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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Drums: The Secret to Happiness

Last summer my family and I decided to move out of the house we'd been living in for thirteen years, and into a new one. Among other things, the old place didn't have a basement, and the jazz-size drumkit we kept in the family room prevented all five of us from being able to sit and watch TV at the same time.

By move-in day, I'd pretty much forgotten what the other rooms in the new house even looked like, but that basement.... I'd spent hours since we first saw it obsessing over exactly where I would put the drums, guitars, keyboards, and amps that I'd accumulated over the years, but that I was never able to set up in our old home.

I went down to my unfinished, underground haven-in-the-making, and started setting up my drumset, which I could finally blow out the way I wanted: Rototoms, 27" China, electronic pads, 10" and 12" aux snares.... As I dug through my box full of multiclamps, I thought to myself, *This is going to be great!*

When I sat behind my elaborate new setup and began to play, though, I noticed that all those extra pieces forced my kit to expand farther away from my body. It was actually uncomfortable reaching for certain things. I began to think about Brandon Greene's current series in *MD* on Drumset Ergonomics, and that perhaps I should give the articles another read so that I could better adapt to this setup.

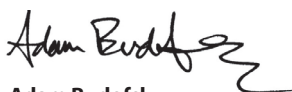
I also realized something that I knew in my heart but chose to ignore in the run-up to the set-up: Adding a bunch of new targets is not always a recipe for artistic tastefulness. It changed the way I played, and not for the better. What a bummer!

The next week I was editing the manuscript to this month's Inside Methods piece on L.A. studio whiz Aaron Sterling, who describes having several sonically distinct setups at hand for various musical purposes, and I thought, *That's the ticket*. Rather than create some monstrosity with little practical purpose, how about setting up two different-sounding kits, each sort of tricked out with specific accessories that support its artistic purpose.

So I set up my son's Pearl kit, tuned it to a thuddy '70s vibe, and added my big China, Paiste Giant Beats, and Rototoms. Then next to them I set up my old Slingerlands, cranked the heads, and put the two aux snares where the rack toms would go. Immediately things got interesting; I found myself inspired as much by the kits' unique sounds as I was by their inherent limitations.

Another benefit: Having two kits set up and ready to go meant that not only could I jam with my drummer friends whenever they came by, but my son and I could hash it out together. Times like those can be hard to come by in a busy household, and they inevitably turn into special memories. I also suspect my wife will want in—when the spirit hits, she's been known to put the limb-independence and rhythm skills she learned as a modern-dance student to gleeful use at the drums. And there's not much in the world that I enjoy more than watching my wife play drums.

So, two big lessons were learned. First: Sometimes things turn out even better than you imagine if you just flip the script. And second—well, we all know that one: more drumsets, happier life.



Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director



Jim Esposito

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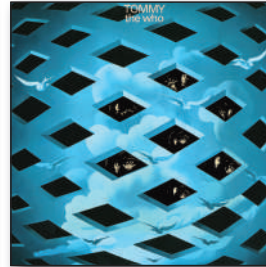
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What's Your Favorite Keith Moon Performance?



This month, as we dove into the drumming of both Pete Townshend on the Who's demo tracks and Keith Moon on the band's final output, we checked in with our readers and social media followers to see which "Moon the Loon" performances were among their favorites.

"Sparks" from the *Tommy* set on the deluxe edition of *Live at Leeds*. Each part of the song has its own distinct drum part, which is very musical and even melodic at times. It starts with kind of a jam vibe with lots of fills, and then tightens up for that sick bass part before Moon quiets down with only his kick drum and cymbal swells. Throughout the song Keith creates memorable drum parts that are as important and catchy as the guitar and bass parts. The way he brings the dynamic down at the end and plays those repeating fills between the guitar strums is one of my favorite parts. The whole performance is genius.

Alex Garcia-Rivera

Quadrophenia for me is a masterpiece with amazing drumming, a wide variety of textures and moments, and it also has some of the greatest songs in the band's catalog. Honorable mention goes to "The Real Me" and "The Punk and the Godfather." I've been listening to this record for ages and practicing along every time I get the chance.

Juan Ignacio Sansinena

Moon's drumming on "Won't Get Fooled Again" ignores all the rules of what you should normally play and makes the song feel like an anthem. His performance also sounds like it's on edge yet so intentional at the same time. And you can tell that

he meant every 16th note that he played. I know they had him stay on the hi-hat instead of his usual crash/ride, so that could have made him play more to fill the space.

Elliot Jacobson

I'd say "Baba O'Riley." That song is so fun and easy to play. Moon followed the vocals, wasn't afraid to be himself, and proved that he was one of the craziest drummers to touch a pair of sticks. He was a fantastic player, a showman, and the first drummer to ever put goldfish in his toms!

Jared Schur

"Won't Get Fooled Again" proved Moon to be one of the few drummers of the time to bring as much expressive quality to his drumming as any guitarist or vocalist would to their own parts. I still get chills down to my heel when Moon starts his solo over Townshend's lone pulsing synth, with tom, snare, and cymbal figures that many drummers would spend weeks perfecting. And when he led in the rest of the band for the final chorus, Moon might've been the only drummer in the world unhinged enough to know that clubbing the snare with a full measure of 16th notes was the only way to precede the greatest scream in rock 'n' roll history. It was a song that, along with others in the dawn of the '70s, elevated the role of the drummer from mere timekeeper to a source of irreplaceable energy.

Jamie Lawlor

The song "Bargain" from *Who's Next* embodies all of Moon's great attributes: primal instincts, unexplainable balance on the kit, and over-the-top playing with purpose. Moon was truly one of a kind.

Thomas Coutcher

Some of his best playing is on *Quadrophenia*, especially on "Bell Boy," "Sea and Sand," and "The Rock." He plays the kit like it's an orchestral percussion section—his toms are his timpani, and his cymbals splash and crash like ocean waves. His playing is lyrical, emotional, manic, and yet contains a high level of control. He's often depicted as too crazy or wild to keep time. But he *is* playing the time: he drives the whole band and never misses a step. Listen to *Live at Leeds*—it's total controlled anarchy. I've never been bothered by his unorthodox fills, only inspired by them. I feel he's still overlooked because he was such an unusual player. In some ways his amazing drumming would only work for a band like the Who. But the beauty of great drummers is that they can come to define a band's sound.

David Turner

Live at Leeds as a single recorded performance showcases Moon in his ultimate form: playing live. Power, intensity, orchestration, and excitement are all wrapped up in one performance and expressed in his unique and incredibly musical presentation.

Alan MacBain

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

Dropped Beat

Jon Hiseman's name was spelled incorrectly in the title of his memorial piece in the November issue.

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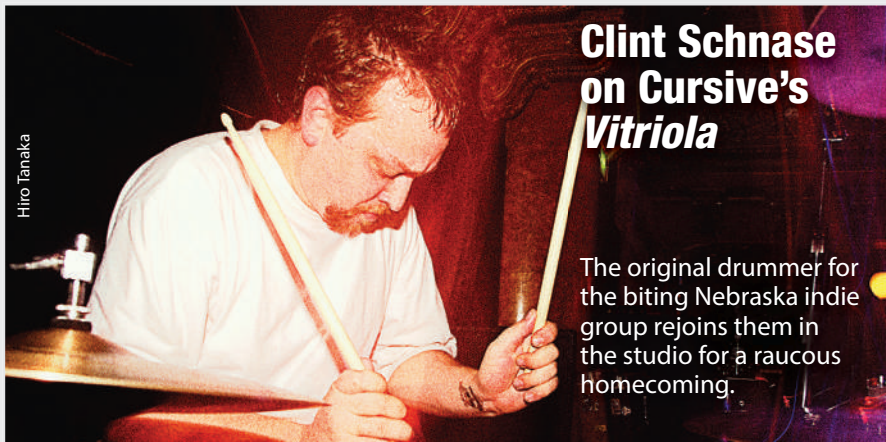




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OUT NOW



Hiro Tanaka

Clint Schnase on Cursive's *Vitriola*

The original drummer for the biting Nebraska indie group rejoins them in the studio for a raucous homecoming.

On October 5, the Omaha-based indie rock group Cursive released the eighth studio album in their twenty-plus-year career. For the effort, Cursive reunited with founding drummer Clint Schnase, who last put his stamp on the group's 2006 release, *Happy Hollow*. On *Vitriola*, Schnase drives jagged riffs and brutally honest, introspective lyrics with the same intensity and tone that fueled the group's late-'90s/early-'00s releases, including their 2003 breakthrough album, *The Ugly Organ*.

For Schnase, it didn't take long to get the creative juices flowing again, even though it had been twelve years since he last recorded with Cursive. "At one point or another, each of us commented on how easy it was to get back into the groove of writing together," says Schnase. "We picked up right where we left off. Matt Maginn [bass, vocals] and I have always written our parts together, and I think it was great for him to have a partner who knew him, his process, and his ideas so well.

"Tim [Kasher, vocals and guitar] lives out of town," Schnase continues, "so we had to change it up a little bit. Over the course of a year and a half, we got together when we could, for about a week at a time, to practice and write. Tim would send us the structure of songs, with him playing guitar and sometimes singing, so we could get familiar with them. The rest of us would listen, reflect on what those songs might become, and then get together and write. Technology really helped make this record possible. We couldn't have done this twenty years ago."

Schnase's deep groove permeates *Vitriola*, perhaps most notably on "It's Gonna Hurt," where the drummer's wide 2-and-4 backbeat trudges beneath brooding, distorted bass-driven riffs. While he cites indie-rock drummers such as Mark Price from Archers of Loaf and Jim Eno of Spoon as influences

for his bottomless pocket, Schnase draws on other genres for inspiration as well. "My timing really goes back to all the hip-hop I listened to growing up," he says. "I always liked the lyrics—and memorized them all—but I was really paying attention to the rhythm. Eric B. & Rakim, LL Cool J, Run-DMC, and the Beastie Boys—that's where it comes from." To illustrate, Schnase directs us to the groove on "Life Savings," where he draws from the Beastie Boys' "Pass the Mic." "I've always loved the beat from that track," he says. "I was excited that I could work it into the song."

Schnase, who, in addition to Cursive, has contributed to the work of their Saddle Creek Records label mates Bright Eyes and the Faint, reflects on his local Nebraskan scene today and what it takes for a younger band to achieve success. "I think the major challenge is that because there is a scene, there are so many bands now who are trying to make it," he says. "When we were coming up, there weren't as many groups—or as many local venues—and we were just trying to get out of Omaha to let the rest of the country know what we were doing.

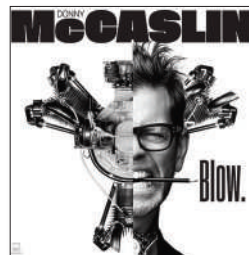
"My advice to a band who really wants to make it is that you've got to commit," Schnase continues. "For us, that meant leaving home for weeks or months at a time, with no money, playing in places that weren't always glamorous. Church basements, fans' parents' garages and other house shows, community recreation centers... plenty of places with no air conditioning, no sound system, or no audience. We ate peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches or whatever else we could find that was cheap, and we slept on people's floors. But those experiences shaped us, and that's how we got our music out."

Willie Rose

Clint Schnase plays C&C drums and uses Vic Firth sticks.



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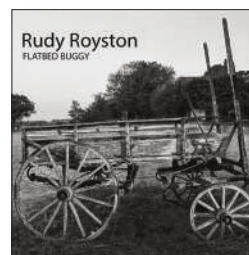
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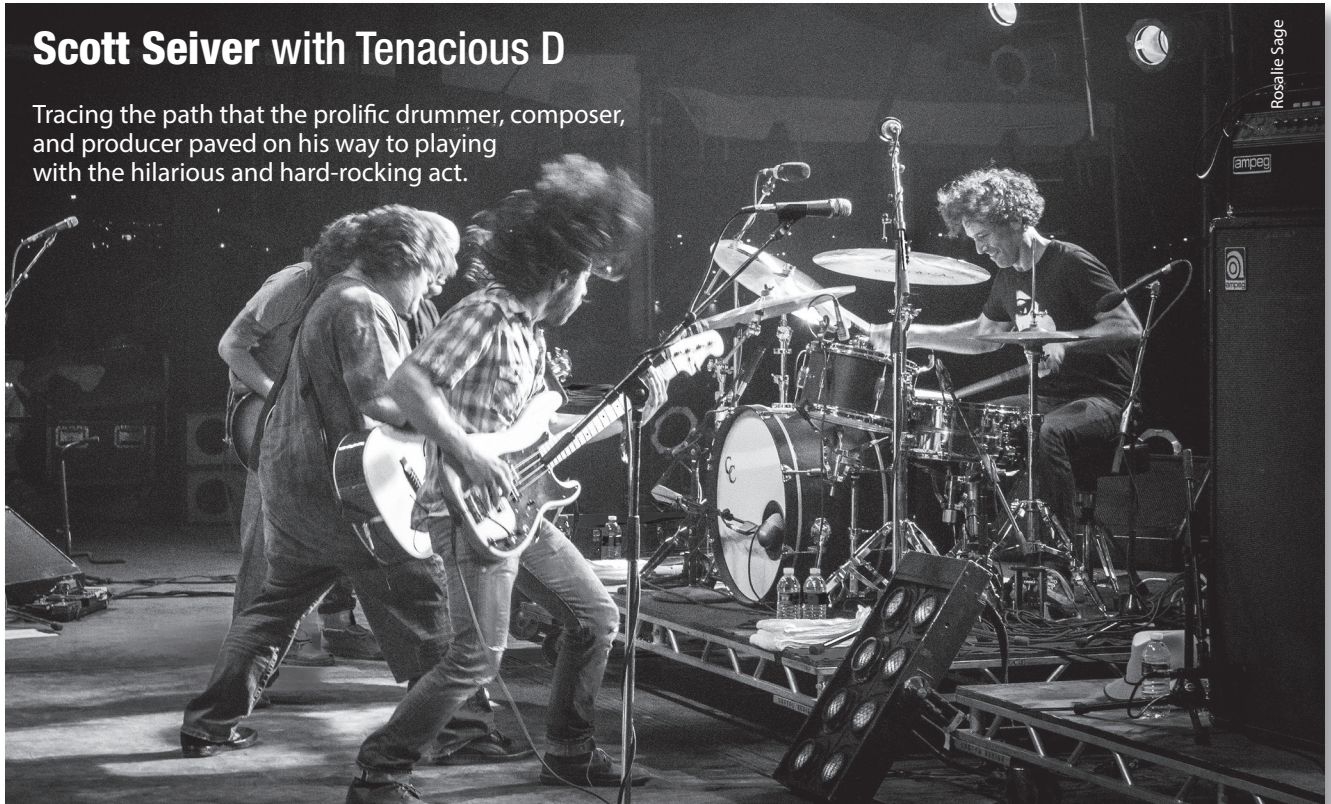


Rudy Royston
Flatbed Buggy (Rudy Royston)

ON TOUR

Scott Seiver with Tenacious D

Tracing the path that the prolific drummer, composer, and producer paved on his way to playing with the hilarious and hard-rocking act.



