, Sheppard plays a DW Collectors Series kit with a black oil-stain finish and black nickel hardware featuring a 12x14 tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and a 20x22 bass drum. His snares are a 6.5x14 DW Blackheart Purple Heart model with black nickel hardware and a 6.5x14 DW Black Iron model. He uses DW hardware, including a 9000 series throne and stands, MCD bass drum pedal, and MDD hi-hat stand. His Zildjian cymbals are 15" K Fat hats and 14" K Hybrid remote hats, a 23" K ride, and 18" K Dark, 19" Constantinople, 19" K Dark, and 18" K Dry crashes.

His Remo heads include a Black Suede Ambassador snare batter, Black Suede Emperor tom batters and Black Suede Ambassador resonants, and a Powerstroke P3 kick batter and custom front head with six "DW holes." His sticks are Vic Firth HD9s ("picked light"). Accessories include a Remo hi-hat clutch and drum keys, LP Percussion, a Roland SPD-SX multi-pad, Audix d6, d4, i5, and ad51 mics, JH Audio Roxanne in-ear monitors with a UE Pro Sound Tap AC, and a Randall May bass drum "May Rail." He also endorses Jerry Harvey Audio products, as well as Anvil and Humes & Berg cases.

dabbling in things." Compounding Mark's anxiety, he auditioned for a film and didn't get the role. "I never wanted to go through *that* again," says Sheppard, who was asked by a casting director to do another audition but said no, opting instead to tour with the established band the Barracudas when Hitchcock decided to focus on his solo release, *I Often Dream of Trains*.

Sheppard lived the life of a journeyman drummer for the next several years, joining the Finnish glam-metal band Hanoi Rocks and the promising Irish group Light a Big Fire, who opened some shows on U2's *Joshua Tree* tour. Despite the occasional triumphs, though, Mark says that this phase of his career was hardly the days of wine and roses. "Let's put it this way," he offers. "The first time I watched *This Is Spinal Tap*, I didn't laugh. Everything in that movie had happened to me. Light a Big Fire was right on the edge of cult and art, but instead of being on Irish television, I was drinking myself to death at twenty-two years old."

Around this time, Mark's father, the actor W. Morgan Sheppard, moved to the States to join the cast of the ground-breaking TV show *Max Headroom*. Mark followed him out to Los Angeles and co-founded the group School of Fish, played on the single "Need You (Like a Drug)" by the buzz band They Eat Their Own, and developed friendships with some music-industry heavyweights like Chic/Power Station drummer Tony Thompson and Guitar Center A&R director Dave Weideman. But booze and drugs still had a hold on him—and it was starting to show in his playing. "People tried to get me auditions," Sheppard recalls. "[Sex Pistols guitarist] Steve Jones auditioned me. I couldn't play. I was not in good shape.

"Eventually I got sober," says Mark, "thanks to some...*interesting* help. I produced a couple minor things for people, but I didn't play drums again. I gave my cymbals to the original drummer of Hole, Caroline Rue. I just wasn't a drummer anymore.

"But now fast forward to 1992. I do this play *Cock and Bull Story*, which gets a huge amount of attention. Then I go back to England to

## Influences

**Steve Hillage** "Unidentified Flying Being" (Joe Blocker) /// **Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers** "American Girl" (Stan Lynch) /// **Rolling Stones** "Gimme Shelter" (Charlie Watts) /// **The Band** "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" (Levon Helm) /// **Bad Co.** "Can't Get Enough of Your Love" (Simon Kirke) /// **PiL** "Rise" (Tony Williams) /// **Charles Mingus** "II B.S." (Walter "Baby Sweets" Perkins) /// **The Soft Boys** "I Wanna Destroy You" (Morris Windsor)

television series *Silk Stalkings* and *The X-Files*. "Then I started killing people on American television," laughs Sheppard, who, in addition to prominent roles in *Battlestar Galactica*, *Soldier of Fortune*, and *Doctor Who*, played a demon on *Charmed*, a crime boss on *Firefly*, and on the long-running fantasy horror series *Supernatural*, the King of Hell himself.

You could say the devil led Sheppard back to rock 'n' roll. Or, maybe it was God. We'll let Mark explain.

"The guy who plays God on *Supernatural*, Rob Benedict, is in a band called Loudon Swain. It's a *really* good band. The drummer's a North Texas boy—Blair Sinta's roommate, Stephen Norton—and Billy Moran, one of my favorite guitarists, is also in it. And they were the backing band for these conventions that we do. But they were being treated at these things like a wedding band. They'd say, 'You wanna play?' and I'd be, 'Nope—I did the *Joshua Tree* tour, I don't need to come out through a vocal P.A.' One day I get cornered, though, and somebody on mic says, 'Come up and play one song with us!' So I play 'Back in Black.' And they're all like, 'Oh, you *do* play drums.' I hadn't picked up a pair of sticks in however long, but there's 3,000 people watching, going nuts. I can't do any wrong! [laughs]

"So, I'm playing drums again. Fast forward a bit, and now I'm putting myself out there. Robyn calls me: 'You want to go out in May? I want to play the Troubadour.' 'Yeah!' I'd been doing eight years of the TV show, and I'd buried music. Billy and the rest of these guys made me play and got me excited again. And people like Kirsten Matt from

make amends, the stuff you do when you're sober, and I go and see the casting director who tried to put me in a film years earlier, and I end up in a forty-five-minute improv session with Daniel Day Lewis and get cast in my first film."

That movie, *In the Name of the Father*, received several Academy Award nominations, and soon the former drummer was appearing in the popular



Zildjian, Chris Hart at Remo, and the guys from Audix jumped in and said, 'This is fun for us, you make this easy.' I have a big fan following, so it was wonderful to be able to say thank you to people for providing me with gear that I can do my job with. And I

can be proud of the companies that support me. DW drums, nobody makes better drums. Zildjian—nobody makes better cymbals. They make *different* cymbals, but not better. Vic Firth—watch the process of how their sticks are made, why would you buy anything else."

Hanging out with Sheppard at a place like NAMM is like being with a kid in a drum shop. His enthusiasm for music and drumming is... well... it's like that of someone who's been given a new lease on life—the rock 'n' roll life—but leavened by the wisdom that experience brings. "In an era of electronic music," says Mark, "the drums are the last great acoustic instrument. Jay-Z... everybody still goes out with a drummer. I grew up in an era of drummers who shaped music. For me, there's Stan Lynch, Charlie Watts—*always* Charlie Watts—and now people like Luke Holland. I love Luke's videos. He's such a great technical drummer, with such great feel.

"The real heroes aren't the technicians," Mark continues, "they've always been the *musical* drummers. Al Jackson was probably more influential on me than anybody. Anybody can sing fifty songs Al Jackson played on, they just never knew he played on them. What

I love about playing now... I never played a Purdie shuffle before. When I tried to work it out, I played it backwards, the hardest way possible! So I watched that great Youtube video of him demonstrating it. And then you put on 'Babylon Sisters'... there's a feel to that man's playing that's mind-blowing. Ash Soan has that in spades. I watch that right hand and go, 'Oh, you bastard!' [laughs] And then you hear him play rock stuff and he's amazing at that too!"

When you meet an individual like Mark Sheppard who's had success in two distinct professions, it begs the question, are there similarities between approaching the two crafts? "Yes," he responds. "At its best, it's art. At its worst, it's chucking a log to the beat. Art to me is getting prepared to jump off a building and trying to fly. You can put it all together and it works, or you can hit the ground. But it's the endeavor itself that is the joy. The desire and the passion to do it. That's why the head bobs up and down, why the hair goes up on the back of your neck. And it transcends all genres of music—listen to John Lydon's post Sex Pistols band Public Image, the record titled *Album*. You know who played drums on the hit 'Rise'? That's Tony Williams!"

And what about all those past demons—do they still haunt Sheppard? "I still get terrified," he says, "but I can't use drugs and alcohol. We all have vices. When I went back to play the Troubadour with Robyn, I hadn't played under that kind of pressure since the last time I played with him. When I played stadiums in front of a hundred thousand people opening for U2, I was terrified then too. I used to start thinking that one half of my body was out of sync with the other. I know why Ginger shot dope, I know what it'll do for you. It'll turn that off. But I just can't do it. I can't trade my life. But at the Troubadour... that was probably the best gig I played in my life. You look at pictures of me from that show—I'm smiling my ass off."

## Recordings

**Robyn Hitchcock** & His L.A. Squires /// **Television Personalities** ...And Don't the Kids Just Love It /// **Nikki Sudden** Waiting on Egypt /// **The Barracudas** Endeavor to Persevere, Two Sides of a Coin /// **Light a Big Fire** Surveillance /// **They Eat Their Own** "Need You (Like A Drug)"



A-list Drummer Mark Sheppard



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# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SNARE DRUM HEADS

by Michael Dawson

We began our deep dive into drumheads with a survey of the assorted types—and their sounds/applications—that are available for the bass drum (June 2018). This month we're examining the different makes and models for the snare drum, which is arguably the most distinct-sounding and sonically malleable instrument on the drumset.

When choosing the ideal heads for your particular needs, you should consider the

following: How much sensitivity do you require? (For example, do you play a lot of quick, soft patterns and rolls, or are you mainly hammering backbeats?) How much overtone control do you prefer? And is durability a significant concern?

We'll begin our discussion with the ubiquitous single-ply coated and then work our way through the various pre-muffled, double-ply, and specialty models.

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## Snare Drum Heads



**Remo Coated  
Ambassador**



**Evans  
HD Dry**



**Remo  
CS Black Dot**

### Single-Ply Coated

The most popular snare drum batter head is a single-ply coated, like Aquarian's Texture Coated, Evans' G1, and Remo's Ambassador. These are the ideal choice for achieving a natural, open, articulate, and resonant snare sound with a wide tuning range and sonic versatility. Most models are made with one layer of 10-mil film and feature a thin coat of textured paint sprayed on top. (Evans' new UV1 deviates from the traditional manufacturing methods with a unique ultraviolet-cured coating that's more chip-resistant.)

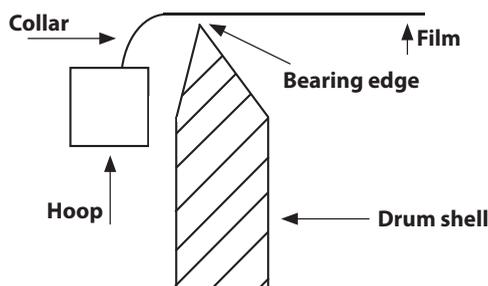
Acoustic jazz and symphonic players may opt for an even thinner head, like Aquarian's 7-mil Hi-Frequency and Remo's 7.5-mil Diplomat, in order to maximize the drum's sensitivity and response at very low dynamics. But those heads can dent easily when hit at higher volumes. Harder-hitting players who want an open, resonant single-ply sound with more durability might find the perfect balance with a thicker single-ply option, like the 12-mil Remo Ambassador X, or the 14-mil Evans G14 or Remo Ambassador X14. While those heads won't be as quick and articulate as the 10-mil standards, they will produce a resonant, full tone with a balanced mix of fundamental pitch and overtone.

### Single-Ply With Muffling

Rather than applying gels or tape to a

single-ply coated drumhead to achieve a drier and more studio-ready snare sound, you might want to consider trying one of the pre-muffled options. The Evans Genera is a 10-mil head with a thin, floating 2-mil ring on the underside of the perimeter. Remo's Powerstroke 3 is similar to the Genera, except that the muffling ring is a tad thicker, at 3-mil. (Remo also offers a 14-mil version, the Powerstroke P3X.) Aquarian's take on this type of drumhead, the Studio-X, has a thin muffling ring glued directly to the underside perimeter for a slightly more controlled sound. All of these models are designed to replicate the deeper and shorter tone you'd achieve by applying a muffling ring or other overtone-controlling device. Heads with a built-in muffling ring will give you a punchy snare sound that's reminiscent of what legendary drummer Steve Gadd made famous on hundreds of jazz, pop, fusion, R&B, and rock records in the '70s, '80s, and '90s.

A more open-sounding alternative to single-ply drumheads with rings would be those that feature a thin applique in the center of the playing surface, placed either on the top or bottom side of the drumhead. These models include Aquarian's Texture Coated Power Dot, Evans' Power Center Reverse Dot, and Remo's Controlled Sound, and they're designed to retain more of the bright, open sound of a basic single-ply



### Anatomy of a Drumhead

Each manufacturer has different methods for creating its snare 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.



**Evans EC Reverse Dot**



**Aquarian Hi-Velocity**



**Remo Coated Pinstripe**

head but with a more pointed attack and slightly shorter decay. The dot also adds a bit of durability. An extra-durable version is Aquarian's Hi-Energy, which is a 10-mil head with a thin Power Dot adhered to entire surface and a smaller dot placed at the center.

Dotted single-ply heads are favorites among many of today's top session drummers, including Chris McHugh, Matt Chamberlain, and Josh Freese. The downside of dotted heads is that they tend to have a little less rebound, especially at the center. Thicker dotted models, such as Remo's 12-mil CSX, provide additional durability. Evans' most durable and focused-sounding single-ply head is the EC1 Reverse Dot, which is a thicker 14-mil head with a center dot and outer tone-control rings.

### Double-Ply

While 2-ply heads are ideal for achieving

big, robust classic rock snare sounds, they're much more versatile than you might expect. A standard double-ply head, like the Remo Emperor, Aquarian Response 2, and Evans G2, comprises two layers of 7-mil film, but manufacturers have also been experimenting with different combinations of thicknesses to make the heads more responsive and open or more durable and controlled. A basic 2-ply coated head pairs well with lively sounding snares because it will tamp down some of the high-end bite without choking the resonance. Double-ply heads are more durable than single-ply versions while still providing crisp, quick articulation.

For enhanced low-end and midrange punch, Remo developed the dual-7.5-mil Vintage Emperor, and Evans has the comparable ST (Super Tough) and black-finished Onyx. (Evans also offers the ST Dry, which features small holes around the edge for additional overtone control.) For its super punchy and extra-durable Force Ten 2-ply head, Aquarian paired two layers of 10-mil film.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, Remo's 2-ply Vintage Ambassador is designed to retain the quick response of a single-ply head. It features 7.5-mil over 3-mil films. Aquarian's thinner 2-ply head, the Super-2, has 7-mil and 5-mil plies. Either of those would be ideal for single-ply players who desire a little more durability and depth.

### Double-Ply With Muffling

Double-ply heads are also available with built-in muffling to provide controlled, microphone-ready sounds without additional dampening. The Evans HD (Heavy Duty) has 5-mil and 7.5-mil plies and a 2-mil floating muffling ring under the perimeter. The HD Dry has small holes around the edge to shorten the decay a bit further. A thicker and more durable option is the Evans EC, which is a 7-mil/10-mil combo plus a specially designed muffling ring. The EC Reverse Dot adds a 5-mil dot at the center for increased attack. A slightly thinner option is Remo's Powerstroke 77, which has two 7-mil plies, a 7-mil underside muffling

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## Snare Drum Heads

ring, and a 5-mil center dot on top.

Aquarian's dual-7-mil Hi-Velocity features a large underside dot for added strength and definition, and the Hi-Impact head has two 10-mil plies and a large Power Dot.

Comparable super-durable models from Evans and Remo are the Heavyweight and the Emperor X. Both of those heads feature two 10-mil plies and a 5-mil dot. Evans also reworked the nearly indestructible design of its marching snare heads for the Hybrid, which has two layers of woven fabric and produces a super-sharp, dense sound that's ideal for players requiring utmost articulation and minimal tone.

Dark, tubby, '70s-type snare sounds are easily achieved with Remo's Coated Pinstripe, which has two 7-mil plies and a specially designed "overtone reducing agent" applied between the layers, and Evans' Hydraulic, which has 7.5-mil and 6.5-mil plies with a thin layer of oil between them.

### Calf-Like Options

Warm, rich, animal-hide snare tones can be achieved via the real thing or several synthetic options. Remo's Fiberskyn Diplomat is a favorite among classical and classic jazz players; it has a 7.5-mil base laminated to a layer of 3-mil fiber. The Fiberskyn Ambassador has a thicker 10-mil base, which translates into enhanced midrange and low-end tones. Evans' Calf-tone is thinner than the Remo models, featuring a 7-mil base blended with a fiber



**Remo  
Fiberskyn**



**Evans  
Hydraulic**



**Aquarian  
Hi-Performance**

top surface. Less extreme calfskin-inspired options include Aquarian's Vintage series, which comprises single- and double-ply heads with a thick beige coating, Remo's Renaissance series, which has a translucent textured surface, and Evans' Strata 1000, which is a 10-mil head with a thin, hazy coating that resembles natural hide.

### Snare Side

Although not as impactful to a snare's overall sound as the batter, your snare-side head can affect how quickly and accurately the wires respond to your strokes. The thinnest resonant heads, including Evans' 200 and Remo's Diplomat Hazy, are made with 2-mil film and produce bright, fast articulation. For quiet, delicate playing, these are the ideal choice. But they could blow out if used in louder situations.

Medium-weight snare-side heads

(Aquarian Classic Clear, Remo Ambassador Hazy, and Evans 300) are made with 3-mil film and are the best option for general, everyday use. Aquarian also has the Hi-Performance 3-mil head, which comes with protective material positioned where the snare clips contact the film to prevent tearing. Thicker 5-mil options, like Remo's Emperor Hazy and Evans' 500, are more resistant to breaking at high volumes while still providing crisp, sizzling response.

If you want the snare response of your drum to be drier, darker, and warmer, Remo has the Black Suede Ambassador, which features 5-mil Ebony film with a textured surface, and the Renaissance Ambassador, which features 3-mil film and has a textured, translucent surface. Either of those models would be a great choice if you want to give a bright-sounding drum a throatier, darker, vintage-style response.



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# Developing the Weaker Hand

## Part 2: Incorporating Odd Groupings

by Albe Bonacci

Last month we developed our weaker hand by leading with it in six-note groupings on the drumset. In this lesson we'll further expand on those exercises by playing odd groupings within sextuplets and 16th notes while leading with our weaker hand.

To broaden the left-hand-lead concept that we worked with last month, try utilizing groupings of five notes. By combining the following orchestrations with other three- and four-note groupings within sextuplets and 16th notes, you'll have a much larger vocabulary to choose from, and your phrases won't seem overly planned. Here are a few examples of five-note groupings that we can utilize.

1A 1B 1C

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

Next let's apply the third five-note phrase from Exercise 1 within a measure of 16th-note triplets.

2

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

Here's a five-note phrase applied to 16th notes.

3

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

We can also combine other groupings within sextuplets. The following pattern demonstrates a sequence of four-, six-, four-, six-, and four-note groupings, in that order, in a 16th-note-triplet subdivision.