This fall the comedic rock group Tenacious D—fronted by the actors, comedians, and musicians Jack Black and Kyle Gass—hits the road for a national trek that lasts through mid November. It's their first tour in five years, and on drums is Scott Seiver, an L.A.-based composer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist with a *long* list of credits. A brief overview of Seiver's drumming output finds him playing on recordings with John Legend, Jason Mraz, Pete Dinklage, Big Sir, and Tenacious D themselves. And that's not to mention Seiver's significant nondrumming credentials.

The road that eventually led Seiver to "The D" began back in the mid '90s, after he graduated from Berklee College of Music in Boston with a degree in music performance and returned to gig in his hometown near Denver, Colorado. The drummer tells *MD* that he soon saw more opportunity in L.A., so he joined a wave of Coloradan musicians in the late '90s who made the same move. With home-state connections and gigs established in L.A., and many more work opportunities that would come over the next half-decade, Seiver was eventually able to build a home studio in 2006 and 2007, enabling him to join a revolution that set the foundation for much of the recording industry's landscape today. "I don't know that there were many other drummers doing it at the time," he says. "But I had a situation where I could record drums for a couple songs at home and just upload the files. That happens now all the time. I had a very early version of that."

Eventually one of Seiver's connections asked him to fill in for some extra songs on a Tenacious D record when the group's usual rock heavyweight was unavailable for the additional session. "My good friend, John Kimbrough, produced the [2012] album *Rize of the Fenix*, and he's known those guys for a really long time," he says. "Dave Grohl is always the drummer on their albums, and he played on that one. But there were a couple extra songs that were added, and Dave couldn't do them. John called me in, which was amazing, and I played drums

and percussion on a couple songs. I got in that way, and aside from that, I had tons of friends in common with those guys. So I quickly became friendly with them and the rest of the band."

When it came time for the group to tour Europe in 2013, their live drummer, Brooks Wackerman, couldn't make it. "At the time," says Seiver, "Brooks was playing with Bad Religion, and he was away for what seemed like three hundred days a year. So I just started doing more and more of the shows until it kind of seemed like, *I'm now the guy*, which is great."

Live, Seiver is encouraged to have his own musical voice—although he still pays respect to the original parts on each of the band's records. "As long as the spirit and conviction are there, I'm welcome to imbue the songs with my own identity, which is great," he says. "That said, Dave's drum parts are so fun to play, and it's just something that I don't often do. I don't have a background of playing any sort of metal or heavy rock. So it's a fun challenge to sort that music out when I'm practicing and try to own it."

And although Black and Gass have certainly achieved a considerable amount of fame and success, the duo has a welcoming dynamic on the road that Seiver admires. "They both have a way of instilling a real sense of belonging, loyalty, and enjoyment," he says. "And they're doing things at a high level, and their shows are big. They could feasibly be on their own bus and hide away in there. But they share the same bus, and the band is always together. We're eating meals, playing Frisbee, or venturing around town together. I feel like they both just love the experience of being on tour with a band, you know? So it's just all fun, all the time."

Willie Rose

Scott Seiver plays C&C drums and Istanbul Agop cymbals and uses Vic Firth sticks and ACS in-ear monitors.

Also on the Road

John Marshall with Soft Machine /// **Josh Dun** with Twenty One Pilots /// **Dean Butterworth** with Good Charlotte /// **Alianna Kalaba** with Cat Power /// **Jon Syverson** with Daughters /// **Zbigniew Robert Promiński** with Behemoth /// **Paul Mazurkiewicz** with Cannibal Corpse /// **Robi Gonzalez** with This Will Destroy You



Manu Delago

“Rudi”

Austrian drummer and percussionist Manu Delago (Björk, Anoushka Shankar) is known for his accomplished work on handpan (or hang), a metal steelpan-like instrument played with bare hands. But he’s also a composer and a drummer with a developed touch and technical facility on a traditional drumset.



Together with vocalist Isa Kurz, Delago has released this highly entertaining and impressive video for “Rudi,” which tells a familiar story of playing drums in your bedroom while also dealing with disapproving neighbors. “I composed this piece quite a few years back,” Delago tells *Modern Drummer*, “and Isa and I performed it live many times, usually as an encore. And it’s such a visual piece that we decided to make a video of it. The story is influenced by me growing up—or any drummer growing up, in a way. And we wanted to make it in a kid’s messy room.”

Opening on Delago seated at a bare-bones kick/snare/hats/cymbal kit with his back to Kurz, who’s on a bed behind him, the piece is a marvel of unison rhythms, with the two breathing as one together. “Isa is an amazing musician,” Delago offers. “She’s not a drummer, but she has amazing rhythm, so she was the perfect person to perform this with. It took some time to memorize it, but once you have it, it doesn’t go away.”

Delago can’t see Kurz at all, so their tight execution is all the more striking. Kurz talk-raps into a microphone with lyrics about paradiddles, double paradiddles, paradiddle-diddles, and drags while Delago plays those strokes on his snare. She then mentions those pesky neighbors, but the track quickly moves into the iconic drum pattern used for Queen’s “We Will Rock You.”

“The phrase [Kurz sings], ‘Rudi is a boy, makes a big noise’ is from Queen,” says Delago. “I was playing around with words used in drum language. Obviously, Rudi-mental, and paradiddles, and drags. I collected those words and tried to put them into this rhythmic, musical piece.”

And what rhythms they pull off. The duo slips into a section where they lock into variations on “kick, snare, hat,” repeated in several cool ways and with gaps and rests that make one realize that this took a bit of work to master. This continues into a brief part where Kurz and Delago lock in on the word “kick” in a wonderfully disjointed manner. Then yet more kicks, rim clicks, and cymbal hits, all crafted and played with confidence. And just when you’ve almost had your fill of Rudi and all those kicks, the piece moves into a climax of sorts, with Delago opening up with some lightning-quick hi-hat work, blast beats, and stick cross-overs from the hats to the ride.

One must wonder, if those annoyed neighbors heard something through the wall so unique on this level, maybe they would have knocked on the door to see it done so beautifully for themselves.

Ilya Stemkovsky

Manu Delago endorses Hardcase Technologies cases, Bosphorus cymbals, AKG mics, Roland electronics, and Xylosynth by Wernick.





Session Great Nir Z

When it comes to gear, Jerusalem-born/Nashville-based session drummer Nir Zidkyahu, whose ultra-precise, intense pocket can be heard on hit records by pop/rock great John Mayer, alt-rock legend Chris Cornell, and modern country superstar Blake Shelton, isn't too particular, as long as he has a sturdy seat. "The older I get, the more I care that the drum stool is comfortable," he says. "I've been using the Porter & Davies [BC2] throne. It's a great monitor system, and I think it makes you play better."

To keep the engine in the BC2 from punching too much bass into his rear end, Nir opts to place the microphone that feeds the system in a position that captures more of the natural resonance of the

entire drumkit. "I find it weird to feel just the bass drum," he says. "So I'll put the microphone off to the side of the floor tom, facing the kick drum. That's a sweet spot that gives me enough of the kick, plus there's more of the toms and some of the snare. Or I'll place it really low, beneath the ride cymbal, facing the shell of the bass drum and the floor."

To be prepared for any type of session, Nir likes to fill his cymbal bag with contrasting colors. "I'll have at least two pairs of hi-hats. One will be dark and old-school, and one will be more hi-fi. I like Sabian Legacy and Manhattan hi-hats. And when I need something to cut through, I like the Evolutions. For rides, I'll have a heavy Legacy and a light Artisan. Those cover pretty much everything. Most recordings end up becoming so bright and crispy, so darker Artisan crashes are my first choice."

When asked to pick his three must-have snare drums, Nir favors a couple of new Sonor models, as well as a classic Ludwig. "The 5.75x14 Sonor Vintage series Beech snare is one of the best wood drums I've ever played," he says. "It's very versatile. It sounds good in a variety of tunings, and it's extremely dynamic. It's beautiful for light brush playing and ghost notes, and it has a very warm crack when you go for a heavy backbeat."

"But the snare that's taken over everything is Sonor's 6.5x14 Bell Bronze," Nir continues. "When I first got that drum, it sat on the stand in my studio for about six months, and I never changed it. It's incredible. My third choice would be a vintage Ludwig Acrolite. There's a sweet spot with that drum that you can't get from any other."

To get what he refers to as that super-deep "potato bag sound" from his Acrolite, Nir covers part of the head with a cheap Home Depot shop towel. "I've found that the red ones sound best," he says with a laugh.

Nir's stick bag is always stocked with his signature Innovative Percussion model, which has a fairly thick grip and a small, jewel-shaped tip. "I try to divide them into two different weights: medium-heavy and medium-light," he says. "That way I can grab whichever feels best for a particular song. I also usually have two pairs of brushes—one with heavy wires and one with light wires. Plus I bring some of the other weird sticks that [Innovation Percussion] makes. Then I'll throw in some drum keys and the Promark Cymbal Sizzler, which always does the job."

"Even though it's been about five years since I quit smoking, I'm still chewing Nicorette," Nir continues. "So I have to have a box of that in there. And I know I'll sound like an old man, but I carry a massage stick and a massage ball so I can massage my own back anytime I need to."

"Other essentials are gaffer's tape, Moon Gel, and a towel," he concludes. "And I try to remember to carry some protein bars so I can take a bite between songs. When you're working in the studio, it's easy to forget to eat, which isn't healthy. And of course, I always carry my Direct Sound Extreme Isolation EX-29 headphones."

Michael Dawson

Indispensables

- Porter & Davies BC2 throne
- Sabian Legacy, Manhattan, and Evolution hi-hats; heavy Legacy and light Artisan rides; dark Artisan crashes
- Sonor 5.75x14 Vintage Beech, Sonor 6.5x14 Bell Bronze, and vintage Ludwig Acrolite snares



- Home Depot shop towel for snare muffling
- Innovative Percussion signature sticks
- Promark Cymbal Sizzler
- Nicorette
- massage stick and massage ball
- Moon Gel
- protein bars
- Direct Sound Extreme Isolation EX-29 headphones



Roland

TD-17KVX V-Drums

A game changing mid-level kit with increased expressivity, improved pads, and highly effective practice tools.

“We developed a whole new technology for the [flagship] TD-50 series,” says Jules Tabberer-Stewart. Roland’s global strategic product marketing manager spoke to *Modern Drummer* during a brief interview at the Totally Drums product launch event held at the company’s Los Angeles headquarters earlier this year. “What we learned from that enabled us to introduce something to make the drumming experience richer for the midrange V-Drums user.”

Tabberer-Stewart is referring to the new TD-17 series, which consists of three five-piece drumkits—the TD-17K-L, TD-17KV, and TD-17KVX models. The KV and KVX setups come with a redesigned PDX snare pad with a tunable mesh head and a more realistic rim, as well as a streamlined TD-17 sound module.

The set we received for review is the most tricked-out in the series, the TD-17KVX. It includes a PDX-12 12" mesh-head snare pad, three PDX-8 8" mesh-head tom pads, two CY-12C 12" rubber crash cymbal pads, a CY-13R 13" rubber ride pad, a stable yet soft-feeling KD-10 kick tower, and a VH-10 hi-hat pad and controller, which fits onto most standard stands so that the pad moves up and down on the pull rod like an acoustic cymbal. The snare, toms, and cymbals mount to the sturdy, compact, and lightweight MDS-4KVX or MDS-Compact rack-style stand. Also included are cable ties, a presized and clearly labeled cable snake, a plastic sound module mount, an AC adaptor, a drum key, and a separate cable for the second crash. The TD-17KVX kit sells for \$1,699.99. The other models—the TD-17KV (with a fixed hi-hat pad and one crash) and the TD-17K-L (with rubber tom pads)—are available for \$1,199.99 and \$999.99, respectively.

Setup and Feel

The initial setup of the TD-17KVX was fairly quick and easy, with the bulk of the time

being spent assembling the rack. Thankfully, Roland includes easy-to-follow instructions, and there aren’t any excessively complicated steps. Every adjustment is made via plastic thumbscrews or a drum key, and once the rack was configured, attaching the cymbal arms, snare mount, and pads was as simple and intuitive as assembling an acoustic kit.

The cable snake is organized with proper lengths of wire for each pad, and each connector is clearly labeled to remove confusion or guesswork. The rack is very compact; we were able to position the kit comfortably within a small, desk-sized nook in our photography studio. The set, excluding the throne, bass drum pedal, and hi-hat stand, weighs around 55 lbs., so it can be moved to different locations relatively easily.

Even though the TD-17KVX has a small footprint, it felt very stable and durable. The tom, cymbal, and snare arms locked firmly into place and didn’t droop during our test. The KD-10 kick tower had a cushy but solid feel, and it didn’t rock or slide when I really laid into it. The rubber cymbal pads had decent rebound, and they swayed just enough to mimic the response of acoustic cymbals.

The hi-hat controller was very impressive. It responded accurately to foot pressure, whether I went for super-tight closed sounds, fully open slashes, or partially open inflections. The elevated rim on the new PDX-12 snare pad accurately replicates the feel and spacing of the hoop of an acoustic drum, which made the playing experience on this pad more natural, familiar, and expressive.

Sounds and Customization

The TD-17 sound module comes with fifty preset kits that should cover whatever sounds you need for general, everyday use, as well as more esoteric configurations for situations requiring more produced, percussive, or electronic tones. Most of the acoustic snare samples are fairly resonant, but you can adjust sustain by pressing the Muffling button and adding some virtual

tape or a dampening ring. Each drum, cymbal, percussion, and electronic sample can also be tuned and processed with EQ, reverb, and other effects.

The snare, toms, and cymbal pads all responded accurately to whatever dynamic level I played, and certain presets had layers of sounds that transitioned naturally from one to the other as my playing volume increased. This was particularly effective on the ride cymbal, where soft bell strikes triggered a more integrated bell and bow sound, while hard hits triggered a strong, bell-only sample.

Roland’s engineers also set the hi-hat samples to have a slight pitch increase when the pedal was pressed hard, which is similar to the shift that happens when you squeeze acoustic cymbals together very tightly. The blend between the tom rim samples and head tones was very natural, so there were no jarring jumps from one sound to another—unless you configured the triggers to react that way intentionally.

The inherent unnaturalness of an electronic kit is most apparent when playing rolls, quick strings of accents on one pad, or delicate figures at low dynamics, but the TD-17 module and pads responded with exceptional accuracy that well exceeded my expectations for a mid-level e-kit. I was especially knocked out by the hi-hat controller’s realistic response. Once I figured out its breaking points—the striking locations, pedal positions, and playing dynamics that caused more obvious jumps between samples—I was able to finesse quite a bit of nuance from it.

You can also upload your own sounds and backing tracks to the TD-17 module, via an SD memory card, to build fully customized kits. The TD-17 module has two additional trigger pad inputs for expansion. On the TD-17KVX V-Drums model reviewed, one input supports the second crash cymbal that comes standard with that model. The TD-17KV and TD-17K-L models are supplied with one crash, so two pads or cymbals



can be added to those models. A USB port enables you to send audio and MIDI from the TD-17 into recording software on your computer.

Teaching/Practice Tools

One of the slogans associated with the TD-17 series is “become a better drummer, faster.” To facilitate that quest, Roland included several features to assist more effective and efficient practicing. First off, the TD-17KV and K VX kits include Bluetooth functionality, which enables wireless access to music playback on most mobile devices. Additionally, the TD-17 module has a Mix In jack, so you can plug in any audio device for play-along practice. Roland also stored a handful of backing tracks within

the module to be used for tightening up grooves in different genres.