4

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

Here are a few more ideas that utilize assorted groupings and orchestrations. Keep in mind that these phrases could also be played within a 16th-note subdivision. However, you may have to experiment with sticking substitutions to facilitate exiting the bar.

5

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

6

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

7

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

8

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

Playing a sequence of five, four, six, three, and six 16th-note-triplet partials highlights an accented clave pattern in our left hand on the crash cymbal. Exercise 9 demonstrates this phrase with brackets that indicate the groupings, along with a few orchestrations of the pattern.

9

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

5 4 6 3 6

10

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

5 4 6 3 6

11

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

5 4 6 3 6

12

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

5 4 6 3 6

**Albe Bonacci** is a Los Angeles-based drummer, educator, and clinician who's performed with Larry Hart, Desmond Child, Diane Warren, Jack Segal, and Dave Morrison, among others. He's also performed for television, radio, and film, and is a faculty member at Musicians Institute.



# The Creative Hi-Hat Foot

## A Fresh Approach for the Steady Timekeeper

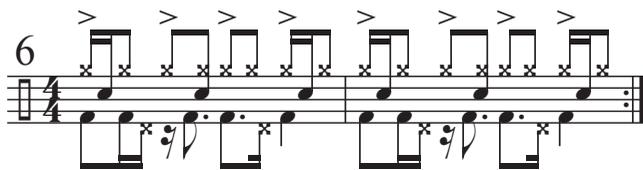
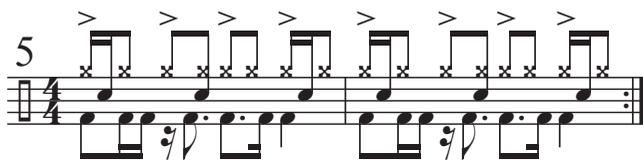
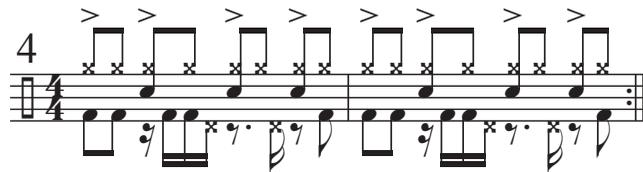
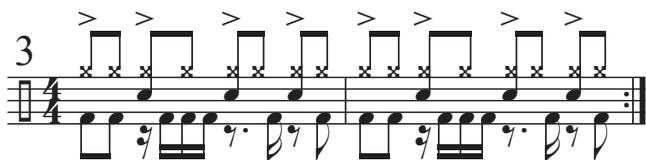
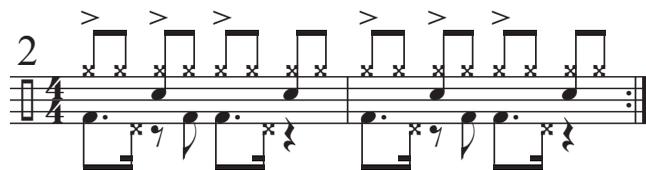
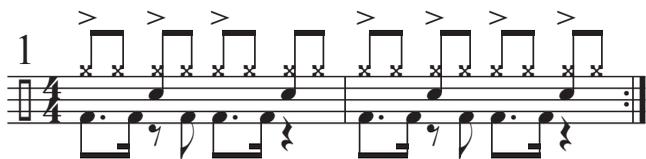
by Stephane Chamberland

In this lesson we'll utilize the hi-hat foot to creatively expand our groove vocabulary. At some point I realized that forgetting about the left foot can be destructive for the groove. Although drummers often employ the hi-hat to keep steady time, we can expand its use to create an interesting and open sound. However, if we want to incorporate and expand this voice, it must fit the music. The exercises in this lesson will help you develop more control, independence, freedom, and musicality with the hi-hat pedal.

In jazz, the ride and hi-hat voices are crucial to the groove's feel. In *Beyond Bop Drumming*, a highly recommended book by the author and jazz educator John Riley, comping patterns are demonstrated that incorporate the hi-hat foot. I fell in love with the musicality and surprising phrases that could be created from Riley's ideas. After recording my own practice sessions, I noticed that this concept can be applied to other styles as well.

Let's begin practicing the concept by replacing some bass drum notes with the hi-hat foot in a rock-groove context. Start by playing 8th notes on the hi-hat with your ride hand. Later, try switching lead hands when practicing these patterns. This open-handed approach will help you balance your weaker side and improve your facility. Experiment with orchestration by placing your lead hand on a ride bell or floor tom. You can also play an upbeat accent pattern instead of only accenting the downbeats.

In each of the following exercises, we'll start with the main groove before incorporating the hi-hat foot.



When practicing these patterns, imagine that your limbs are totally independent, both in terms of their coordination and relative volume. You can practice with a heel-down or heel-up technique on the hi-hat pedal or incorporate the entire leg for loud strokes. My book *Pedal Control* offers more information about these techniques. Because the snare, bass drum, and ride are generally louder than the hi-hat pedal, you'll have to balance your limbs' dynamics to make sure the hi-hat variations can be heard. Play the hi-hat pedal at the same volume as, or louder than, the rest of the drumset.

Remember to practice with a metronome, and make each exercise groove. Also, compose your own grooves, and again start replacing some bass drum notes with the hi-hat pedal.

Don't forget to practice jazz independence patterns with other books such as *The Pulse of Jazz* by Nic Marcy, or for other styles, *The Hi-Hat Foot* by Garey Williams. And to listen to some of these concepts applied to a jazz-fusion setting, check out Vinnie Colaiuta's playing on the Jing Chi song "Going Nowhere," from the album *Jing Chi Live at Yoshi's*.

**Stephane Chamberland** is an internationally recognized drummer, clinician, educator, and author who currently leads the Stephane Chamberland Jazz Quartet. He is the co-author of the books *The Weaker Side*, *Pedal Control*, and *Drumset Duets* (Wizdom Media). For more info, visit [stephanechamberland.com](http://stephanechamberland.com).



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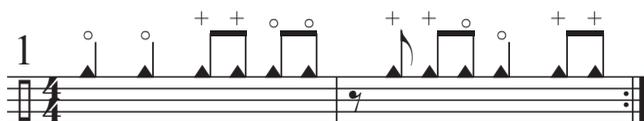
# Latin Jazz Drumming

## The Mambo, Part 1

by Steve Fidyk

In this lesson series we'll focus on Latin jazz rhythms and interpret them on the drumset. For the first installment, we're digging into the Afro-Cuban mambo bell pattern.

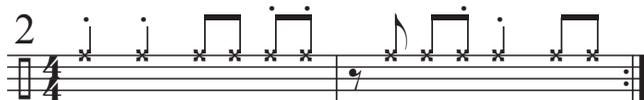
Mambo is an Afro-Cuban style that's built upon a clave foundation. Traditionally its main phrase is played on a mambo cowbell or the side of a timbale shell. Here's an example of this pattern based on a 2:3 clave.



The mambo became an extremely popular style in the 1950s, shortly after the conga master Chano Pozo joined Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra in the late '40s. The American bandleaders Stan Kenton, Art Blakey, and Max Roach began to combine traditional mambo rhythms with the modern bebop vocabulary to create what was initially labeled "Cubop" or "Cuban Bop." This stylistic combination led to a more flexible rhythmic phrasing that could be played straight or swung.

Resourceful jazz drummers borrowed these traditional rhythms, which were originally meant for hand percussion instruments, and applied them to the kit. For example, in a traditional Afro-Cuban percussion section, you'll hear the mambo pattern played in conjunction with clave, guiro, tumbaó, bongo, and conga variations simultaneously. Jazz drummers often take these rhythms and assign them to different limbs to create the sound of a percussion section on the drumset.

It's customary for jazz drummers to voice the mambo pattern on the cowbell, the cymbal bell, the closed hi-hat, or the shell of a floor tom, the latter of which mimics the sound of a timbale shell. To start, try playing the traditional mambo bell pattern on the ride bell.



If you have access to a pair of congas, try the following traditional patterns with your hands. Doing so can help you gain a better understanding of the rhythm's phrasing, sound, and feel before applying the figure to the kit.

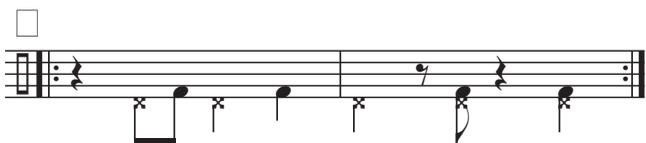
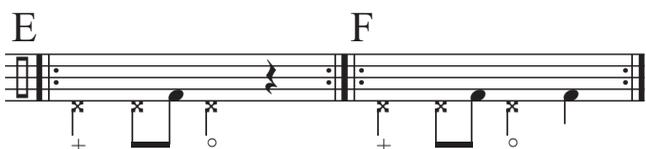
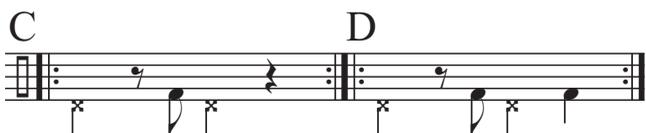
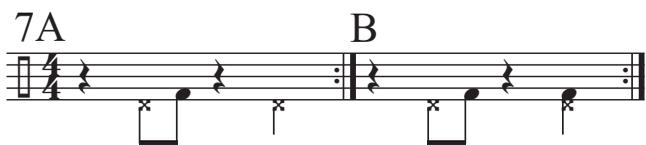


L L R L L L R R L L R R R L R R

Next, with your nondominant hand on the drumset, play the accented and open sounds from the conga rhythm between the snare rim click and the toms.



Once you have control of the previous hand patterns, incorporate your feet by playing the following bass drum and hi-hat patterns.



### Essential Listening

- Cal Tjader *Mambo With Tjader*
- Tito Puente and his Orchestra *Dance Mania (Legacy Edition)*
- Pérez Prado Orchestra *Big Hits by Prado*
- Dizzy Gillespie *Afro*
- Mongo Santamaria *Watermelon Man!*

Go to [Modern Drummer's Spotify page](#) to listen.

The following example combines the mambo bell pattern with the conga pattern from Exercise 5 and the foot pattern from Exercise 7B.



This next example combines the mambo bell pattern with the conga pattern from Exercise 6 and the foot pattern from Exercise 7G.



With all four limbs combined, the texture creates a dense Afro-Cuban percussion section feel. Take your time when combining your hands and feet, be patient with your progress, and practice each example with a metronome. A good starting tempo would be 84 bpm or slower.

Next time we'll examine jazz variations of the mambo bell rhythm.

**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).



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# Multilayered Polyrhythms

## Rhythmic Puzzles for Your Mind and Body

by Aaron Edgar

**Last month we concluded** our two-part introduction to polyrhythms with an example that combined multiple polyrhythms within one phrase. In this lesson, we'll continue layering multiple polyrhythms to take the previous ideas to an even deeper level. These exercises will challenge your mind and body, and they'll yield unique rhythms that can be surprisingly funky.

Exercise 1 demonstrates three-, four-, and seven-note groupings played simultaneously. When layering these figures at the same time within a 16th-note subdivision, all three groupings collectively take twenty-one quarter notes, or three measures of 7/4, to resolve. We'll play every fourth 16th note with the hi-hat foot to represent a quarter-note pulse. Playing every third 16th note on a cymbal stack or ride gives us a four-over-three polyrhythm on top of the quarter-note pulse. And we'll play every seventh 16th note on the snare, which yields a four-over-seven polyrhythm over the hi-hat foot.

Exercise 1 consists of three staves of music in 7/4 time. The first staff shows a quarter-note pulse on the hi-hat foot, represented by 'x' marks on the 4th, 8th, 12th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions. The second staff shows a four-over-three polyrhythm on a cymbal stack or ride, with notes on the 1st, 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions. The third staff shows a four-over-seven polyrhythm on the snare, with notes on the 2nd, 9th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions.

Try not to jump in and read straight through this pattern. Although you *can* practice this way, it's a tough road that can leave the phrase feeling rigid, and you might not attain a clear vision of how the groupings interact with one another. Instead, approach these rhythms piece-by-piece while focusing on how each layer individually feels against the pulse, and build the entire phrase systematically. It should feel like a rhythmic solar system, with each grouping orbiting around the beat in different periods.

Let's start by examining how each piece feels against our pulse. Exercise 2 isolates every third 16th note against the hi-hat foot, which yields a four-over-three polyrhythm.

Exercise 2 is in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a quarter-note pulse on the hi-hat foot with 'x' marks on the 4th, 8th, and 12th 16th-note subdivisions. The second staff shows a four-over-three polyrhythm on a cymbal stack or ride with notes on the 1st, 4th, and 7th 16th-note subdivisions.

Exercise 3 isolates every seventh 16th note against the pulse, which results in a four-over-seven polyrhythm.

Exercise 3 is in 7/4 time. The first staff shows a quarter-note pulse on the hi-hat foot with 'x' marks on the 4th, 8th, 12th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions. The second staff shows a four-over-seven polyrhythm on the snare with notes on the 2nd, 9th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions.

Practice Exercises 2 and 3 until they feel comfortable. Your pulse should feel as solid as if you were playing a four-on-the-floor groove, and the three and seven layers should feel like funky yet even syncopations over the foundation.

Exercise 4 presents more of a challenging feel by isolating the snare and ride. Count 16th notes out loud and try not to feel these groupings as triplets. If you have trouble with the spacing, play solid 16th notes on the bass drum to provide a partial that each grouping can align with. Each side of the polyrhythm should feel evenly spaced. If you're hesitating or rushing into the notes, slow down while counting to reinforce each rhythm's placement.

Exercise 4 is in 21/16 time. The first staff shows a complex polyrhythm with notes on the 1st, 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, and 19th 16th-note subdivisions. Below the staff is the counting guide: 1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a 5 e & a 6.

Once each separate polyrhythm feels comfortable, revisit Exercise 1. Start with quarter notes on the hi-hat foot, and maintain the pulse, even if your hands need to restart. Add in every third 16th note with your right hand and slowly incorporate the snare. Adding one note at a time makes practicing this example easier.

To make this material musical, we need to embellish these rhythms. Let's start by spicing up our seven-note grouping. In Exercises 5-7, we'll play a seven-note phrase on the bass drum with two extra notes added on the third and seventh partials of the grouping. The snare will play every seventh 16th note starting on beat 2 of each figure.

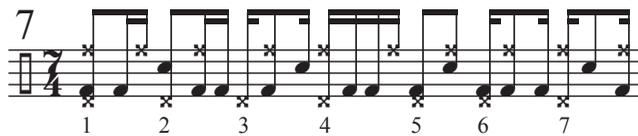
Exercise 5 demonstrates the embellished seven-note layer on top of quarter notes with the hi-hat foot. Be careful not to start feeling the pulse shift to the upbeat halfway through the bar.

Exercise 5 is in 7/4 time. The first staff shows quarter notes on the hi-hat foot with 'x' marks on the 4th, 8th, 12th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions. The second staff shows an embellished seven-note phrase on the bass drum with notes on the 1st, 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, and 19th 16th-note subdivisions.

In this next example, we'll play every third 16th note with our ride hand to create an embellished seven-over-three polyrhythm.

Exercise 6 is in 21/16 time. The first staff shows quarter notes on the hi-hat foot with 'x' marks on the 4th, 8th, 12th, and 16th 16th-note subdivisions. The second staff shows an embellished seven-over-three polyrhythm on the ride with notes on the 1st, 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, and 19th 16th-note subdivisions.

In Exercise 7, we'll play the entire 7/4 phrase from Exercise 1 with the embellished seven-note bass drum pattern and displaced snare. Starting with your hi-hat foot, slowly add the kick and snare figure. Humming a bass line along with the kick and snare can help you internalize how this feels as a musical pattern. Once that's comfortable, add in every third 16th note with your ride hand.

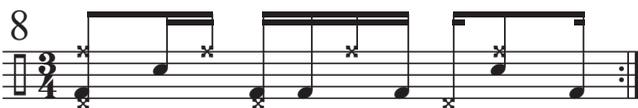


So now we have a three-measure groove in 7/4 with contrasting rhythms underneath orbiting cymbals.

Considering the phrase's current form, you'd have to write a very specific piece of music to make this pattern practical and useful. You could imagine a bass line that works with the kick and snare pattern, add a counter melody on every third 16th note, place some chord changes along the way, and evolve themes that align with both sides of the rhythm.

However, for those of us who live on Earth, there's a lot we can utilize from this groove to place it in a more typical musical setting. Exercise 7 contains twenty-one beats of rhythmic material with multiple polyrhythms that resolve within a single phrase. But we don't need to use the entire example. We can pick our favorite rhythmic moments and assemble a new, unique groove that fits into a more common setting. The final three examples apply shortened phrases from Exercise 7 in a musical way.

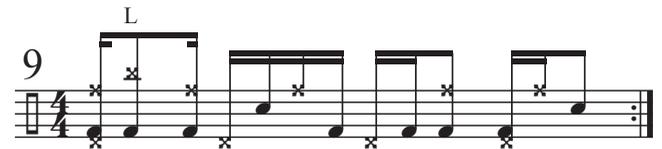
The last three beats of Exercise 7 make a funky and interesting 3/4 groove, as demonstrated in the following example.



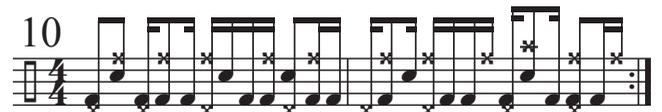
This groove also sounds great with the hi-hat foot on the upbeat, which you can find within Exercise 7 by starting from the "&" of beat 1 in the second measure. Another great option is to pedal 8th notes with your hi-hat foot, which gives the phrase more of a driving feel.

In Exercise 9, let's take beats 11-14 from Exercise 7 and

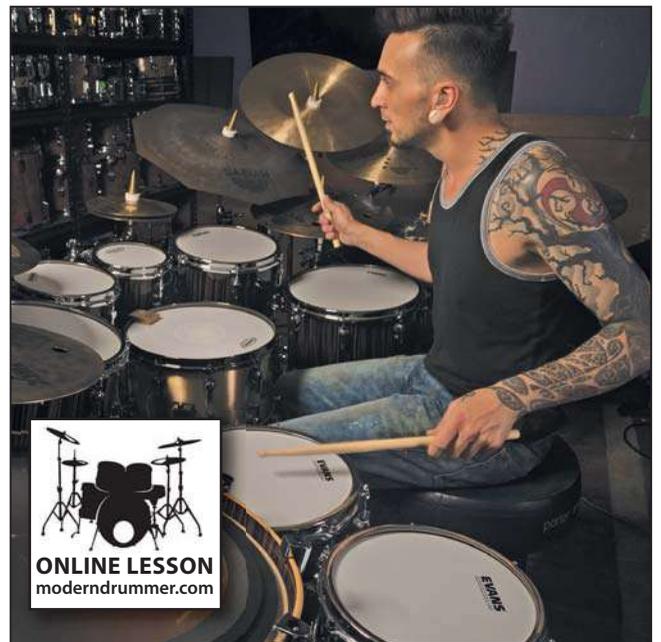
reorder them. I like how these four beats flow—except for the rest on what would be beat 1 if we played these isolated figures as is. So I wrote a groove that starts with beats 13 and 14 and ends with beats 11 and 12, in that order. The only embellishment is an alternate cymbal stack that's played with your left hand on the "e" of beat 1.