The Coach mode of the TD-17 includes the Time Check tool, which monitors and accesses how accurately you play different subdivisions along to the metronome. The Quiet Count function allows you to program phrases where the metronome drops out for one, two, or four measures at a time. Both of those options are incredibly valuable for honing your ability to control subdivisions and maintaining a steady internal pulse. The Warm Ups mode takes you through five-, ten-, or fifteen-minute courses that begin by guiding you through subdivisions that become smaller every two measures. The second portion of the course, Auto Up/Down, increases the speed

of every beat, from the current tempo to a predetermined maximum, and then brings it back down. The third step uses the Time Check tool to assess accuracy against the click. Each Warm Up session concludes with an overall evaluation of your performance.

The three coaching functions in the TD-17 module are incredibly valuable chops/timing-building tools for teachers, students, and professionals alike. Add to that the improved playability of the PDX pads and the detailed, expressive, and useful sounds included in the TD-17 module, and you have one of the strongest outputs—in terms of form versus affordability—by any manufacturer in recent memory.

Michael Dawson

OffSet

Eclipse Double Pedal

A symmetrical design for more ergonomic setups.

According to OffSet, the conventional double pedal design, with a secondary pedal extending off to the side of the primary pedal, fails to account for comfort and ergonomics. In response to that concern, OffSet has designed a bilateral double pedal that aims to put the drummer's body in a safer and more efficient position.

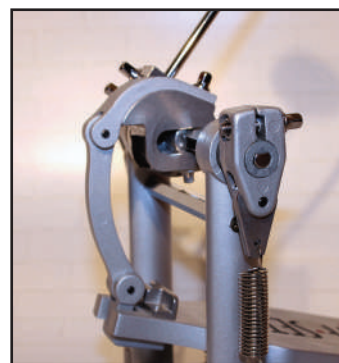
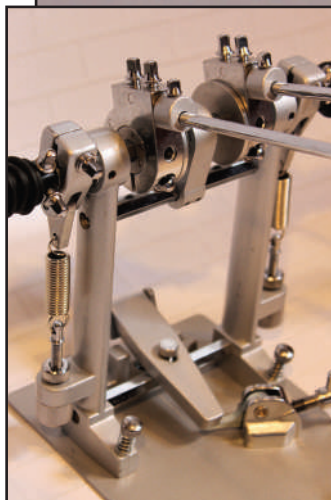
Drummers who struggle to find a comfortable configuration for their kits will understand the issue that OffSet is tackling here. Adding a double pedal to a drumset can really throw things off—oftentimes you're forced to alter your hi-hat, bass drum, and tom placement, potentially resulting in a setup that's in a constant state of flux. OffSet's bilateral pedal features a fully adjustable design that allows you to fit the pedals into your current configuration with minimal alteration. For review, we received a chain-drive Eclipse model double pedal, plus a direct-drive conversion kit. Let's take a closer look.

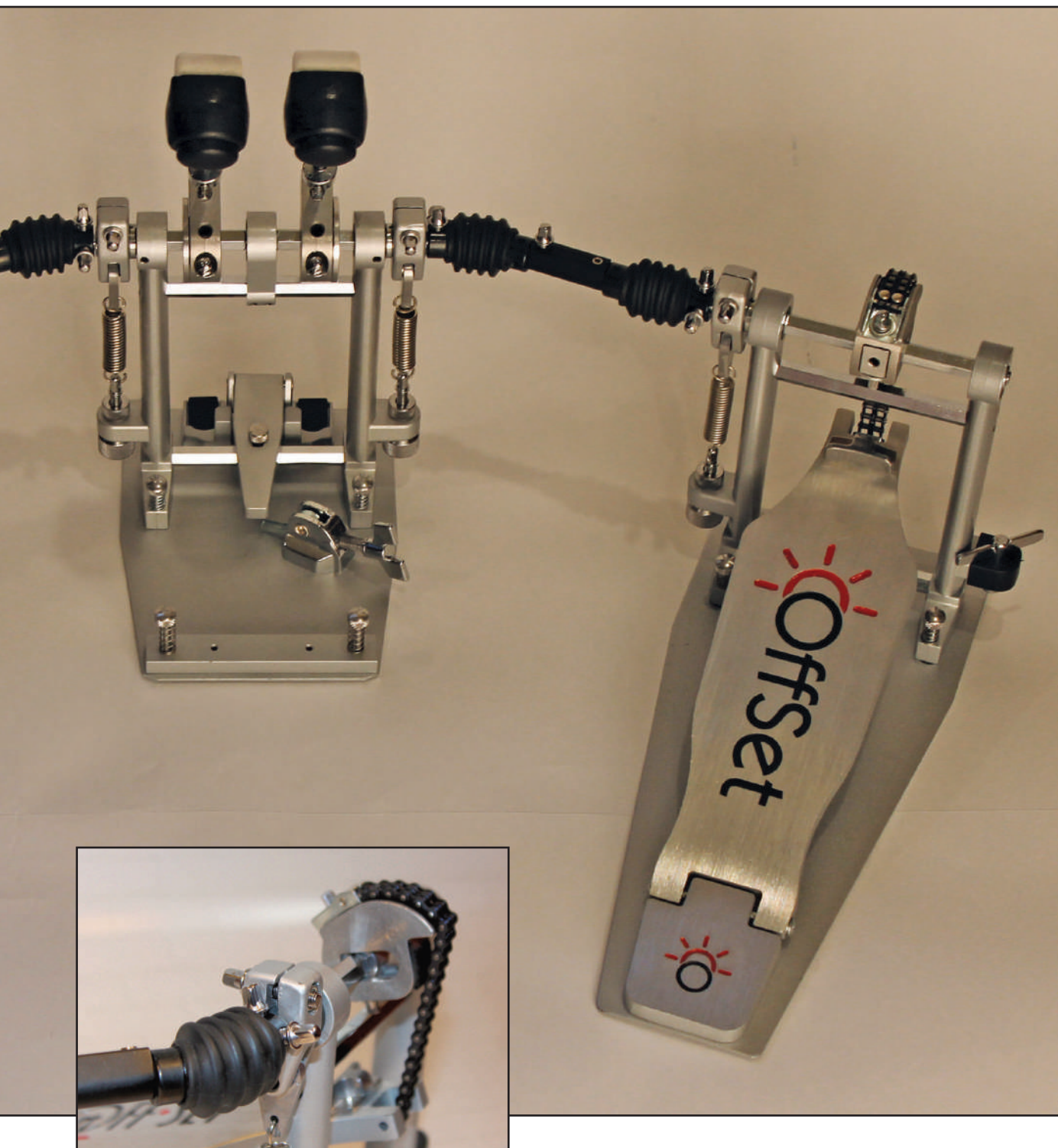
Quality and Customization

The Eclipse features the same top-quality specs that you'd expect from a high-end pedal. All moving parts have sealed bearings, and it's strong but lightweight. Despite having more moving parts than a standard double pedal, the Eclipse is fast and easy to set up due to its thoughtful design. I especially liked that the hoop clamp adjuster was easy to reach, since the footboard doesn't block it. The bottom of both footboards and the pedestal are fitted with hook-and-loop fasteners and adjustable spikes, so they lock into place easily. During my time with the Eclipse pedal, the footboards stayed put on any rough surface or carpet. Converting the chain drive to direct drive was quick and easy, and it was nice to be able to adjust the feel of the pedals for different applications.

The value of the Eclipse pedal is in its customization. Every component is adjustable. The footboards are 12.5x3.5, which is the largest in the industry, and they respond accurately to either heel-up or heel-down playing. The drive wheel can be adjusted via a drum key (there are key holders on the outside pedestal of both pedals) from 1.5" for speed playing to 3" for power playing.

I tried all of the positions for the drive wheel and felt most comfortable with it at the midpoint, which left the beater at a moderate distance from the drumhead. If you're a speed metal player, you'll find the Eclipse comparable with other pedals marketed towards that genre. With the drive wheels set to the 1.5" position, the pedals were extra responsive and snappy, which allowed for quicker playing. The long footboards also allowed me to move my foot lower on them when playing at fast tempos, and they were great for facilitating heel/toe techniques.





Functionality

This pedal is most useful for players who want to achieve a more ergonomic, symmetrical setup. If you prefer to mount your rack toms directly on the bass drum, the Eclipse will allow you to move the bass drum over so that the toms can be centered over the snare. After experimenting with the Eclipse pedal for a couple weeks, I noticed a slight improvement in my posture and ease of playing. It wasn't a huge difference for me, but other drummers may experience a more dramatic effect.

I found the OffSet Eclipse double pedal to be a refreshing example of drum-gear innovation. The company offers a thirty-day trial period for its products, so if you're looking to try something different, head over to offsetpedal.com to find a dealer near you. List price for the Eclipse pedal is \$389, the direct-drive conversion kit is \$69.95, and a padded case is \$99.95.

Christopher Kozar



indentations, the bell is well integrated and slightly flat, and the bow has a fairly steep curvature. Depending on the application, this could be a perfect vehicle for huge, dramatic attacks and mallet rolls or light, dark, and smoky ride patterns. Jazz players will appreciate its rich, nuanced tones, while rock and recording artists will enjoy its mysterious, musically rich roar.

18", 19", and 20" Extra Thin Crashes

Complementing the silvery, smooth-sounding 20", 22", and 24" Masters Thin crash/ride models, these three Extra Thin crashes were inspired by longtime Paiste artist Jim Keltner's ideas for sound and function. They have a warm, rich tone that opens up easily and sits comfortably within the music, especially when played in quieter situations. Ideal for mallet swells, light crashing, delicate riding, or quick, flashy accents, these crashes have a perfect balance of brightness, expressivity, sparkle, warmth, and complexity that will work well in any light to moderately loud live or recording situation.

Michael Dawson



Mo Drumsticks

Magnetic Beater System

A unique product to help boost your bass drum chops.

When developing skills

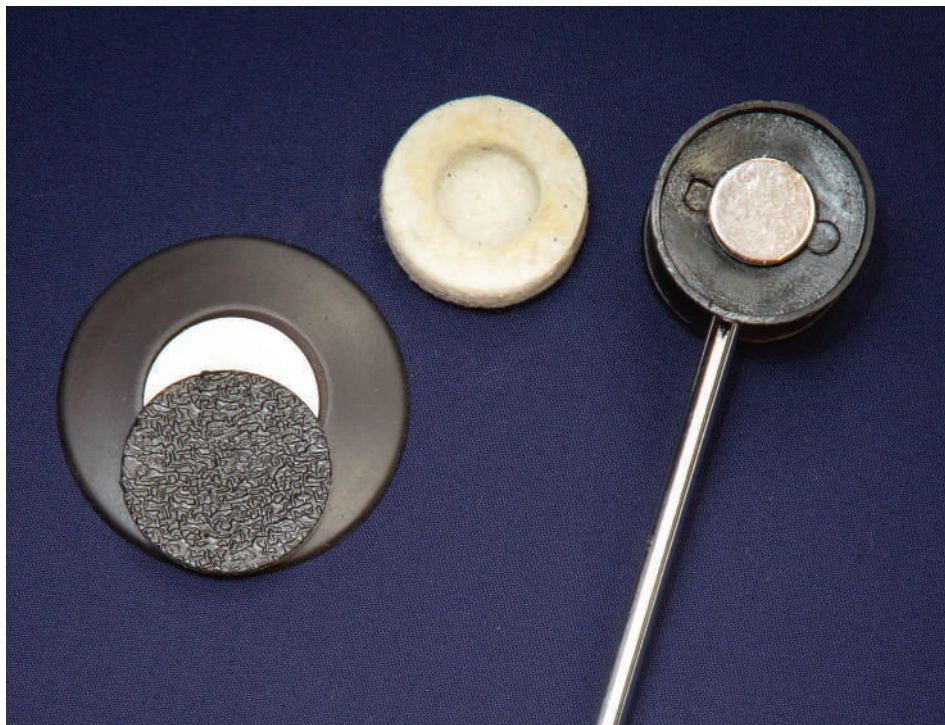
and sounds, most drummers concentrate on their choice of drums, heads, and cymbals. However, some other important factors, like sticks and beaters, are often ignored. Mo Drumsticks, who've been making unique products since 2010, recently developed a magnetic bass drum beater system that's easy to install and that represents a new, valid option for developing bass drum skills.

Concept and Build

Mo's magnetic beater system comprises two parts: a stick-on kick pad that incorporates a thin magnet, and a beater with an internal magnet. When properly installed, the magnets are oriented so the polarities match and repel each other at proximity. We received a set of two beaters and kick pads for review. We also received a set of additional impact pads that could be added to the drumhead for increased resistance. The kick pads installed just as easily as any other commercially available patch or drumhead protector. They use a similar type of adhesive as other pads, so they install best if the head is clean and free of debris. The beaters are one-sided and made of round felt. I was concerned that the magnet would add an excessive amount of weight to the beater head, but it didn't.

Performance

I was surprised at how well the magnets functioned in the Mo system. They're very strong. The resistance from the kick pad is *quite*



strong, even without using the additional impact pads. I needed to reduce the spring tension on my pedals to find a comfortable balance. The company recommends reducing spring tension so that you achieve "effortless forward motion with just the right amount of repulsion." Each user will have to experiment to find a setting that feels best. One side effect of using this system is that you can lower the tuning of your bass drum for a deeper sound, since you don't have to rely on tension of the head for rebound.

The real benefits of this system reveal themselves when using it for exercises and warm-ups. Since the magnets add resistance, using this setup offers a similar experience to practicing on the drums with heavier drumsticks. I spent a few days switching back and forth between the magnetic beaters and regular versions. I noticed a difference in my speed and control when I went back to my normal beaters, especially while playing double strokes in more extreme musical styles.

The only issues I had with the system are related to sound. While the kick pad is light enough to not muffle the bass drum, it does add some noticeable click to the attack. This additional attack wouldn't be ideal for certain situations when you need a softer bass drum sound, such as acoustic jazz. That said, players of any genre could benefit from using this system while warming up or practicing. The Mo Drumsticks magnetic beater system can be purchased directly from modrumsticks.com for \$59.95 for one beater or \$99.95 for two.

Christopher Kozar



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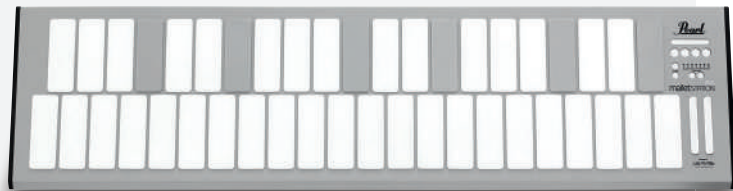
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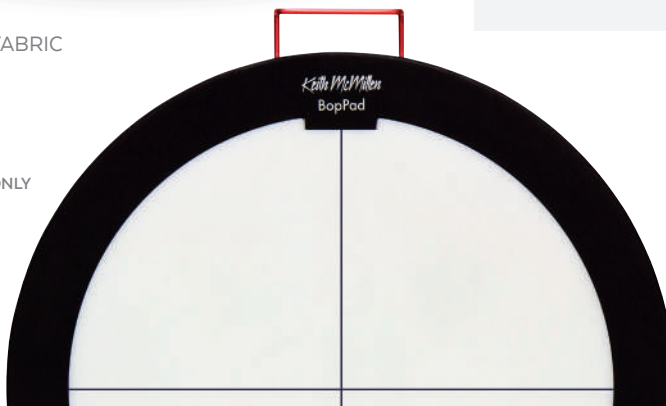
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Quicksand's Alan Cage

Quicksand drummer Alan Cage isn't overly particular about his gear. "I'm not too attached," he says. "But I don't like deep drums, at least on the rack toms. I always play a 16" floor tom, but I don't mind it being different depths. I just don't think deep toms sound as good, and, aesthetically, I don't really like the way they look." Gretsch was going to send out a bell brass snare for Cage to check out, but he thought it would be insane to lug around such a heavy drum. So he opted for a beaded brass snare instead. "I'm not that picky with the snare," says Cage. "It's more about something that sounds consistently good in different types of rooms. Usually I go with brass, but I like wood snares as well."

"One thing that's really important to me, which is the opposite of what's been going on with drums, is that I like to have the rack toms on the bass drum," Cage continues. "I don't like to have stands everywhere. I want to be able to move the drums as a unit if I need to and have the setup be very tight. For the type of show we do, like festivals, we don't always have a ton of time to set up. Having to move around giant stands can be difficult and takes a long time. It's nice to use stuff that can be set up quickly and easily."

When asked if he notices any difference in tone when using toms mounted on the bass drum, Cage says, "I've played tons of vintage kits that are drilled, and they sound great and resonate. I'm not a studio drummer or a wizard with drum sounds, and maybe I'd feel differently if I was recording all the time. But when doing a live tour, if there's a tiny difference in sound but a much bigger hassle in setting up the kit, then I'll take the slight variance in the sound. Efficiency is the key word. I want things to be easy to set up, easy to break down, and easy to replicate, even if I'm not using the exact same kit every night."



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D. 16x16 floor tom
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Cymbals: Sabian
1. 14" AAX Stage hi-hats
2. 18" AA Medium crash
3. 18" AA Rock crash
4. 22" Players' Choice AAX Stadium ride

Hardware: Gibraltar stands, spare pedal, and throne, and an old single-chain Pearl bass drum pedal

Drumheads: Remo Emperor Vintage Coated on top of snare and toms, Ambassador Clear on bottom of toms, Powerstroke P3 Coated kick drum batter

Sticks: Promark 5B Natural

Interview by John Martinez

Photos by Alex Solca

In the Studio with Travis McNabb

When not touring with top modern country acts Sugarland and Frankie Ballard, this Tennessee transplant tracks drums for artists around the globe out of his home setup.

Story and photos by Sayre Berman



Top modern country drummer Travis McNabb resides in the cozy town of Franklin, which is located just outside of Nashville, Tennessee. "I left New Orleans in 2009 and relocated to Nashville," he says. "It was a transitional period in my career; [my band] Better than Ezra had made the decision to be more of a part-time endeavor. I made the move to facilitate the logistics for my [sideman] work with Sugarland, and I also wanted to get more involved in the Nashville session scene."

Nashville is known for its abundant supply of touring musicians and first-call studio aces. In the past, rarely did the lines between those two roles blur. But things are changing, and musicians are starting to do both types of work. "Things are fast-paced in the studio, though," cautions McNabb. "Doing sessions requires sharing musical ideas and having great tones and feel, but the pace is quick. You have to deliver in a take or two, or you won't get any callbacks." McNabb is no stranger to the business of making records, however.

"My having produced and engineered records for Better than Ezra is appreciated here," he says. "Anything that adds a bit more value and makes me harder to replace is an asset worth cultivating."

McNabb's home studio is in the 600-square-foot lower level of his home. "I decided to forgo a control room in favor of a single open space," he says. "The majority of the time I'm working by myself, so having the gear that would typically be in a separate control room right next to the kit makes more sense." But the computer is strategically placed just out of reach of the drumset. "Those couple of steps are enough time for me to change my hat back and forth from drummer to engineer," Travis explains.

When asked about the types of records that feature drums recorded in his home studio, McNabb says, "The bulk of what I do here is independent records. About a third of the time, a producer, engineer, or artist comes over. But most of what I record is for people that I've developed relationships with over the years but that live in

Travis's Studio Gear

Drums: 1960s Ludwig in Champagne Sparkle (22, 13, 16), 1940s Ludwig & Ludwig in Blue/Silver Duco (26, 13, 15), Ludwig Keystone with zebrawood hoops (24, 13, 16, 18), Ludwig Stainless Steel (24, 13, 16, 18), Ludwig Classic Maple with Pewter Sparkle wood hoops (20, 22, 24, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18), Ludwig Club Date (22, 12, 13, 14, 16), 1960s Gretsch (24, 13, 16, 18), DW Classic (24, 13, 16), Sonor Force 3000 Scandinavian birch (22, 13, 16)

Snares: Over forty options, including a rare 1989 Zildjian/Noble & Cooley, a '90s hand-engraved Clevelander, a vintage Slingerland Radio King, custom drums by AK, Dunnett, Brady, and Bearing Edge, various Ludwigs (Black Beauty, Supraphonic, Acrolite, and Copperphonic), and several one-offs by DW

Cymbals: Assorted Zildjian and a few oddities



other cities. Clients will send me tracks with everything from rough sketches to complete drum parts. Sometimes I'm replacing real drums, but more often I'm replacing programmed drums that were in there as a placeholder."

How does McNabb dial in sounds to match the vibe of the music? "I'll switch out the gear to achieve the sound I want," he says. "But this is a very specific-purpose studio, so my mics and preamps are set to where I can just forget about them—with the exception of minor tweaks from time to time."

Travis refined his recording skills by asking for advice from some of the engineers he's worked with before. "Tom Tapley (Sugarland, Faith Hill, Pearl Jam) and Mark Dobson (Keith Urban, Hunter Hayes) have been over to help me figure out the best ways to use the room and the gear that I have," he says. "I went to school for recording, and when I was with Better than Ezra we had our own studio and would engineer our own albums. So I have a good amount of experience, but I don't know as much as my engineer pals do."

Rather than mess with the position of his mics to get the sounds he wants, McNabb will change out drums and cymbals. "If the track calls for a big sound, like a ballad with a lot of space, that might require me to use a big bass drum without a lot of muffling, and a big, detuned snare," he says. "I might also use different compression settings on the room mics."

"For a '70s-sounding track with Mac Powell of the band Third Day," Travis continues, "I experimented with single-headed toms. I loved the way they sounded, so the next week I brought them on the road with Frankie Ballard."

McNabb's room treatments are a little DIY. "I have some foam right over the kit, because I don't have a high ceiling," he says. "I also made curtains from packing blankets over foam for sound absorption, and there are rugs over the tile floor. I also installed double-pane glass on the sliding doors, with a layer of Plexiglas and a 4" gap between the two panes, so I can have a beautiful view without beating up my neighbors with drum sounds."

One of McNabb's favorite pieces of equipment is his RCA 74B ribbon mic. "It's a cool old mic that has been rehabbed in recent years," he says. "It has an interesting character about it. Room mics capture the whole picture of the kit. I put another mic in the shower that's in the bathroom around the corner from the drumkit."

When asked if there are any secrets to capturing a great drum sound, McNabb responds, "There's a technique that recording engineer Tom Tapley shared with me. I place a figure-8 mic between the bottom snare head and the batter side of the kick and

compress the heck out of it. It sounds very aggressive and crunchy."

McNabb relies on a mixture of high-quality gear combined with more affordable options. "I use the fancy stuff, like the old RCA mic, where it really matters," he says. "More pedestrian items, like the workhorse Shure SM57, are used on the top and bottom of the drums. I prefer to spend the most money on the snare itself, since that's what's played the most and has the most dynamic possibilities."

What are some things to keep in mind when building a home studio? "Don't be afraid to experiment," suggests McNabb. "Don't be frustrated if you think you don't have enough equipment. Sometimes limitations are good; they make you be creative."



Drum Wisdom

Mark Walker

The Berklee professor and well-traveled performer has made a career out of adapting ethnic rhythms to the drumset—and offering valuable advice on how to do that accurately and authentically.

by Ken Micallef

Grammy Award-winning drummer, Grammy-nominated composer, percussionist, author, and educator Mark Walker is a world-renowned musician and professor of percussion at Berklee College of Music. An instructor with eighteen years under his belt, Mark designed a new curriculum for Berklee, including the classes Caribbean Rhythms for Drumset, South American Rhythms for Drumset, Funkifying the Clave (in partnership with bassist Lincoln Goines), and the online-only Afro-Cuban Drums. “We’re talking about various rhythms from different song styles of Latin American music,” says Walker, “which continues to expand to more than fifteen countries.”

Walker’s recording and performance credits are equally stellar, his gig bag hitting stage and studio with Oregon, Paquito D’Rivera, the Caribbean Jazz Project, Michel Camilo, Andy Narell, the WDR and NDR big bands, Eliane Elias, Lyle Mays, Rosa Passos, and many more. Here Mark shares knowledge from his 2001 book, *World Jazz Drumming*, and from years spent teaching students just like you.

Fifty percent of understanding Latin and Brazilian musical styles is listening, and the other fifty percent is knowing how things fit together. You can master all the patterns in a book, but if you don’t know what the piano player and bass player are doing, how will you function in the band? If you have a context, it makes much more sense. You have to know how to blend what you play with the ensemble in an appropriate way. If you really know the music, you’ll eventually sound authentic, because you know how it’s supposed to sound.

The world has a lot of great musical traditions, and when they are combined with the spirit of improvisation and variations, it can result in a new kind of jazz music. You can take traditional music from anywhere in the world, incorporate jazz harmony and traditional rhythms, and make it unique. In *World Jazz Drumming*, I present a guide to various Caribbean, South American, and U.S.-based rhythms;

there are also a few of my original jazz tunes incorporating some of these rhythms, such as *candombe* from Uruguay, *cumbia* from Colombia, *samba* and *baião* from Brazil, and *bembe* from Cuba.

To play these styles more authentically, it really helps to learn the traditional percussion grooves of each style. With some exceptions, like *songo* and *timba*, most Afro-Cuban patterns are adapted to the drumset from the percussion section. A lot of the accompaniment patterns we play come from the *timbales*, such as the *casaca*, *bongo bell*, and *timbale bell* patterns.

Several important transition phrases are traditionally played by the *timbales*, such as the *abanico*, or “fan,” which takes you from a verse to a chorus. To understand and apply transition phrases, I have my students practice eight bars of the *casaca*, an accompaniment pattern for softer sections. On the last measure, they will play the transition phrase—the *abanico*—leading to a bell pattern for another eight bars. The bell is used for the chorus and louder sections. Another transition



phrase, the ponche, or “punch,” leads them back to the cascara. I call that “the circuit exercise” because it gets them used to going to and from a verse and chorus smoothly.

There are people playing left-foot clave with impressive coordination, but many times it doesn’t sound even remotely Cuban. The whole point of playing clave comes from rumba, which is folkloric music from Cuba, the only music that essentially requires the clave to be played *at all times*. Rumba clave without a Cuban context sounds like the musical equivalent of nachos—where are the rice and beans?

A basic approach for applying left-foot clave is to set up an ostinato by using a rimclick for clave and adding basic right-hand phrases, such as cascara and bell patterns. From there, you can add a bass drum tumbao rhythm. Once you have the basic grooves feeling good, you can concentrate on practicing coordination by setting up a new ostinato.

For example, the right hand plays a cascara rhythm, the left hand plays the melody, the right foot plays a tumbao pattern, and the left foot plays a clave. The melody can be played on any limb, but in this case, it will be played using the left hand [while maintaining that ostinato]. Play beat 1 on the snare with the left hand, and then move to the “&” of beat 1, beat 2, the “&” of beat 2, and so on. After you can comfortably perform each isolated 8th note, play two 8th notes in succession over the ostinato: beat 1 and the “&” of beat 1, the “&” of beat 1 and beat 2, etc. Displace those until you cycle back to beat 1. After that, you can move the melody to another limb, say, the bass drum.

It’s a method similar to Gary Chester’s *The New Breed* or interpretations of Ted Reed’s *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. The idea is to be able to play any melodic accent you hear. Listen closely to rumba, and try to imitate the feeling and phrasing. Even the rumba clave itself sounds different from how it’s written! It takes time and a lot of listening, but after a while you’ll get the feel subconsciously. That’s when you really own it.

For a more soloistic approach, practice the clave with the left foot while playing doubles between your snare and bass drum in quarter notes, 8th notes, triplets, etc.

In Brazilian samba, two of the most important percussion instruments are the surdo and tamborim. The important thing to remember is that this music should have a feeling of 2/4, and not 4/4. The surdo is the bass drum part from which the drumset bass drum part is adapted, and it has an emphasis on beat 2. The tamborim part is what we often adapt to the cross-stick. If you play a one-bar cymbal ostinato and a two-bar cross-stick pattern, the groove is unbalanced. The right hand needs to play the same phrase as the left, with the addition of some notes. This way, the surdo and tamborim patterns are well balanced. The one-bar ostinato would work if the left hand were playing a one-bar pattern as well.

There is a phrase known as the “fork,” which is written 16th–8th–16th, but feels different, somewhere between that 16th-note phrasing and an 8th-note triplet. This comes from another form of tamborim playing known as virada, where the instrument is turned while the fork phrase is played, resulting in an accidental note on the “&” of each beat. Because we are not machines, the fork is going to sound a little lazy, almost like a triplet. But the accidental return note will hit exactly on the “&,” giving us the essence of Brazilian samba: four 16ths, but with the feel of a rolling egg. Again, listening is the other fifty percent!

I spend a lot of time helping students with balance and sound. Some students come in and play something funky, but they play the hi-hat too lightly and smack the snare with an ear-splitting backbeat. I



ask, “What would that sound like if you had only one microphone, and the listener was way out on the other side of a stadium? All they would hear would be the snare drum.” I encourage students to be aware of the volume of all the parts of the set. Each part doesn’t have to be exactly the same volume, but the set must be balanced. When the student plays swing, I teach them to keep the cymbal strong, feather the bass drum softly on all four beats, and keep the comping slightly underneath the cymbal, so it isn’t too heavy but still has some bottom.

The sweet spot on each part of the drumset is extremely important to know. If someone hits a loud backbeat near the edge of the snare, it’s going to have too many overtones and be annoying to the listener. A drummer might put their wallet on the snare, but to me, that just kills all the overtones and forces you to hit hard. There is no development of any kind of tone or individual sound; all you hear is a loud, dead hit.

I encourage students to work on a big, fat sound on the snare without any muffling, and to get control of where they hit. They often find they don’t need any muffling, unless they’re going for a specific

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tuned-down, muffled '70s sound. In that case, I suggest using a folded paper towel on the very edge of the drumhead with some gaffer's tape over it. If you're recording, you can adjust it. A wallet or phone takes too much away from the drum, and it moves around. Your phone belongs in your bag, not on the snare drum.

For the bass drum, it helped me to develop a technique where I could play full strokes as well as dead strokes, flat-footed or heel-up. I changed my position at the drum throne and moved it up toward my thighs, rather than sitting on the edge. This freed me from using the dead stroke as a resting position.

I spend a lot of time pointing out to students that the moment they start moving their left leg, they have lost all control of the hi-hat stick sound. It's become a habit for many of them, because they want to "keep time," but they're already keeping time with the stick!