The final example creates more of a fragmented groove using a sequence of beats 5, 6, 7, 2, 3, 4, 21, and 1 from Exercise 7, in that order. A few bass drum notes and a crash are added to round out the groove.



When applying ideas like this musically, remember that you can always modify the phrase to fit what's happening. Exploring these types of rhythmic puzzles can be a fun challenge that yields unique source material to spice up any rhythmically adventurous project. It's possible I'm simply sadistic, but I find these challenges a lot of fun. Enjoy!



**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).



# TAPAS for the Gigging Drummer

## A Five-Part Recipe for Ensuring Ultimate Employability

by Jonathan Ulman

Every practicing drummer wants to get better. But the wealth of information at our immediate disposal is extensive, to say the least, as we are inundated with videos, photos, tips, tools, routines, product recommendations, and expert opinions by professional drummers from around the world. Our challenge is to sift through everything, digest it, and determine what we need to improve our own playing.

I was asked in an interview a while ago what I felt were the keys to being a successful session musician. I concocted an answer, but it wasn't until a few days later that I took some time to think about the question more deeply. I started putting together a list of words that eventually evolved into the acronym TAPAS. The dictionary definition of the word "tapas" is "a wide variety of plates to create a complete cuisine." When applying that to how one can be a successful session musician, the definition becomes "a wide variety of characteristics and skills that create a complete player."

**T = Thorough:** Paying close attention to every detail, being methodical and meticulous

**A = Adaptable:** Being able to adjust to all situations, whether on stage, in the studio, or on the road

**P = Professional:** Meeting the highest standards and exceeding expectations in all areas of the work

**A = Attentive:** Paying close attention, staying alert, and being an active listener

**S = Skilled:** Having the knowledge and ability to perform at a high level in all genres

Now let's return to the topic of "getting better." That can mean completely different things depending on who you ask, so trying to pigeonhole everyone into the same lesson plans or practice routines may not be a great idea. That being said, I believe all drummers should have an understanding of rudiments and should routinely work on their hand mechanics and technique. They're the foundation you'll continue to build on throughout your career. It's when you start applying technique to different musical situations that you'll begin to delve into areas that specifically apply to you.

As a session drummer, I spend the majority of my time



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focusing on getting better and more confident in these areas:

1. Working with a click track and feeling comfortable playing in front of it, on top of it, and behind it.

2. Becoming fluent in numerous genres of music.

3. Refining my sound. I'm often hired because my playing style and sound is appealing for a project, so I'm constantly practicing to ensure that everything I do remains as consistent as possible. When working on projects I want to be sure that I'm utilizing my skill set and knowledge in ways that support the sound and feel that the artists envision.

While it would be ideal if I had unlimited time to watch every drum video and master a full gamut of styles, that's simply unrealistic. So I catalog the areas of improvement that most directly impact my career path, and I focus my attention there. To remain busy, the most important thing for me is to maintain being a well-rounded drummer, so it's essential that I have a wide range of styles under control. That way I can walk into every situation with confidence.

Again, what's important to me isn't necessarily relatable to you. The desire to get better at your craft, and the decisions regarding the specific areas you should focus on, are personal choices. You ultimately have full control of your destiny. If you want to master every Metallica song, every jazz standard, and every Motown hit, or if you just want to be able to play the epic drum fill in Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight," nothing should stand in your way. As you work on those things, you'll inadvertently improve your general technical and musical abilities, which can then be applied to future playing situations and practice objectives.



**Jonathan Ulman** is a session drummer and percussionist from Boston. He was the 2016 and 2017 Boston Music Awards' Session Musician of the Year winner. For more information, visit [jonathanulman.com](http://jonathanulman.com).



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# Drumset Ergonomics

## Part 2: Seat Height

by Brandon Green

**This month we're going to explore** the critically important relationship between the drum throne and the human body. Selecting an appropriate throne height is one of the most overlooked steps of setting up a drumset, yet it could have the greatest impact on your comfort and execution on the instrument.

I vividly recall when one of my favorite drummers posted a message online saying he was going to stop playing the drums because of back pain. He blamed the drumset for causing his back pain, but that was such a misguided notion. Of course, it's possible to injure yourself playing drums, but only if you don't respect the role that your specific body mechanics play in the process. Fortunately, if we take a few minutes to grasp a basic understanding of the internal components of the human body, we can dramatically decrease the likelihood of developing back pain due to improper throne height.

Joint pain can occur when we force a joint to do something that it isn't capable of doing. Think of any joint (i.e., where one bone meets another) like a 200-pound magician lying on a bed of 200 nails. While it may seem like an impressive feat, basic mechanics tells us the magician is only dealing with one pound of body weight per nail when evenly distributed over all 200 nails. Our joints respond the same way to stress. Healthy joints distribute force evenly. But if we sit too low or too high on the throne, the bones will naturally start to apply pressure to one side of the joint over the other. That's when pain starts to set in. Unfortunately, by the time you begin to experience pain, it's often because the cartilage has been worn down to the point where the bones are rubbing against one another. This condition is called osteoarthritis.

By taking the time to learn how we should position ourselves on the drum throne, we'll be able to protect our joints for the long term while also recognizing how to deal with current issues. Let's start by examining what parts of the body are affected by sitting on a drum throne. From there, we'll explore a simple assessment to help you determine exactly where you should be sitting to avoid aggravating current pain or causing new pain.

Before I delve into this topic any further, I have to emphasize that I'm not a doctor or pain specialist. I'm a drummer and a specialist in human mechanics. If you're currently experiencing high-level back pain, and the upcoming suggestions don't make a difference for you, I strongly advise you to connect with your primary doctor to talk further about the issue.

Now, let's begin.

### Drop the Dogma

Strictly adhering to cookie-cutter rules, such as sitting with your legs at 90-degree angles or keeping your shins perpendicular to the pedals, won't do you any favors. Concepts like those have been handed down for generations, but they don't take into consideration science or—more significantly—your individualized body structure.

What you need to figure out is how high you should sit

given your personal joint structure and muscle system. Is it possible that you've simply cloned the setup of your favorite drummer? There are several legendary players who sit extremely low, but following their example may prove problematic for you down the road.

### Understand and Respect Your Body

The hip is a ball-and-socket joint that has three degrees of freedom. One of the most important steps in determining your ideal drum throne height is to identify the shape of your hips and how much motion the joints will allow. The muscles across this system are commonly referred to as hip flexors. However, there are multiple tissues involved, including the psoas, TFL (tensor fasciae latae), and rectus femoris. The mechanical output of these tissues will determine how high you are able to raise each leg.

### The Assessment

Pedal width is an important topic that will be explored in a future article. For now, set your throne at a medium height and sit down. With your feet flat on the ground and at a comfortable distance apart, slowly lift one knee up towards the ceiling. Check to ensure that your back does not move from front to back or side to side. Your weight should stay evenly distributed between your glutes and thighs. Relax and repeat the process with the other leg.



What did you observe? Can each knee be lifted to the same height? Or does one side have a greater range of motion than the other? As we get older, the structures in our back often change, so you might be able to lift one of your legs higher than the other. If you prefer to sit relatively low at the drumset, then the hip with the lowest range of motion will determine your throne height. If you find that you curve your lower back to allow the hip to flex, then your seat is positioned too low for optimum output.

Once you have an idea as to how high you can lift each leg, lower or raise your throne to find the most comfortable height that allows you to utilize a full range of motion without pushing your back and hips into positions that you can't control.

The active range of motion assessment described previously is a great way to determine your ideal throne height. But can your active range of motion improve over time? Absolutely! By exercising your limbs within your active range of motion, you can see an increase in flexibility because you're not pushing your joints into unnatural positions.

The following images will help you understand what happens if you sit too low or too high.

### Sitting Too Low

In the first photo below, I'm sitting too low. The second photo shows what happens to the spine in this position. The lower lumbar spine is pushed into flexion from its normal curvature. It's not a problem to be in this position on occasion. But when challenged to do so regularly, the structural integrity of the lower spine is decreased by 30 to 40 percent. This reduction in stability is often what leads to long-term injury. Repetitive motions, such as playing the bass drum and hi-hat with the feet, will eventually create friction in the lower back, which irritates the surrounding tissues and structures. No one wants that.



### Sitting Too High

Now in the first photo below, I'm sitting too high. My spine is being pulled back into extension to help manage my balance on the throne. This extended position of the spine is shown in the second photo. Forcing the spine into extension will actually lead to an increase in structural integrity and compression. The challenge with this position, however, is that you may end up losing some range of motion because a few vertebrae could become locked. Trying to force excess movement into a locked joint will likely also cause irritation to the surrounding tissues.