It's possible to rock out at any volume. This technique involves playing rock and funk in settings where the volume has to be reduced. You play with just as much intensity and attitude using the same grooves and sounds. The secret is the proximity of the stick from the drum. For a backbeat, hit in the very center of the head, using a rimshot, but from an inch above the drum. It's not easy to play at first, because you have to nail every rimshot from such a low proximity. It's a slamming but controlled sound, and you can still make people dance at any volume you choose. You can play in any room, with any band, and you can get a big, fat, intense backbeat sound. This also goes for the hi-hat; if you play it soft, with the shoulder, but slightly loose, it sounds like you're hitting hard from far away. You must learn to get a big sound using a low stick height.

Some of the hardest lessons I've learned were about dynamics on

the drumset. I started out playing rock and hitting hard, which I think everyone should be able to do when the context requires it. However, I was thrust into many situations that required a lighter touch, such as swing and Brazilian music. When I started working with pianist Lyle Mays, clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera, classical guitarist Ralph Towner, and steel pan virtuoso Andy Narell, hitting the drums hard didn't work. I had to learn to blend, not to cut—and not to lose the intensity. It was very difficult when these artists got on my case about the volume, but I needed to figure out a way to make it work.

I began practicing Alan Dawson's Rudimental Ritual. In the Ritual you play a samba ostinato bass drum and hi-hat with a series of rudiments on top of it. I practiced it flat-footed to challenge myself. The result was more control of both the dynamics and the spacing of the notes. I also felt more relaxed playing more intense, high-volume music as well as softer music. Dynamics relate to stick heights, and if you know how high the stick should be for mezzo forte, as opposed to pianissimo or fortissimo, you're going to be in good shape.

I give students an exercise where they can play any rhythm, but just randomly call the dynamic marking and make their sticks go to the appropriate height right away. After a while, it become subconscious. The exercise is like an obstacle course, but you can practice it at any tempo with straight 8th notes, 16th notes, triplets, etc.—even around the set.

Decades later, those same artists are still calling for gigs. And I can still hear the phone ring.

Mark Walker endorses Yamaha, Paiste, Remo, Vic Firth, and Meinl products.



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Jason Aldean's

Rich Redmond

by Mike Haid

Alex Solca

With twenty-one number-one hits to his credit, countless sold-out tours with Jason Aldean, and an endless stream of TV appearances with acts like Bob Seger, Bryan Adams, Keith Urban, Little Big Town, Ludacris, Jennifer Nettles, Chris Cornell, and Joe Perry, Nashville's game-changing country music drummer Rich Redmond has lived practically every musician's dream—including his own. "My goal in life," he says, "was to hear myself on the radio, see myself on television, and travel the world on someone else's dime."

Check, check, and check.

The story of Rich Redmond's climb to the top of today's country music scene is unique—one of sheer determination, tenacity, persistence, and discipline to overcome all obstacles. Ironically, playing country music in Nashville was not Redmond's original goal. But in moving to Music City, he found success by burrowing his way into the core of the Nashville scene, connecting with a pair of ace players, and forming a sought-after rhythm section. Together they would break new musical ground and build a hit-making machine with an up-and-coming artist named Jason Aldean. Redmond calculates that today the Aldean band performs for about a million fans a year. "In 2015 we played eleven NFL stadiums with Kenny Chesney," he offers as an example of the group's reach. "These shows averaged 80,000 fans per night, including the first country show ever at the Rose Bowl."

Redmond's talents run deeper than his résumé or his bachelor of music education degree from Texas Tech University and masters of music education from the University of North Texas would suggest. A three-time *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll winner in the Country Drummer category—and a 2010 winner in the Clinician

category—Redmond also maintains active careers as an actor, speaker, author, educator, and music producer. His New Voice Entertainment company has produced several number-one hits, and his C.R.A.S.H. Course for Success motivational-speaking business is a one-of-a-kind "edutainment" program combining music, drumming, and a motivational format customized for people of all ages, in any field, and at any level of business or education.

Now, with career commitments in Los Angeles and Nashville, the forty-eight-year-old Redmond says he's just getting started. And he insists that drumming is at the heart of it all.



MD: How did drumming enter your life?

Rich: I'm from Milford, Connecticut, a restless, high-energy kid. My mom was a nurse, and my dad was an accountant. I believe that, secretly, my dad wanted to play drums. Vicariously, he would ask, "Hey, would you like to play the drums?" So, at age seven, I started taking lessons with Jack Burkey at the Milford Percussion and Guitar Workshop. Jack taught me how to hold the sticks, and he got me started on the Joel Rothman books. I learned the rudiments, and I was heavy into Kiss at the time. I started gravitating towards the lessons and eating it alive.

We moved to El Paso, Texas, in 1981, when I was eleven, and I joined the school band in the fifth grade. From having that early training in Milford, I was ahead of the other kids. I could read and play mallet percussion. I knew how to play the marching cymbals and tune the timpani. It was a great experience because I came in as more of a leader and was enjoying the whole energy of drumming.

Texas is an amazing music education state, because they're big on football. And when you have big football, you have big budgets, which [trickle] down to the music program, with massive marching bands. We had a 400-member marching band at JM Hanks High School. I played snare drum in marching band for eight years in school, which was great rudimental training. I also played in concert band, symphonic band, pep band, jazz ensemble, and jazz trio. I was obsessed with drumming.

MD: After your college years in Texas, how did you end up in Nashville?

Rich: After college I knew that I had to move to New York, Los Angeles, or Nashville. My destination of choice was L.A.—I liked the weather and the music scene—so I reached out to a sax player friend, Dan Nelson. He literally changed my life. I asked him if he knew anyone looking for a drummer on a regional or national level. He said, "Yeah, there's this girl named Trisha Yearwood that's looking for a drummer in Nashville. Call this guy, Johnny Garcia, and send him your demo."

That phone call was the turning point in my career. I sent him my demo. Johnny called me and said, "I don't know who you are, but I heard your demo. If you can get yourself to Nashville, we'll listen to you play." So I flew to Nashville on a Monday, auditioned, and it came down to me and another guy. The other guy, who lived there, got the gig. I flew back to Dallas, did my weekday gigs, then flew back to Nashville one week later to audition for Deana Carter. Same thing: The other drummer got the gig because he lived there. There was another audition for Barbara

Mandrell the following week. So, I flew back to Dallas, did my local gigs, shedded the Mandrell audition, did all the right things to prepare, showed up on time, dressed the part, smiled, and played the music down, spot on. Again, lost out to the guy that lived there. After that I realized that I had to get out of Dallas.

I was twenty-six years old. I gave my band two weeks' notice, and I moved to Nashville. As much as I loved the idea of moving to Los Angeles, I didn't know anyone there. But I was getting great feedback on my drumming in Music City, USA. So in March of 1997, I moved to Nashville. I joined the union the first day and called everyone in the union book. "Hi, my name is Rich Redmond. I have a tuxedo, I have reliable transportation, and I can read music." The stock response was, "Good luck, kid."

But I moved to town on a Tuesday, and had a gig by Saturday night. One handshake led to another, and I'm still shaking hands all these years later. For the first ten years in Nashville, if I wasn't working, I was out on the town, going to singer/songwriter nights, sitting in with bands, and building a network of connections that have kept me working all these years.

MD: When did your big break finally happen?

Rich: It became apparent that in order for me to really get into the scene, I had to build my own network and put my own rhythm section together for backing artists. By 1999 I'd created a rhythm section that would put us on the map, and that eventually became Jason Aldean's band. Until then I was doing every gig I could find around town, from singer/songwriter nights to demo recordings. I was waiting tables, parking cars, and substitute teaching. I was hungry and wanted to make my dreams come true.

I was playing in a club one night, playing Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" with a country band, and in walks a gentleman named Ken Allison, who had a band called the Blues Other Brothers. They did all Motown and soul music in a Vegas-style show. He hired me to join the band, which is where I met his son, Kurt Allison, who is now Aldean's guitar player and a dear friend. Kurt and I became tight and started playing a gig with a singer named Ronna Reeves. We ended up getting a gig with Aimee Johns, who had a bass player named Tully Kennedy. It felt great with this rhythm section, and we knew we had something special. That was the birth of what we called the 3 Kings. We've been Jason Aldean's rhythm section since 1999. In the mid 2000s, we were one of the go-to rhythm sections in Nashville for labels to hire to do showcases with up-and-coming artists.





Chris and Todd Owyong

While we were playing with Aldean, from 1999 to 2004, we also had a band together called Rushlow, with Tim Rushlow, vocalist from the band Little Texas. We had two top-ten hit singles. That was my first major-league experience in the industry as a recording artist, and all that goes with it. As soon as that band fell apart, Aldean signed with Broken Bow Records. At the end of 2004, we recorded our first Aldean record and hit the road. And we've been touring nonstop ever since. Jason is on his twenty-seventh radio single, and his twentieth number-one song. He's an incredibly consistent singer with a strong, recognizable voice. We've never cancelled a show. It's a joy and a thrill to back up Jason.

It's been an incredible run, and Jason's been loyal to us. We've been playing together now for nearly twenty years. The music business can be a treacherous place, with very little loyalty. We've been fortunate to mix business and pleasure successfully, which is also very rare in this business. People say it's not wise to mix business and pleasure. But literally every success in my career is a direct result of mixing business and pleasure.

MD: Let's get into some playing concepts. Can you explain your use of the rimshots for



Chris and Todd Owyong

Drums: DW Collector's Series, Pure Maple shells with reinforcement hoops and black bickel hardware.

- A.** 5.5x14 Black Nickel Over Brass snare with black nickel hardware and Canopus 20-strand wires
- B.** 9x13 tom
- C.** 14x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 16x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian (all brilliant finish)

- 1.** 15" HHX Groove hats
- 2.** 20" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 3.** 22" HHX Groove ride
- 4.** 21" Chad Smith Holy China

Heads: Remo Coated Powerstroke 77 snare batter and Ambassador Hazy snare-side resonant; Emperor Colortone Smoke tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants; Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter with a black double Falam Slam impact badge and Woodshed Stage Art Custom front head. Drumtacs applied to resonant heads of floor toms for overtone control.

Percussion: LP cowbell, maracas, and medium shaker and a Grover Studio Pro tambourine

Hardware: DW 9000 Series 2-leg hi-hat stand, 9000 double bass drum pedal with DW Rich Redmond custom Black Sheep beaters, 9000 cymbal stands and snare stand, and Low Tripod throne stand with Porter & Davies thumper seat; Artisan Customs seven-stick stick holder; QwikStix beverage holder; LP Percussion Table cut in half with stand tube cut down; Cymbolt cymbal tops

Redmond's 2018 Touring Setup



Chris and Todd Owyong

with Cympad 40 mm Optimizers (black) cut in half to 20 mm to fit on Cymbolts

Sticks: Promark Rich Redmond signature ActiveGrip 595 sticks, Hot Rods, and medium brushes; Adam Argullin custom yarn mallets spun onto Rich's signature stick

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX multi-pad and RT-30 tom and kick triggers for gate side-chain; Alesis SR18 drum machine and DM5 module

for thumper throne; Porter & Davies BC Gigster throne; Boss FS-5U footswitch; Ultimate Ears and JH Audio in-ear monitors

Microphones: Audio-Technica AE2500 condenser outside bass drum, AE3000 on top and bottom of snare and on toms, ATM450 on hi-hat and ride, AT4050 overheads, and AT4047 center overhead; Shure Beta 91 inside bass drum

your backbeats?

Rich: I tilt my snare towards me when I play, which I got from Kenny Aronoff, Liberty DeVitto, and Phil Collins. In my youth I would practice rimshots for hours to develop the muscle memory to hit the same spot with accuracy when I played a backbeat. I'm known for that cracking snare drum sound. In my clinics I'll play the first few lines of the *Syncopation* book on the center of the snare. Then I'll play it on the rim. It's obvious which sound has more energy and attitude. It's the rimshot. I can't imagine not playing the rim of the snare. It's in my DNA at this point in my career.

MD: What are the elements of what you call "money beats"?

Rich: For me, it's all about keeping the kick and snare simple and consistent while adding color and texture with the rest of the kit. "Money beats" are the timeless, simple rock grooves that are heard and played on almost every great rock tune throughout history. The kick and snare relationship never changes. It's the coloring and seasoning with the other limbs that [add] the secret sauce. It's your ability to change the sound of a simple beat, at any moment, by changing up the combinations of ideas with your other limbs over a rock-solid groove.

Most country hit songs are played between 70 and 89 BPM. It's a 19 BPM window. So your fill vocabulary is limited to simple, proven fills. It's my job to find creative ways to play the same-style fills over and over again. I do that by placing a kick drum between the notes, [adding] drags or flams between the notes, breaking it up between my hands and feet. The kick/snare relationship is what you hear on the radio—what you hear way in the back of the arena, stadium, or amphitheater. That's what gets the listener moving and bouncing to the music. It's the additional coloring that creates the lope, feel, and vibe of the beat. You need to be able to combine these elements with a click track or a loop at any dynamic level. There's more than meets

the ear when playing a simple rock groove, if you're incorporating these tasty rhythmic elements into your "money beats."

MD: Please describe a typical Aldean recording session.

Rich: We've recorded eight Aldean records, and many demos leading up to Jason's record deal. A lot of the drum tracks are dictated by what's going on, sound-wise, in the songwriting community. The last three records have lots of programmed loops mixed with acoustic drumset. I'll overdub real percussion over that to give it a more organic sound. If you're mixing 808 hi-hats with a programmed MIDI shaker, then add a real instrument in there. It creates a nice, human touch.

Pete Coleman, our engineer for all eight records, also engineered all of the Blondie records, all the Pat Benatar records, and recorded "My Sharona" by the Knack. We've been working together forever. So I know what he likes. He likes my ride cymbal and crash cymbals positioned up high, like Ndugu Chancler, to create more separation from the tom mics. I don't normally play like that. But I respect Pete and give him what he needs to do his job well. He doesn't like the hats bleeding into the snare mic.

We put a triangle of tape underneath the bell of the cymbal to help isolate the brighter, resonant tones. And he loves a modern, off-the-shelf Black Beauty snare drum. We've used that same drum on almost a hundred songs. It's easy to make one drum sound a thousand different ways with muffling and editing.

We'll also use the song demo to build our tracks from. So I'll tip my hat to the demo programmer for ninety percent of the track and then Redmond-ize the other ten percent with my heart and soul and musical choices, to try and create those "Mona Lisa" moments that make the drum track more interesting. But at the same time, I'm keeping in mind that this song is a potential single. So, I'm thinking like an A&R person, too.



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Rich Redmond



Chris and Todd Owyong

MD: What makes for a great drum track?

Rich: A memorable beat, a killer groove, musical choices, and staying out of the way. The groove is the muscle of the song. The connective tissue is the appropriate fill coming in and out of each section of the song. Then the finishing touches consist of scrubbing and/or gridding the tracks to really lock them all in as tightly as possible to create that unstoppable, impenetrable groove that makes it a radio hit. The first five or six Aldean records were not really scrubbed or gridded. The last two records were heavily mixed with modern technology. What I loved about our early Aldean records is that we were eight guys in a room, like the old Motown recordings, all playing at the same time. There were no samples and no scrubbing. But as you grow as an artist, you also have to grow with the technology, to keep up with the industry standards for making hit records. You have to go into the studio with the confidence to know what a song needs, and

then deliver the goods. You also have to be humble enough to take directions.

MD: Do you play differently live from how you play in the studio?

Rich: I tell my students that a good live drummer should play the song every time like he's playing it for the very first time in the studio. It's your job to recreate the energy and excitement you had when you first recorded the song. The fans paid a lot of money to come and see the band, and you have to be an actor. In the studio, a good drummer plays a song the first time sounding like he's played it a thousand times. I play very much the same in both studio and live settings, with lots of energy and attitude.

MD: You have great visual energy.

Rich: When I play, I think like a dancer and a boxer. I'm neither, but I have go-to body moves that not only help me internally, but create a cool live visual. I also abuse the fake twirl in concert. I learned how to use that effectively by watching Carmine Appice. I

Rich's Pre-Show Routine

"Before the show I work out on the drum pad for about thirty minutes, warming up on rudimental patterns. It's a grid that I do, moving accents around with diddles, rolls, flams, and Swiss triplets, and then volume practice with loud and soft strokes.

"I stretch a lot and try to work out daily, and I cut off all liquids an hour before the show. On the road, my day is filled with clinics or going to the gym, doing promo spots, and whatever needs to be done before soundcheck, which is at 3:30 P.M. We'll do four or five songs to make sure everything is good.

"My drum tech, Jon Hull, is amazing. I never have to touch a thing. Everything is tuned, cleaned, and set up to perfection, with a bottle of water and towels there and the fans running. I love this guy!

"At 7 P.M. we do a thirty-minute, three-song VIP experience. I play a djembe and we do a Q&A Storytellers-style set. Then, we have some time before the show for personal business, a little more warm-up on the pad, and hang with the band. At 9 P.M., we hit the stage and take no prisoners."

A Tragedy's Message

Rich Redmond was on stage with Jason Aldean during the horrific mass shooting in Las Vegas in late 2017. Here he recalls the incident.

"We were playing the Route 91 Harvest Festival. My parents were supposed to be at that show and decided at the last minute not to come. Around the fifth song, we started hearing strange sounds in our monitors. I'd started the song 'When She Says Baby' and made it to about bar nine, when suddenly I noticed that the band had disappeared. I was the last guy on stage.

"My drum tech, who had grown up around guns, knew what was happening, and we both hid behind my drum machine rack, thinking that the bullets were coming from the front of the stage. They were actually coming from over our shoulders, and we were exposed the entire time. There were no sides or back on the stage. If he really wanted to hit us, he could have. I ended up getting separated from the band, and everyone was screaming, running, and ducking.

"Amazingly, all sixty members of our organization, band and crew, were unharmed. It was a terrifying night. I'm fine now, and was fortunate that it wasn't my time. It's helped me focus on spending the rest of my life doing things that are helpful to people. And the way that I feel I can help people the most is through education, entertainment, and motivation. The fact that I'm alive is God's way of telling me that I have more work to do."

make sure the sticks never leave my hands, because it's too risky. I try and keep my grip loose, because your grip affects your tone.

A more open grip will produce a more open tone.

MD: What is the Nashville Number System?

Rich: The Nashville Number System outlines the harmonic structure of a song using numbers. I use it to chart out the rhythmic details that are crucial to the song before we go in to record our tracks. The best resource to learn this system is drummer Jim Riley's book, *Song Charting Made Easy: A Play-Along Guide to the Nashville Number System*. Jim and I went to college around the same time, and both moved here at the same time. We were roommates and championed each other. Jim got a road gig as bandleader for Rascal Flatts, and it's still going strong. I got connected into the studio scene before connecting with Jason Aldean. We both wanted to become educators as well as players.

MD: Can you explain what a macro rhythm is?

Rich: A macro rhythm is the main beat of a song. I'm always thinking about macro rhythms in fills, too. Every drummer will play the macro rhythm differently because of their nuance in style and feel. Ringo may play it

with a little swing. Joey Kramer may play it more straight ahead. David Garibaldi may play it with ghost notes added. Omar Hakim may add closed drags. Billy Cobham might add more open drags. But they're all still playing the main macro rhythm. As a session player, you need to be like a character actor and be prepared to play any one of these variations of the macro rhythm at any given time.

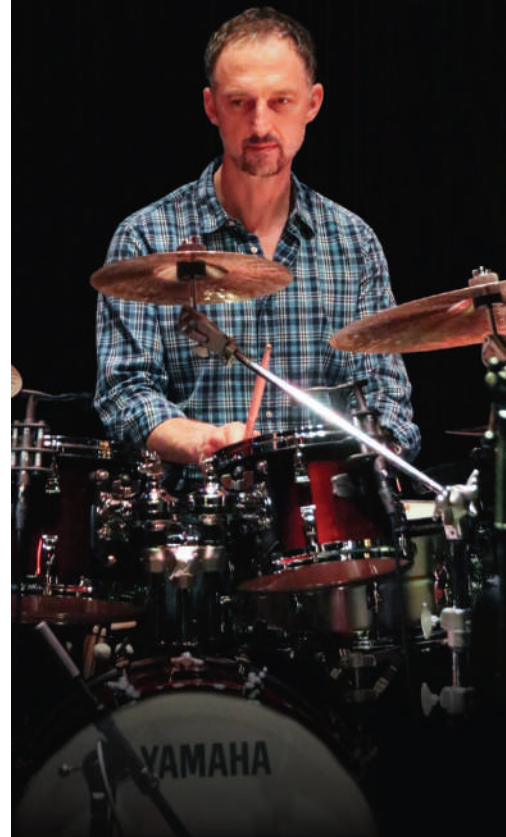
MD: How about phrase charts?

Rich: Phrase charts are the keys to the castle. It's the easiest way to shrink down the guts of a song into bars, intro, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, turnaround, verse two, chorus two, bridge, breakdown, solo, outro, tag. You have to know what all these terms mean in the anatomy of a song, and then write out only the information you need to execute the song to sound like another drummer, or like yourself. Stops, starts, endings, builds, and feel changes. I write out the BPM and describe the feel, like "sassy rock" or "even 16ths," which reminds me what to go for in each section of the song. A lot of working musicians use this type of chart. I have a filing cabinet filled with thirty years' worth of phrase charts from various bands I've worked with.

MD: Can you talk about the latest Jason Aldean recording, *Rearview Town*, which debuted on *Billboard's* Top 200 chart at number one?

Rich: I'm very happy with my mature musical choices on the new record. You hear the drums, you feel the drums, and there's nothing distracting to the songs. And that's the goal. We're very hard on each other to push each other to grow and develop our sound and create new ideas with each new record. The key is bringing those songs to life so the story can be told. We start the night off on our new tour with "Gettin' Warmed Up," which surprisingly jumps from a straight rock groove to half-time in the chorus, which is a total turnaround from what you would expect. Remember, our hit record tempo is 70 to 89 BPM. We have four number-one songs at 70 BPM.

"You Make It Easy" is a lesson in discipline as a slow 6/8 R&B groove, with practically no fills in the song. "Drowns the Whiskey" is classic country, and I'm playing brushes, but there's a loop to help modernize the groove. Again, the discipline is that I don't change the pattern for three and a half minutes. "High Noon Neon" is great songwriting and storytelling. It's the imagery that I try and help create based on the lyric. To add color and texture to each track, I do a lot of cymbal-swell overdubs, shakers, tambourine.... You've got to be willing to



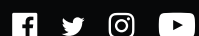
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Rich Redmond

play a pattern for four measures without changing anything. A lot of drummers aren't willing or don't have the discipline to do that. It helps create a phrase, like a marching cadence. It's a win-win for me, because the songs come to life and I've done my job as a drummer.

MD: Would you please discuss drumming as a business?

Rich: I've read a lot of books, and I'm very much into personal development. You have to develop the mindset that you're running a small business, and the product is you. You're selling yourself. In this industry, I sell myself, which allows me to sell rhythm. If you play from the heart, it'll set you apart. If you're just playing academically, you're only halfway there. When you put your heart and soul into what you're playing, it elevates your persona to a higher level than the guy that's just going through the motions. As a drummer, I want to know who wrote the song, what it's about, what story is being told, and what emotion I can bring to the song.

I was an early adapter of social media. I wore MySpace out! I built my personal brand on MySpace and made some great connections on there. And I jumped on Facebook immediately. It's a great way to break the ice with people. It takes extra effort to bring that cyber relationship into the real world. A lot of people don't want to make that effort. I make connections on Facebook and then get together with them in person to build that relationship. I know all of my Facebook friends personally. Building a solid brand is crucial. There are a million ear-cleaning devices, but everyone calls it a Q-tip. You want to establish your brand so that



when someone needs your particular style, they know you're the guy that will deliver the goods.

MD: You have a motivational-speaking program. What's at the heart of that?

Rich: My C.R.A.S.H. motivational speaking seminar combines music and business in a fun and innovative format that works for any type of business or corporation. There are very few drummers who've moved into this arena. Mark Schulman, Dom Famularo, and I are all active [in] this area, and we each have our own slant. My program is based on the philosophy of developing a successful living.

C.R.A.S.H. stands for commitment,

relationships, attitude, skills, and hunger. It's a cross-generational platform that can work for a five-year-old or a fifty-year-old. It can work for a soccer mom or a CEO. It can work for the top-performing people at a company, or all the new hires. Mark Schulman has been doing it for a long time, and he's my first-call sub in the speaking arena. If I get a call for a speaking gig and have a conflict, I send the gig to Mark. If Mark gets double-booked with Pink and needs me to go to Mexico City to cover his speaking gig, I go.

MD: Besides the Aldean gig, what other irons do you have in the fire?

Rich: My website, richredmond.com,

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Rich Redmond

highlights all the things I do, and then feeds out to all of the other sites like crashcourseforsuccess.com, which is my motivational-speaking site. Then there's my drumming education program, which is housed at drumminginthemodernworld.com. It's 120 educational lessons broken up into easily digestible modules. It's a snapshot of everything I've learned about drumming, and how you can develop a career in the music business. I've also started 1225 Entertainment with Mike Krompass to produce and develop talent in rock, pop, country, hip-hop, and TV

and film. We're also considering starting a publishing company and record label. This is all in the works. In today's entertainment market, you have to be a jack of all trades, master of all!

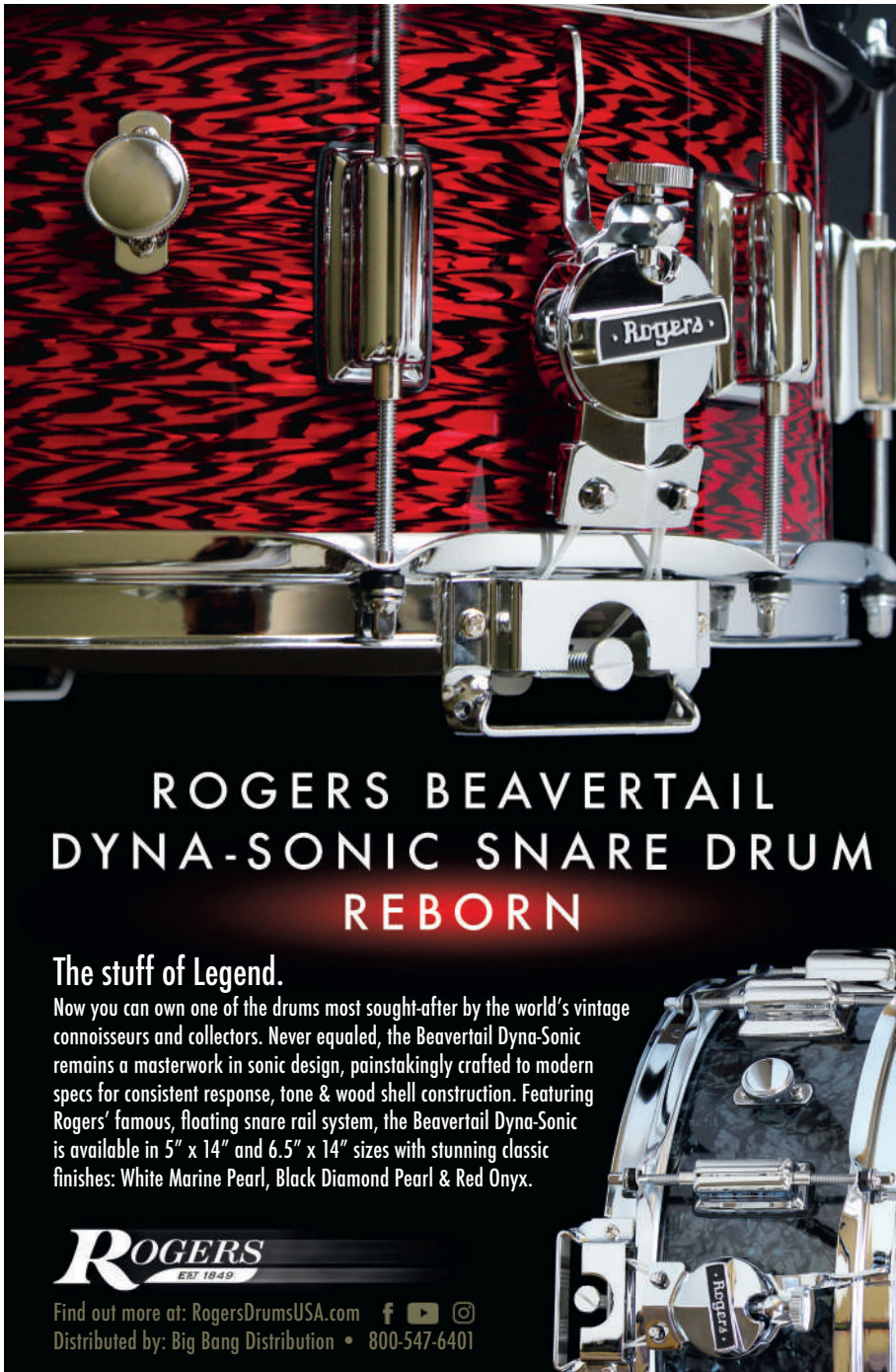
MD: So what's next?

Rich: I'd still like to play on records in other musical genres. I'm still meeting new people and making new friends in Los Angeles. It's still exciting to me to think that there's more music and more adventures ahead on the West Coast. I would like to have a number-one hit song in the U.S. as a songwriter. With

our 1225 Entertainment company I'll be writing with some amazing songwriters, and I have a better chance of that number-one song happening in the States. I'm also going to record a solo instrumental fusion record. I know all the right musicians to do it. It'll be what I call "approachable fusion." I want it to serve three purposes: pure listening, play-along educational product, and license to TV and film. I've always wanted a Rich Redmond solo record. Another project I'm involved with is called The Fell with legendary bassist Billy Sheehan [Mister Big, David Lee Roth], my 1225 partner Mike Krompass on guitar, Scott Westervelt on keys, and Stephen Vickers on vocals.

I don't know where things are going over the next twenty years. I just want to be happy and, in the process, hopefully change lives. My purpose in life is to affect people in a positive way. I know that I can do that through music, education, and entertainment. I find that all of these avenues feed each other. When I moved to Nashville twenty years ago, they said, "Hey, kid, you're either a recording musician or a touring musician. And they *never* mix." I set out to prove them wrong, and I discovered that if you can play with accuracy, consistency, and fire in the studio, they'll say, "We want you to come and play live with us." And, if you can play a live gig with accuracy and consistency, then they'll say, "Hey, you can come and play on our new record." These two things can cross-pollinate.