Following the seat height principles outlined here might not completely eliminate back pain if you're already experiencing it. But it should help you create a scenario where your body is working as well as it can within its current range of motion. See you next time!

Muscle and exercise specialist **Brandon Green** is the founder of Strata Internal Performance Center, and is the owner of the drummer-centric biomechanics and fitness website [drum-mechanics.com](http://drum-mechanics.com).



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

## Vater Stick Shield

The Stick Shield can be applied to any drumstick to make it more impact resistant. The drumset version is 3" long and lists for \$10.95. A version for marching sticks is 5" long and lists for \$18.25.

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



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



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[www.trakke.co.uk](http://www.trakke.co.uk)



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The Advanced Lightweight hardware pack includes two cymbal stands, a snare stand, and a hi-hat stand. The pieces in this sturdy, modern-style pack are made out of aluminum to improve portability. An included carrying case has enough space to fit the stands as well as a standard-size throne and bass drum pedal. The Advanced Lightweight hardware pack lists for \$668. The hardware is also available individually: the cymbal stand and snare stand list for \$149 each, and the hi-hat stand lists for \$215.

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



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### TR-8S Rhythm Performer

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



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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS Taking the Reins

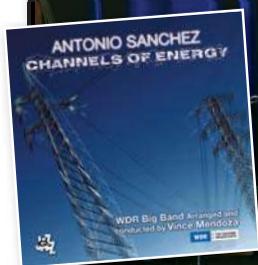
### Antonio Sanchez *Channels of Energy*

The innovative musician veers in yet another direction.

Following on the heels of his Grammy-nominated drums-meets-electronics tour de force, *Bad Hombre*, the amazing Antonio Sanchez takes a left turn into a big band setting. Early in his career, Sanchez toured with Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra, and always hoped to further explore that format. On this thrilling double disc, he richly fulfills that wish in a modern way, teaming up with one of Europe's jazz jewels, the WDR Big Band, along with esteemed arranger and conductor Vince Mendoza. The eight Sanchez compositions are culled from his previous six discs as leader. Mendoza's arrangements brilliantly expand the harmonic sophistication of the drummer's music and add drama to the

bold rhythmic explorations. Sanchez's drumming is driving, yet at one with the ensemble due to his "orchestrating" dynamics and musicality. Although dazzling, his intriguing soloing—often employing challenging subdivisions and beat displacements—is never mere bombast; each one builds as a mini composition interlocked with the ensemble. A drumming event. (Cam Jazz)

**Jeff Potter**



Elisa Caidana

### McClenty Hunter Jr. *The Groove Hunter*

Hunter leads the way with authority.

Best known for his tenures with jazz notables Kenny Garrett and Dave Stryker, McClenty Hunter Jr. steps out for his winning debut as a leader. His strong swing pulse, infused with a bluesy pocket born of gospel roots, informs this inspired set featuring a crack quartet supplemented with special guests. Hunter also contributes four originals that favor lyricism, including the lovely "I Remember When." Kicking off with "Blue Chopsticks," Hunter shows his unflagging command of breakneck swing tempos and exchanges crisp, fiery fours with pianist Eric Reed. Also hyper-tempo is the Coltrane chops buster, "Countdown," on which Hunter unleashes an explosive duet passage with guest altoist Donald Harrison. In contrast, he lends a gentle R&B pocket to "Sack Full of Dreams" and plays pensive mallets-on-toms accompaniment on "Give Thanks." And of course, Hunter delivers his trademark killer shuffle on the rousing "That Girl," featuring guest guitarist Stryker. As a "Groove Hunter," this drummer always captures his prey. (Strikezone) **Jeff Potter**



### Duduka da Fonseca Trio *Plays Dom Salvador*

Duduka pays tribute to a musical mentor.

As a teen growing up in Rio de Janeiro, Duduka da Fonseca endlessly played along with pianist/composer Dom Salvador's *Rio 65 Trio*, a watershed LP that heavily influenced his future innovations in "samba jazz" drumming. Later, Duduka fulfilled a dream when he joined Salvador's '80s quartet. Here, the drummer's superlative trio, featuring pianist David Feldman and bassist Guto Wirtti, cover eleven Salvador compositions with fresh arrangements. "Farjuto" is a choice example of Duduka's samba jazz concepts, straddling a feel between the two elements, while on "Transition," he percolates a snare-driven groove framed by northeastern Brazilian influences. "Antes da Chuva" showcases his sensitive touch with airy yet commanding interplay. In contrast, "Samba do Malandrinho" is fueled by his infectious, popping brushwork. On the blazing finale, "Meu Fraco é Café Forte," Duduka proves touch also facilitates power, pushing the tune to a tidal surge, then unleashing a ripping solo that ramps the trio to a fireworks finale. Spirited and intimate. (Sunnyside) **Jeff Potter**



### Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

**Rogério Boccato Quarteto** No Old Rain /// **Fran Vielma and his Venezuelan Jazz Collective** Tendencias /// **Sean Noonan** The Aqua Diva /// **Jeff Williams** Lifelike /// **Bob Holz** Vision: Coast to Coast Connection /// **John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble** All Can Work /// **Akira Tana** Jazzanova /// **Buddy Rich** The Lost Tapes /// **Diego Pinera** Despertando



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# Vin-Three!

Dan Siegel *Origins*  
 Brian Eisenberg Jazz Orchestra *Life Changes*  
 Mili *Written in the Stars*



Sam Rabourin

Taken together, a trio of vastly different releases shows why VINNIE COLAIUTA is still a first-call studio powerhouse.

Keyboardist Dan Siegel's music on *Origins* is a chill set that features Vinnie Colaiuta laying down subtle rimclick grooves ("When One Door Closes") and oh-so-smooth brushes ("Moon and Stars") with plenty of space for **Lenny Castro** to fill in with perfect percussion. There's lots of understated fire on the mostly piano-driven material here, even if the notes aren't flying by fast and furious. (dansiegelmusic.com)

Though he's working within the confines of involved big band charts, Colaiuta loosens his tie on the latest release by the Brian Eisenberg Jazz Orchestra. On the opening title track, Vinnie takes a few breaks featuring tight singles around the kit before settling in and kicking the band with propulsive swing. Check out his clever fills on the hip-hop flavored "Savvy Man Blues" for an example of how Colaiuta can show irreverence for traditional norms while still comping behind horn solos with all the right reference points and licks. (brianeisenbergmusic.com)

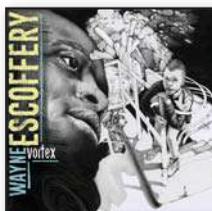
Vocalist Mili's music is intelligent pop featuring slick studio execution, but in Colaiuta's hands it's transformed into a showcase for his varied grooves and solid support. The drummer's 7/8 flow in "Had to Be You" is the work of a musician who's breathed odd time signatures for decades, and the title track features tasty rimclicks and tom fills woven within the verse pattern. This is radio fare, but Colaiuta is really playing here. (miliofficial.com) **Ilya Stembkovsky**



## Wayne Escoffery *Vortex*

An impressive set of progressive jazz tunes anchored by **RALPH PETERSON JR.**

Building off a successful stint in Tom Harrell's band, saxophonist Wayne Escoffery has emerged as a capable bandleader himself, and his latest release, *Vortex*, is an impressive set of progressive jazz tunes, most of which are anchored by the perennially impressive drumming of Ralph Peterson Jr. Escoffery's band displays a remarkable adeptness at moving strategically between chaos and serenity. Likewise, Peterson's playing on *Vortex* reinforces his reputation as a master craftsman within modern jazz. Whether he's laying back to provide a relaxed feel to the deceptively syncopated 15/4 pulse of "Judgment" or taking center stage as the featured soloist on the album's opener and title track, Peterson has a knack for knowing when to emerge as the primary instrumentalist and when to allow his bandmates to shine. (Sunnyside) **Keaton Lamle**



## Godsmack *When Legends Rise*

Hard rock vet **SHANNON LARKIN** lays it down on Godsmack's decidedly mainstream seventh studio album.

The first album in Godsmack's lengthy career to employ co-writers, *When Legends Rise* drips with drummer Shannon Larkin's signature smackdown despite its slick pop/rock production treatment. While Larkin's penetrating signature ride cymbal sound, the band's occasional use of percussion-infused textures, and vocalist Sully Erna's guttural growl are absent here, the drummer spares none of his usual aggression. Shannon's verse tom groove and driving chorus smash on the album-opening title track, tasty double bass parts and hand/foot combo fills on "Every Part of Me," clever shifting backbeats on "Someday," and song-serving precision on lead single "Bulletproof" stand out among the album's eleven tracks, ensuring that it represents yet another arena-worthy statement. (BMG) **Ben Meyer**