Kenny Aronoff was a great career model for this. He was getting hired for a lot of different gigs while living in Bloomington, Indiana. They were flying him all over the place. He had Tama keep a set of drums in Nashville, Los Angeles, New York, and London. So I thought, *Okay, I still want to be part of the Los Angeles music scene.* So now I rent a place by the Hollywood Bowl. I have a car there, and I go out there and work when the Aldean band is off. There are new contacts to be made out there, the sun is shining, different music to experience, and people think I'm absolutely crazy for doing it. But I think crazy people change the world. I figure, the door is open, so let's really kick it open, and let's get drums everywhere, make connections, and live life. Let's be creative, make music, and explore new possibilities. Yes, it's exhausting, and I feel like a lunatic sometimes. But I want to speak, teach, act, perform, and hopefully see *my* picture on a T-shirt one day. I'm constantly exploring new ideas and pursuing new avenues. I love what I do. And it's all fun!



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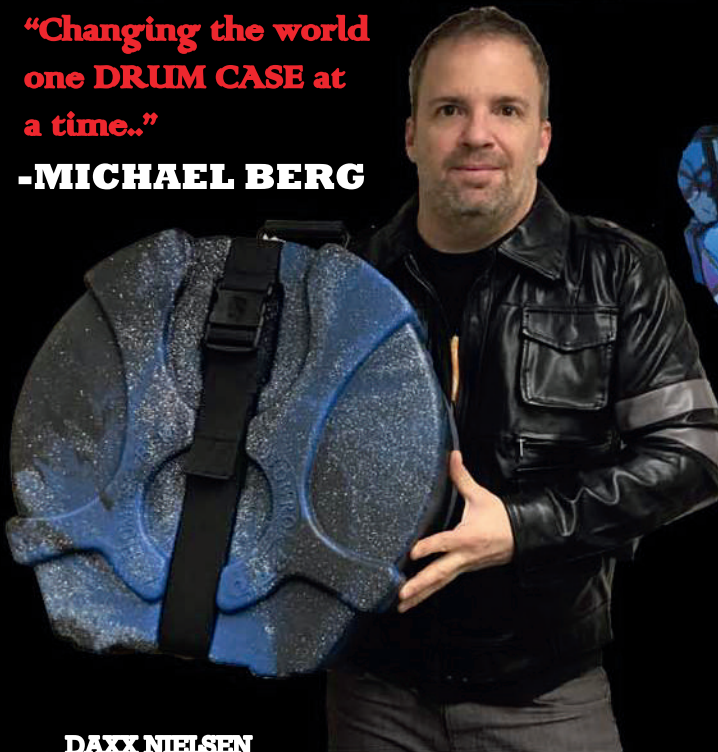
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Mike Clark

He's done so much great jazz playing over the past half century, it's *almost* enough to make you forget his famous funk innovations of many moons ago. But make no mistake, this drummer is living large in the moment.

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by John Fell

Mike Clark smiles when quizzed about his drumming on the Headhunters' 1974 classics "Palm Grease," "Actual Proof," "Butterfly," and "Spank-a-Lee," some of the most influential jazz-funk tracks of all time. When Clark made his name as an innovator of the Oakland-based linear-funk style popularized by the Headhunters, he flipped the groove *his* way, making it slide with the graceful cogitations of jazz and the deep soul of the blues. Clark's tenure with Herbie Hancock's groundbreaking Headhunters was brief, prefaced and followed by ceaseless work playing his true love: straight-ahead jazz. Hip-hop also embraced Clark, with many producers including Grandmaster Flash sampling his groove to "God Make Me Funky."

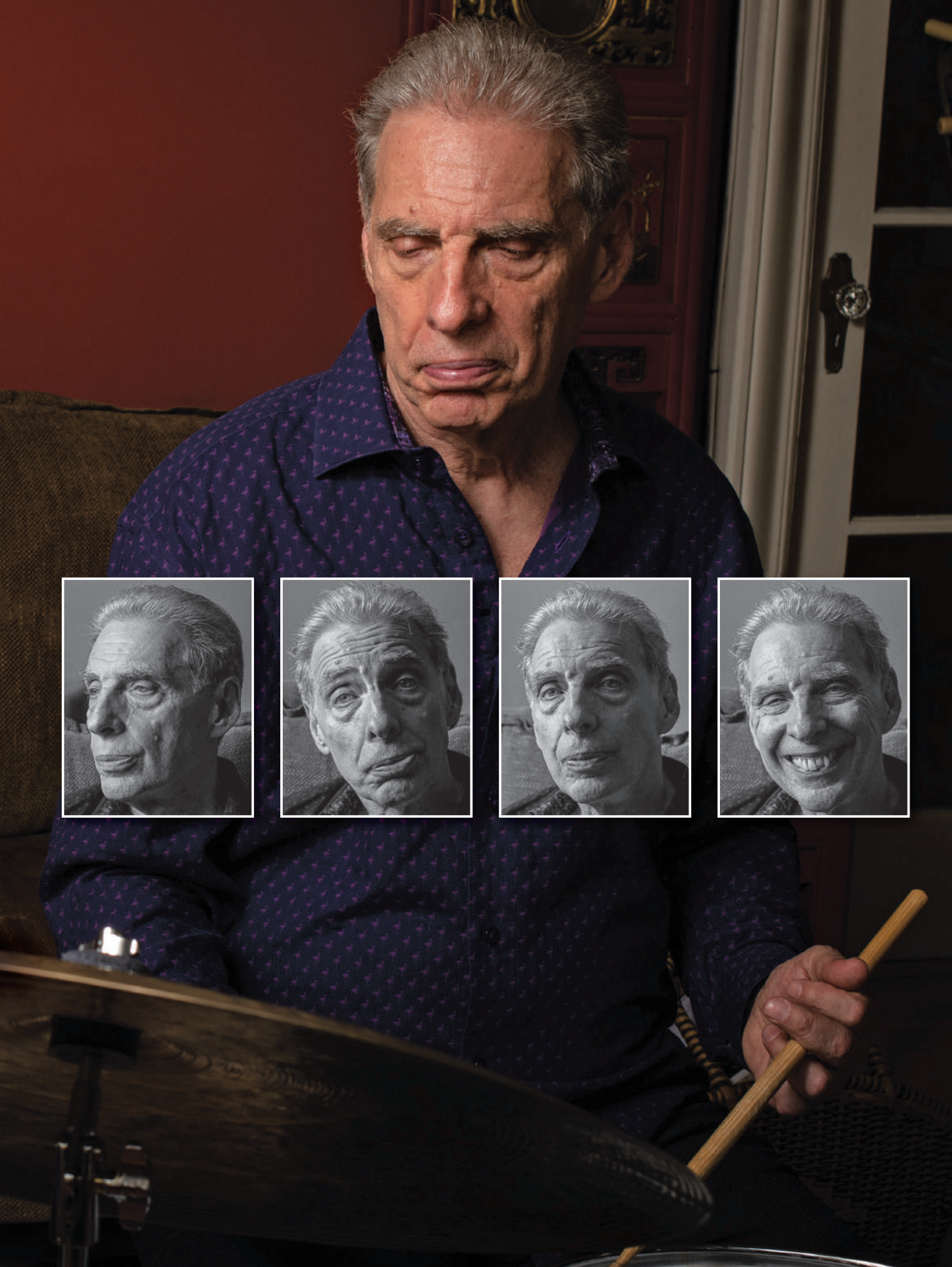
Yes, Clark has heard it all before—the questions, the praise—and though he's anxious to talk about his new projects, he's happy to explain how he invented the slippery, agitated, nerve-juggling grooves of his famous jazz-funk juggernauts. But there's so much more to Mike Clark's story. Take, for instance, his origins as a child drumming star in Texas. Or his Chitlin' Circuit work with blues greats. Or, more to the point, his current schedule as one of the busiest jazz drummers anywhere.

Many of Clark's current projects are on the adventurous Ropeadope label: Venture's *Life Cycle*, the organ trio blowouts of Clark and Delbert Bumps' *Retro Report*, and the avant garde of Middle Blue's *Love Chords*. There's also Eddie Henderson's *Be Cool*,

Mike LeDonne's *From the Heart*, the Rob Dixon Trio's *Coast to Crossroads*, and ongoing work with Peter Bernstein, Eric Alexander, Jack Wilkins, and Dave Stryker, to name a few.

Clark's earlier oeuvre includes the Headhunters' records *Thrust*, *Flood*, *Survival of the Fittest*, *Straight from the Gate*, *Evolution Revolution*, and *Platinum*. "One of my records that I really like is *Summertime* [1999] with Chris Potter and Billy Childs," he adds. "And there's *Carnival of Soul* [2010] and *Give the Drummer Some* [1989]. *Blueprints of Jazz* [2006] is good. And Wolff & Clark Expedition's *Expedition 2* [2015]."

We spoke to Clark soon after he'd returned from a short tour with the group Venture, featuring bassist Felix Pastorius and vibraphonist/pianist Mark Sherman. "That band's kickin' butt," says Clark. "I'm very excited about our album hitting the jazz charts." And while this issue was in production, the drummer did a hit with George Cables and Ed Howard, a festival with Eddie Henderson and Donald Harrison, a record date with Greg Skaff and Leon Dorsey, a Blue Note show with Sonny Fortune, Dave Kikoski, and Ed Howard, and his own European tour with Rick Margitza and Reggie Washington. "I'm also doing a John Coltrane/Johnny Hartman tribute recording with Kevin Harris, Donald Harrison, Tony Garnier, and Patience Higgins—and Wolff & Clark Expedition are starting their next album!" For Mike Clark, it seems, the hits just keep coming.



MD: This is a Renaissance time for you. What accounts for the resurgence of your popularity?

Mike: I've been rolling for a while at this level, but with social media everyone sees I'm very busy. I've been making jazz records as a leader and a sideman since the '80s. I'm not making any more records now than I was then. Label owners and editors see you're busy on social media, and pretty soon your phone starts ringing. I'm not getting any more work, but I'm getting more attention.

MD: I've been listening to your album, *Blueprints of Jazz*. That's what I love to hear you play, even though you're better known for linear funk.

Mike: Post-bop and bebop—that's been my passion since I was eight years old. But Herbie's records sell a million and mine sell in the thousands, so that's the answer to that. I was on some very high-profile records, so naturally people who don't buy jazz records know me from *Thrust*, *Death Wish*, and the other *Headhunters* albums.

MD: You're a straight-ahead jazz drummer who was detoured by Herbie Hancock's bigger paychecks.

Mike: He didn't [tell me I'd make] a lot more money, because I was making money playing jazz at that point. We all know Herbie from Miles Davis and his records. But he wanted to play funk, and I had some reservations because I thought it might throw a wrench into my jazz career, which it did. I'm not begrudging the gig; it made me a well-known musician. What Herbie said was, "You could stay here and probably play jazz until you die. No one will know you." I said, "Yeah, you're right."

MD: What was the essence of the linear style that you originated along with David Garibaldi and Greg Errico?



Clark's Setup

Drums: DW Jazz set

- A. 5.5x14 wood DW or 6x14 Craviotto snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 14x14 floor tom
- D. 14x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Epoch series

- 1. 14" hi-hats
- 2. 22" ride
- 3. 20" ride
- 4. 18" crash

Heads: Evans Level 360 G1 Coated snare batter and Clear snare side, J1 tom and bass drum batters

Sticks and Brushes: Innovative Percussion

Mike: I took Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones, Tony Williams, and Jack DeJohnette and put bits of their phrasing on different parts of the instrument instead of playing it just like they did. I'd put maybe one note on the cymbal, one on the snare, one on the bass drum, one on the hi-hat, one on the floor tom, etc. That's how I came up with those things. I saw Lenny White play at the Both/And Club with Freddie Hubbard; he was addressing something like that also. Lenny and I became friends and we talked about it a little bit. I'd get some ideas of what he was doing and then do it my own way. A lot of us were experimenting with that, and of course Clyde Stubblefield, Jabo Starks, and Bernard Purdie, anybody who played funk was also in my brain. And there were jazz radio stations for good music. That became part of what I did.

MD: In the '70s you played on the *Headhunters' Thrust*, *Man-Child*, and *Flood*. And Herbie's soundtracks to *Death Wish* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. Videos of the latter-period *Headhunters* show the band becoming more commercial. Is that why you left?

Mike: Yeah. I still wanted to play jazz, and I wasn't getting off creatively. I was becoming unhappy, and I was vocal about it. When we'd record, Paul Jackson and I would lay

down a minute and a half of a groove, then Herbie would take it to L.A. and turn it into a whole piece. Herbie hired a rhythm guitar player who couldn't solo, and I'm thinking, "This is not what I want to do with my life." It's great to say I'm playing with Herbie Hancock, because he's a genius, man. But still the music was becoming something I didn't want to do.

MD: What did you do?

Mike: I went back to San Francisco and played one year at a club called Christo's with a band that featured Eddie Henderson, Pharaoh Sanders, Joe Henderson, and Julian Priester. I came off Hancock and rolled right into that gig.

MD: You've seen it all. How have drum and cymbal companies changed?

Mike: I play a DW Jazz kit now, and it sounds fantastic. I have my old Gretsch kit, too. And I have some old K Zildjian cymbals, but I prefer my Istanbul cymbals and my DW drumset to the old Gretsch kit and the old K cymbals.

MD: Why?

Mike: When I play old Gretsch drums or old Ks, I start to play a little bit like the people I loved to listen to on records in those days, even though my personality is strong in what I do. With the DW set and Istanbul cymbals, it's really me. It's my sound. I'm not impersonating anybody.

MD: There's an amazing YouTube video of you and Paul Jackson playing together. It looks like you're in a restaurant. It's one of the best examples I've seen of your funk playing.

Mike: That was recorded in a lighthouse in Japan around 1988. Paul and I are best friends; our relationship is completely natural. I was going to Japan to tour with him. Paul picks me up off the plane in Narita, and I say, "Get me to the hotel. I need to sleep." Paul says, "No, man, we got to do a video. The bread is really good." We get to the lighthouse. There's a camera crew and everything. I'd been teaching at Drummers Collective, so I'd seen a lot of DCI videos. I asked Paul, "Where's the script? What are we going to do?" He's like, "Oh, man. Don't worry about it. Go out there and sit down." I have no idea what we're going to play, and Paul says, "Remember that thing we used to do with Herbie?" I have no idea what he's talking about. We did about a million things with Herbie. And Paul says, "Yeah, you know!" and he counts "3, 4," and we just hit it. Paul and I have this telepathy. We could just *play* together, man. So the whole thing is ad lib. It represents our friendship and love for each other. We could hook up a groove up in a nanosecond. In Japan that video is called *Rhythm Combination*. Then Paul and I did a record, *The Funk Stops Here*.

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Mike Clark

MD: Whether playing jazz or funk, you keep your sticks close to the heads and cymbals. What does that give you?

Mike: It depends on the gig. With Grant Green Jr. recently, the sticks were way off the head. It depends on the emotions. In a jazz situation, if you're not required to use a lot of power, there's no reason to have the sticks way back. If you get heated up, then all bets are off on your grip and all the things you think are correct. You play whatever feels fantastic in the moment. After all this time playing, I have control so I can spit it out without making a bunch of arm movements. I play from the wrist. I can play everything at tremendous volume, and I can play the same stuff at a whisper, because I've worked on it.