## MULTIMEDIA

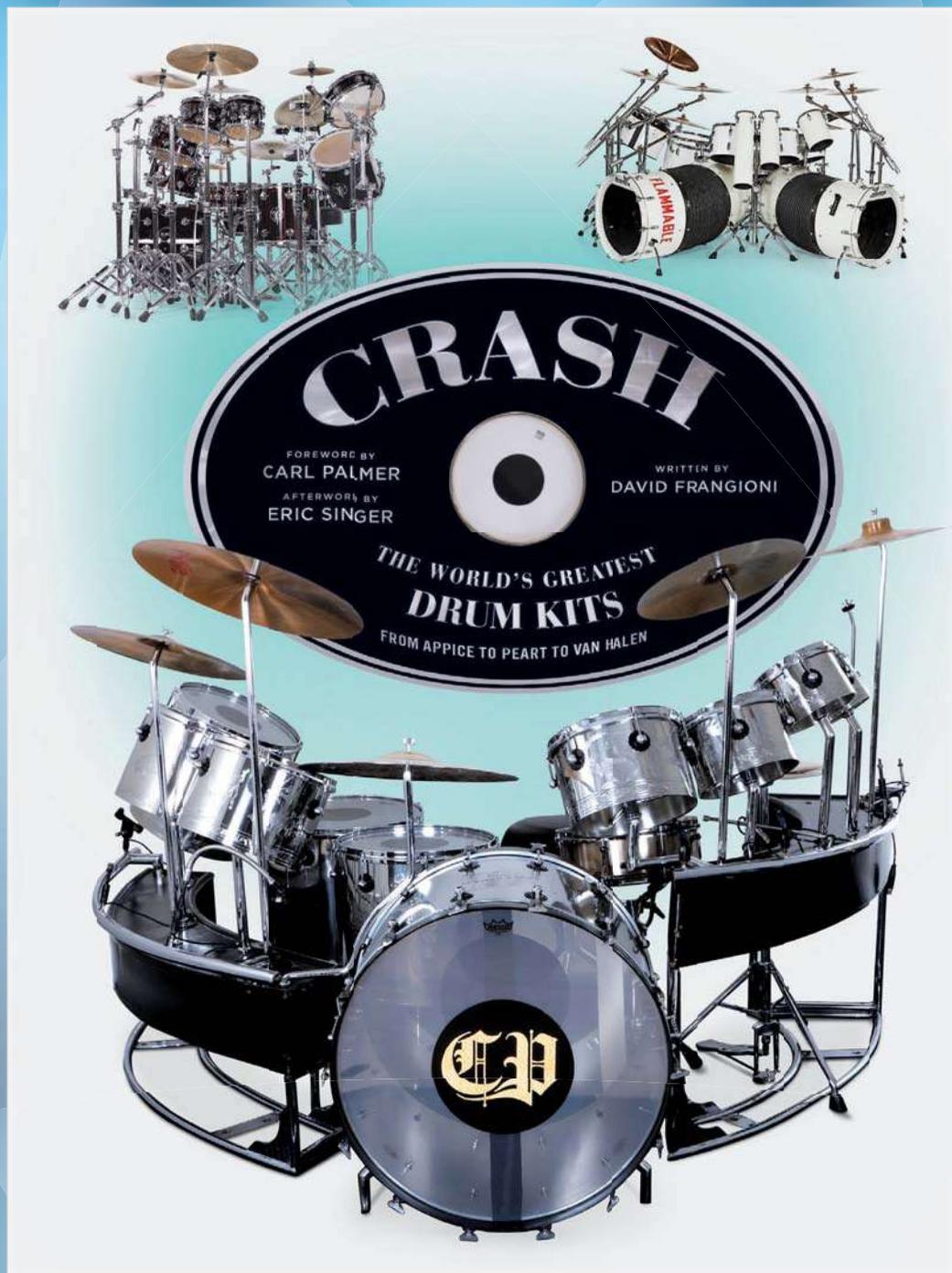
### *Drums by Five (A Quintuplet Method for Drum Set)* by Hubert Bründlmayer

Discover the wonders of quintuplet phrasing using this informative and challenging book.

Drummers looking for some advanced-level challenges will have a taxing but rewarding time with this book focusing on application of the quintuplet into rhythmic language. The warm-up suggestions alone are enough to open up the way you think about your pre-gig ritual or just getting your hands loose, especially when the author suggests accenting different notes in the groupings. The meat here, though, is the focus on five-note phrases and how to make them sound good in the music you're playing. There are building blocks for hands and feet with foot ostinatos, the author's thoughts on reading and playing along with loops, and his own rudiment mutations with names like "Pataraf-la" and "Draga-Di-Diddle," so say goodbye to your weekend plans. When you feel like you're getting the hang of things, Bründlmayer introduces "Wilcoxonish Quintuplet Rudimental Etudes," offering, "Here's some harder stuff to work on." Also included are some Bill Stewart and Marcus Gilmore transcriptions to see how jazz greats employ fives on record. Use this book to move beyond the beyond. (20€, hubert-music.com/quintuplet) **Ilya Stembkovsky**



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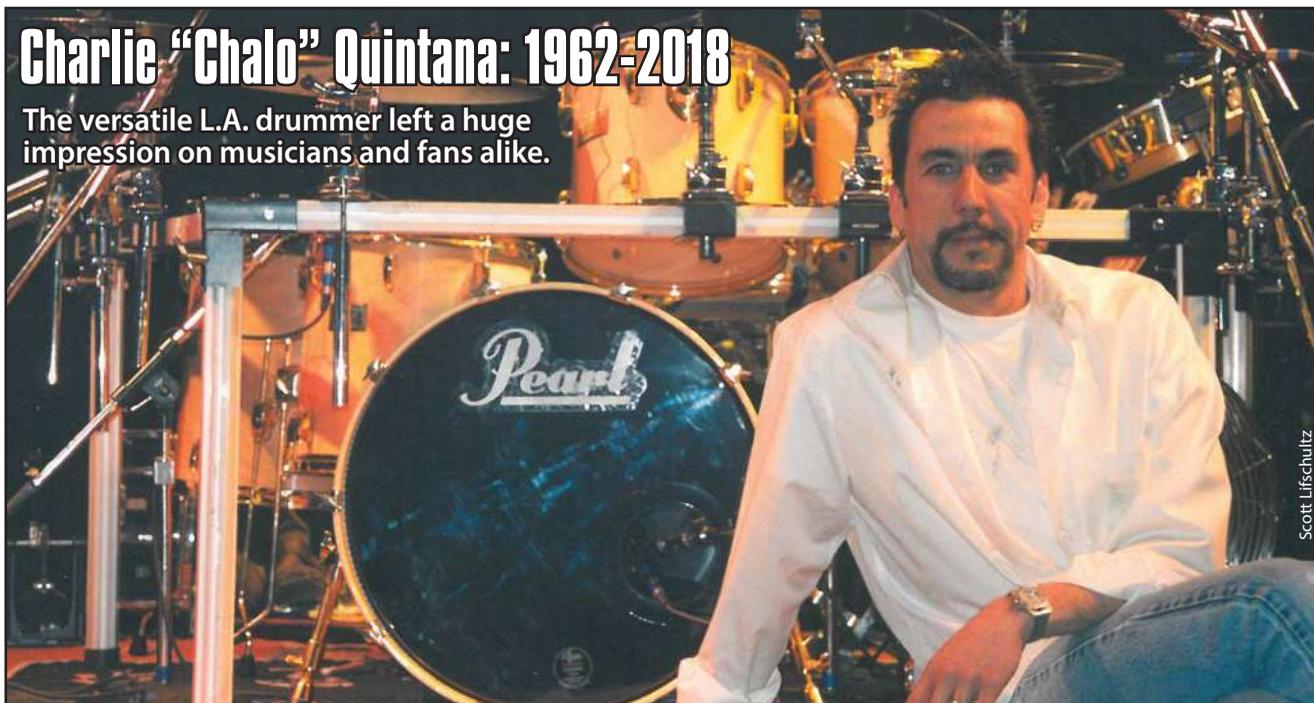
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## IN MEMORIAM

### Charlie “Chalo” Quintana: 1962-2018

The versatile L.A. drummer left a huge impression on musicians and fans alike.



Scott Lipschultz

For a while it seemed like every time you switched on late-night TV, tuned into the radio, or went to a show, there was Charlie “Chalo” Quintana on the drums.

Bob Dylan, Cracker, Joan Osborne, Izzy Stradlin and the Ju Ju Hounds, Soul Asylum, Social Distortion, the Cruzados, Agent Orange, and the Havalinas comprise just some of the artists Quintana worked with over the years.

And then one day, the Charlie sightings became less frequent. Eventually it seemed like this great drummer had vanished altogether. Following his death this past March 12 at the age of fifty-six, we got a hint as to why. Quintana had been struggling in recent years with emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, his sister Elizabeth Montoya told the *Los Angeles Times*. He also suffered from arthritis, which she said made it very difficult for him to continue playing drums.

Health wasn't the only issue for Quintana, who had been living in Mexico. Social media posts from earlier this year indicated he'd been the victim of a robbery and was having trouble paying for medicine. Friends were assisting with fundraising efforts.

Quintana first made a name for himself as a teenager in the late '70s with the pioneering L.A. Latino punk rock band the Plugz. Even at such a tender age, you could hear a song-first savvy in Quintana's playing on tracks like “Achin,” as he snaps off Hal Blaine–like snare rolls while anchoring the infectious tune with the kind of big, smashy beats that next-gen alt-punk drummers such as Dave Grohl and Tré Cool would take to the bank.

Bob Dylan took notice of the Plugz and Quintana during their late-'70s/early-'80s run, using Quintana in his “Sweetheart Like You” video, which led to the drummer and other Plugz members famously backing Dylan during a ramshackle three-song performance on *Late Night with David Letterman* in 1984. Quintana toured in Dylan's band for a spell in the early '90s.

Shortly after the Dylan gig ended, Quintana joined Izzy Stradlin and the Ju Ju Hounds, whose self-titled debut album was an



Quintana, second from right, with the Cruzados. The band, whose praises were sung by a number of legendary musicians in the mid-'80s, released two major-label albums and appeared on *Mexico and Mariachis: Music From and Inspired by Robert Rodriguez's El Mariachi Trilogy*.

unapologetically Stones-y, absolutely kick-ass affair that didn't gain much traction. Sadly, the world at large never got to hear Quintana's furious work on an amped-up cover of Toots and the Maytals' “Pressure Drop.” Drumming that is at once totally off the chain and remarkably precise doesn't get any better than this.

Quintana knew his way around a slow song too. Upon his passing, Cracker singer David Lowery commented about the drummer on Twitter with a link to the band's dreamy 1996 ballad, “Big Dipper,” saying, “A true test of a drummer's ability is a slow song. No one could ever match [Charlie] on this.”

Amen. Quintana puts on a definite slow-jam clinic in “Big Dipper,” with a hypnotic pulse that never wavers, tasty fills in just the right spots, and a spooky cymbal sizzle that fills in the wide-open spaces beautifully.

It's a high point in a career that was sadly cut way too short.

**Patrick Berkery**

# Big Bang/Ahead 25th Anniversary Giveaway!

To celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ahead Drumsticks, Big Bang Distribution and Modern Drummer have put together three great prize packages.

**Grand Prize:** 6x14 Ahead titanium snare drum "Fully Loaded" and a pair of Silver Anniversary Limited Edition laser-engraved Ahead drumsticks.

**1st Prize:** A four-piece set of Ahead Armor cases and a pair of Silver Anniversary Limited Edition laser-engraved Ahead drumsticks.

**2nd Prize:** Wicked Chops practice pad and a pair of Silver Anniversary Limited Edition laser-engraved Ahead drumsticks.



The **Ahead titanium snare** has a 1 mm engraved shell, TightScrew tension rods, chrome S-hoops, a Trick multi-step throw-off, and Fat Cat dual-adjustable wires.

The limited-edition **Ahead Silver Anniversary 5BLTD** drumsticks are laser-engraved and individually numbered from 1 to 1,000 and shipped with a matching certificate of authenticity.



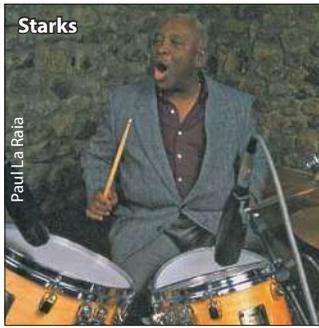
The **Wicked Chops practice pad** is designed to help improve accuracy, dynamic control, power, speed, and endurance.

**Ahead Armor cases** feature Revolution's patented TruForm design, in which the shape of each case corresponds to the shape of the drum and its mounting hardware. Included sizes are 8x10, 9x12, 16x16, and 18x22.



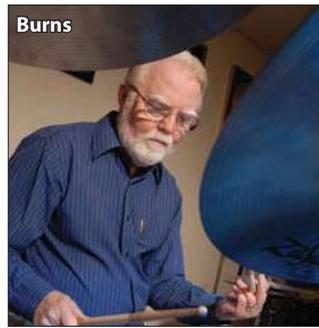
Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com) between the dates below and look for the Big Bang Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS JUNE 1, 2018, AND ENDS AUGUST 31, 2018. 4. Prize Drawing: Winners will be selected by random drawing on September 5, 2018. Winners will be notified by phone or email on or about September 6, 2018. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Big Bang Distribution, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada; Florida; New York; and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Prizes: Grand Prize: One (1) winner will receive one (1) 6x14 Ahead titanium snare and one (1) pair of 25th Anniversary Limited Edition 5B Ahead drumsticks. Approximate retail value \$1,138. 1st Prize: One (1) four-piece Ahead Armor Case set and one (1) pair of 25th Anniversary Limited Edition 5B Ahead drumsticks. Approximate retail value \$453. 2nd Prize: One (1) Wicked Chops practice pad and one (1) pair of 25th Anniversary Limited Edition 5B Ahead drumsticks. Approximate retail value \$78. Approximate retail value of contest is \$1,665. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004, 973-239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winners' names, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/BigBangDist/Official Rules/Winners List, 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004.

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



Starks

Paul La Raja



Burns

## John "Jabo" Starks and Roy Burns Pass

As this month's issue went into production, *Modern Drummer* was saddened to hear about the passing of the funk legend John "Jabo" Starks and the jazz drummer, author, and Aquarian Drumheads founder Roy Burns. Keep an eye out for tributes to both men in upcoming issues of *MD*.

## INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

### Guitar Center Names Donny Gruendler Vice President of Music Education

Music instrument retailer Guitar Center recently appointed drummer, author, educator, and industry veteran Donny Gruendler to the position of vice president of music education. In this role Gruendler will help expand Guitar Center's focus on music education programs to provide more individuals with the resources needed to learn the craft of music. Gruendler will spearhead Guitar Center's Lessons program and engage with music educators nationwide.

A statement from the retailer says that Gruendler's appointment reflects Guitar Center's growing emphasis on music education, which also includes the expansion of Guitar Center Lessons facilities in recent months. Approximately 190 Lessons locations had already been established; by the end of 2018 the retailer plans on opening an additional 90 education facilities



within their locations nationwide. The expansion will be accompanied by new offerings including DJ classes, electronic music production courses, and songwriting lessons.

Gruendler has a master's degree in music from Wayne State University and a bachelor's degree from the Berklee College of Music. Since 2016, he has served as president of the Musician's Institute College of Contemporary Music. Gruendler is also an accomplished author and clinician, and his instructional material has appeared in several

DVDs and mobile applications. "I'm very excited to join the Guitar Center team in this new role," he says. "As an educator, I strive to reach as many students as possible, and Guitar Center gives me the opportunity to reach so many more, igniting a new spark and passion for music."

### Yamaha Names Carles Pereira 2018 Young Performing Artists Competition Winner



Carles Pereira, of Barcelona, Spain, has been selected as a winner of the 2018 Yamaha Young Performing Artists (YYPA) competition in the drumset category. The annual program, which is conducted by the band and orchestral division of Yamaha Corporation of America, honors emerging eighteen- to twenty-two-year-old artists for their extraordinary talents in jazz, classical, and contemporary genres. Pereira is one of the eleven musicians selected nationwide

to earn the distinction in 2018.

Pereira, who is originally from Barcelona, Spain, moved with his family to Singapore, where he attended the Academy of Rock and was a member of the school's flagship band. During this period, Pereira performed at many prestigious venues in Singapore and Southeast Asia. He's currently a student at the Berklee College of Music.

The 2018 YYPA winners each receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the YYPA Celebration Weekend during Yamaha's Music for All Summer Symposium, which this year is held June 25–30 at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

## Who's Playing What



Natalie Pisechchio

**Conor Rayne** (Brasstracks) has joined the Yamaha artist roster.



Baker

Robinson

Bittner

**Jimmie Morales** (Gilberto Santa Rosa, studio) has joined the Toca Percussion roster.



**Josh Baker** (Mariah Carey), **John "JR" Robinson** (studio), and **Jason Bittner** (Overkill, Shadows Fall) have joined the Cympad family of artists.



# DRUMFEST

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# A Keller Innovation

**This month's inventive setup** comes to us from Stephen Shepard, who's been playing drums since 1962. In the late '70s, Shepard started a drum restoration and manufacturing company in San Diego called the Drum Craftsmen with his best friend and fellow drummer, Paul Bleifuss. "In the '80s," Shepard says, "after going on a six-month tour in Scandinavia and meeting my better half, I moved from California to Oslo, Norway. Paul kept our company but changed the name to Bleifuss Hand Crafted Drums. We kept in touch throughout the years, and for my fiftieth birthday, he sent me a set of raw Keller shells and told me to make something special with them. Sadly, Paul passed away in 2007, and it was then that I decided to do something with the shells in his memory."

The resulting six-piece set features 8x10 and 10x12 rack toms, 12x14 and 15x15 floor toms, a 16x18 bass drum, and a 3.5x14 snare. Shepard gave the drums a sunburst finish with ten coats of hand-rubbed tung oil. To make the set's smaller kick more versatile, he took some imaginative measures. "I always loved the feel of an 18" bass drum," he says. "It's very nimble. But its musical applications can

be limited. In most of the playing situations I'm involved in, the bass drum is miked. So I invented a concept where I could adjust the bass drum's pitch to fit the musical expression as needed."

The invention consists of a U-shaped section of 120 mm plastic tubing and a straight section of tubing that are both placed inside the bass drum. "One side of the U-shaped section can slide in and out of the straight section," Shepard explains. "The straight section is fastened to the resonant bass drum head. The curved section of tubing rests in a notched rail on the bottom of the bass drum to lock in to the desired position. In the forward position, the bass drum mic picks up more of the fundamental tone from the resonant head. In the rear position, the fundamental tone is lowered a little more than a whole step. This noticeably lowers the overall pitch, which makes the drum sound like it's larger."

After giving the set a trial run, Shepard was pleased with the outcome. "I recorded a studio test of the invention," he says, "and it works just as desired! I've used the set for everything from free jazz to hard-rock gigs with very satisfying results."

**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.



## COMING UP IN MD

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John Fell

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#micitlikeit



A close-up photograph of a Vic Firth VKB5 beater. The beater has a light-colored, tapered wooden shaft with the brand name and model number printed on it. The head is a soft, white, spherical felt tip. The beater is shown in a dynamic, slightly blurred position, suggesting movement. The background is dark and out of focus.

# FEELS LIKE... WHOA

## Introducing the new VicKick® Wood Shaft VKB5 Beater

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