MD: What did you work on specifically to enable those dynamic levels?

Mike: In the '70s I played three years in a jazz trio where we couldn't play very loud. But they wanted us to be creative. I learned to make it happen like that. Now I can do that at will. And I played with Vince Guaraldi [famous for the Charlie Brown theme and many jazz records] for ten years. There were times in the '70s when Vince wanted us to be modern, really bashing, then he had this Wynton Kelly side to his playing. We just wanted to "tip," but he'd give us solos, and it would be inappropriate to play the drum solos at three

times the volume of the rest of the song. Most of the things I've learned to do came from the gig, not the practice room.

MD: What's your focus when playing funk?

Mike: No matter what I'm playing, I focus on the whole picture—the dynamics, the feeling, and the interplay. I focus real heavy on what everybody else is doing. I'm listening to them and then adding what I think will enhance the situation. Herbie taught me to chant. That gives me a tight focus. I chant before I play, "nam-myoho-renge-kyo"; that gives me that tight focus that can last for hours.

MD: How do you maintain your hands?

Mike: Joe Bonadio showed me a warm-up that Joe Morello showed him. You play two strokes on the right hand, two strokes on the left hand, and then repeat that all the way up to ten strokes. You do it at 8ths then 16th notes. That helps me when I go to the gig so I can swing right away. My hands aren't tied. If I want to increase the speed of my hands, then I speed up the metronome marking, and I do three sets until I get to a place where I'm uncomfortable with the speed. Then I back it down a little bit. And I practice phrasing and swinging. I practice jazz language, Charley Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*, and Philly Joe Jones' ideas.

MD: We live in an era of drummers with

tremendous facility. Thoughts?

Mike: Well, if a guy has tremendous technique and he uses it musically, that's fantastic. But if it's all like "Look at me," it's boring and self-serving. One problem in jazz is when I see guys that have gospel-chops technique or incredible double pedal, but that language doesn't fit in jazz music. I'm not saying to keep jazz language where it is; definitely move it forward, but take from where it left off and move forward. I'm a big fan of McClellent Hunter and Greg Hutchinson and EJ Strickland. As far as the lineage, I like Lenny White and Billy Hart. Both of those two guys are master improvisers.

MD: You came up playing in Texas and New Orleans?

Mike: I was born in Sacramento, and my dad was a drummer. He had a tremendous jazz record collection. I was a child drummer. I sat in with my dad's bands. Then when he travelled later as a union rep with the railroad, we'd go to Philly, Atlanta, Baltimore, New Orleans, Virginia, and we moved to Texas. As a kid I could play an exciting drum solo like Gene Krupa. Eventually I'd get gigs as a solo drummer. I played from New Orleans to Hawaii until I was eleven, when I started my own bands.

MD: How did you begin playing jazz?

Mike: There were a lot of bebop bands

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in Texas, and I played in strip bars and nightclubs. I was into Art Blakey and others at an early age. I played jazz and blues, and I played every damn gig that they called me for. We played swing on blues gigs. It was the closest thing to jazz. I brought in some money as a kid.

MD: When did you go pro?

Mike: At twenty-one I had my own organ trio in Vallejo for three years, four nights a week. Then I met Paul Jackson and started getting seriously busy in Oakland. This was around 1967. And because I could play the James Brown grooves, I got those gigs.

MD: You played with Bobby Hutcherson and Woody Shaw around Oakland and Berkeley then?

Mike: Yes, we played the Both/And Club, New Ruthie's Red Duck, and Esther's Orbit Room. Then, Mr. Majors, and the Black Knight, and Latitude 38. I played, of course, the Keystone Corner. And the Keystone Berkeley, Mandrake's was another. And Gatsby's and the Trident in Sausalito. There were so many places to play that were so phenomenal. We played seven nights a week, and I'm not exaggerating.

MD: You must have had some wild experiences.

Mike: When I was fifteen I played a gig with

Albert King. Nobody knew who he was then. It was this town in Texas called Brooklyn. They took us to this little place out in the woods. I wore a black suit, a white shirt, a tab collar, and a black tie. The other musicians on the gig were maybe twenty-five. Everybody seemed to be afraid of Albert King. I was too young to be afraid of him. We started playing a shuffle. And Albert said to me, "Put some bacon fat on it, motherf**ker! Don't make me come back there." Some guy came up from the audience and grabbed the stick out of my hand. This joint is all picnic tables and sawdust. It's not like the Village Vanguard. This guy takes the stick and hits the snare drum and makes me somehow realize I needed a backbeat on the 2 and the 4. He told me to mash down on the stick after I hit 2 and 4, and I did. That put the back on the shuffle, which I'd been playing more like a Cannonball Adderley or Horace Silver thing. As soon as I started to do that, Albert King turned around and said, "Well, all right!"

MD: What did the gig pay?

Mike: At the end of the gig Albert said, "Step into my office," and there was no office. Albert sat in one chair, and, you know, he's a great big guy. On the other chair was a pearl-handled 38 pistol. The pay was fifteen dollars.

And he screwed me for three bucks. He said "Well, I think twelve."

MD: What accounts for your longevity at seventy-one?

Mike: I feel great. I think I'm improving as a jazz musician and an artist. And I love people. I really dig people. Some jazz guys get old and bitter and hate humans. In all walks of life some people get that way, and there are definitely some bitter older jazz guys that feel they were overlooked. Or they hate all the new stuff. I don't buy into any of that stuff.

MD: You have a great attitude.

Mike: I think each one of us can accomplish our dreams just as who we are. You have to improve and be at a certain level of performance, but I don't have to copy the latest guy or another drummer. I spent most of my life except for the gig with Herbie Hancock playing straight-ahead jazz with funk gigs on the side. For the most part I played the way I wanted to play and lived my life as creatively as I wanted to, and I'm still doing okay—phone rings all the time.

My absolute favorite thing in life is playing jazz in New York with New York jazz musicians, because it's so focused and sophisticated, yet it's so funky and swings so hard, and everybody knows what they're doing. I love playing with these cats!



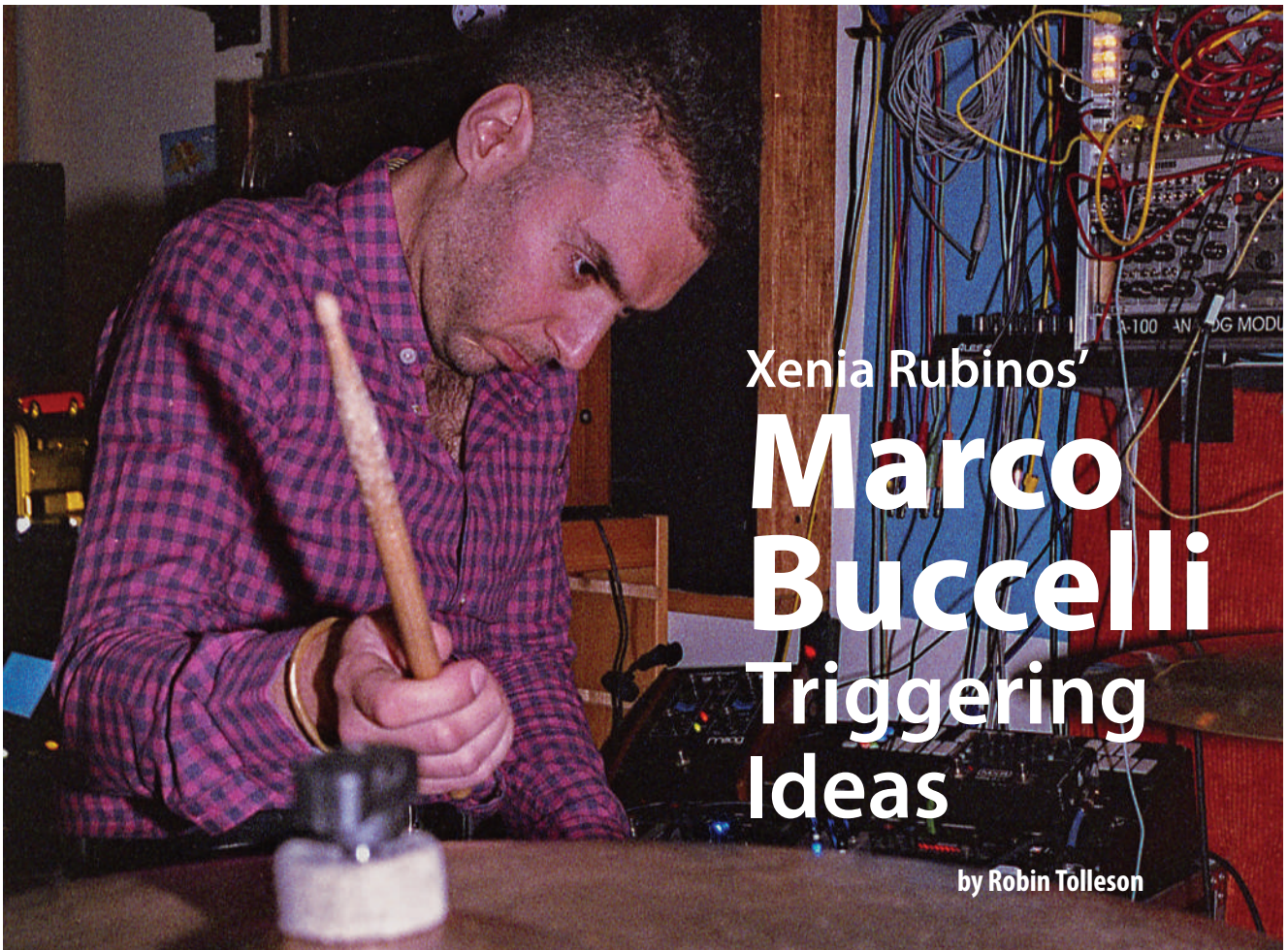
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Xenia Rubinos' Marco Buccelli Triggering Ideas

by Robin Tolleson

Intention. Precision and power. Innovation. They're qualities that Marco Buccelli has for several years been exhibiting in his beat making with Xenia Rubinos. The Brooklyn-based rock and soul singer and instrumentalist's albums *Magic Trix* and *Black Terry Cat* feature fiery, tantalizingly nuanced rhythm tracks created by the drummer, who Rubinos has gone out of her way to credit with shaping her sound. "I love to find the balance between acoustic drums and electronics," Buccelli says. "And I love to get to electronic sounds from sound manipulation. It can be using modular synths, or affecting the acoustic snare. Using those tools makes more sense than using prerecorded sounds on software, and it's fun."

Buccelli goes deep when it comes to creating his sounds, whether it's the stacked Tibetan cymbals on Rubinos' "Cherry Tree"; the metallic, snares-off tones on "When You Come"; the distorted snare and kick crunch on "Black Stars"; the three offbeat clave clicks on "Lonely Lover"; the one-handed brush part on

"Laugh Clown" that mimics a scratchy vinyl record; or his approach on "Don't Wanna Be," where he's triggering percussion and a keyboard sample of his creation while playing a dynamic drum part.

And evidence of Buccelli's artistry extends beyond Rubinos' discography. In 2011, under the name Hypercube, the drummer released the instrumental *Le cose grandi e le cose piccole*, featuring guitarist Federico Casagrande, and he has recently been working on a project with engineer/producer Benny Grotto at Mad Oak Studios in Boston. "I trigger samples using my MPC5000," he explains. "There is no prerecorded sequence—what you hear is what I played live hitting the pads. I trigger my Eurorack modular synths with a pad and a contact mic placed on the kick. I also process the sound of the snare using a mic connected to my guitar pedal effect rig. With this piece I wanted to create an improvisation that was cohesive, had repetitions just like a song, and no resolution."

Buccelli credits his mother with his interest in music while growing up in

Naples, Italy. "My first memories of music are of her being in the kitchen and singing those beautiful old Italian songs," he recalls. "I think that's why I love the song form so much." As a boy he also attended outdoor festivals, enthralled with the sounds in the air. "I remember being at one of these festivals and being extremely impressed by the drums, mainly by the kick drum. I felt it in my chest. It was then that I started playing drums."

Marco's parents bought him a practice pad, and he taught himself to play by listening to rock drummers like Led Zeppelin's John Bonham, Stewart Copeland of the Police, Deerhoof's Greg Saunier, and Fugazi's Brendan Canty. At sixteen he was playing in a Zeppelin cover band. "I was listening to classic rock—Zeppelin, Deep Purple, that type of stuff—and then I started listening to Queen," he recalls. "On those first Queen records you hear more of a hard rock or classic rock attitude—they sound a lot like Led Zeppelin. Then I started listening to grunge music. I was into Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and then I got into

punk rock and became a big Fugazi fan. Then someone played Ornette Coleman's *Skies of America* album and I was like, *Wow, what have I just listened to?* That blew me away. I was really excited, and I started to listen to jazz as well."

Soon after, Buccelli found out that Walter Scotti, one of the best drum teachers in Italy, was living a block away from his family's apartment. "He'd already retired and decided not to teach drums anymore," says Buccelli. "He had a long career, playing timpani at the San Carlo theater in Naples with the symphonic orchestra, and then doing jazz gigs at night. We met, and I asked him to give me drum lessons. He said, 'Okay, you're going to be my last student.' He taught me the rudiments, and he was really big on classical snare techniques. Because of him, that's something that I absolutely love. People would study with Walter Scotti because he would apply those classical concepts and techniques, bringing them from the snare to the rest of the drumkit."

That classical background still informs Buccelli's drumset playing. "I rely on that—not only the techniques, but also Walter Scotti's method," he says. "I use it a lot, when I practice and when I play. My drum fills, everything that I do on the drums comes from a strong rudimental standpoint. I was talking with a drummer friend about practicing and warming up, and he was like, 'Marco, what do you do?' I'm like, 'I make sure every day I do this page and that page from *Stick Control*.' And he looks at me like, *Stick Control*? But I think it's the ultimate book, and Scotti was extremely creative with it. He taught me so many different ways of practicing the same two or three pages. For example, the first three pages of *Stick Control*, I remember he was like, 'Okay, practice them just like they are [written]; and then it was, 'Substitute the L with your kick drum.' There were so many other combinations that I could practice for three hours just with that book."

Buccelli toured around Italy with his own

Tools of the Trade

Buccelli's acoustic drums include a 6x14 Pork Pie Pig Lite acrylic snare, a 5x12 Ludwig remote snare, and a vintage Ludwig Standard 16x16 floor tom and 16x22 bass drum. His cymbals include a set of hi-hats made up of two 16" Zildjian A Custom crashes; a Zildjian 22" medium Constantinople ride; a stack made up of a Zildjian 18" Breakbeat ride and a 17" "chopped" Paiste Sound Formula thin crash; and a stack of two Tibetan cymbals.

Marco attaches "DIY" piezo pickups to his bass drum, an Evans SoundOff pad, and a mini spring clamp applied to his hi-hat and other cymbals. Those pickups are connected to Eurorack modular synthesizers: a Malekko Mute 4 unity mixer with mute switches; a Make Noise MATHS function generator module ("I primarily use it as an envelope generator when playing live with triggers"); a Doepfer A-135-1 QVCA/VCMIX mixer; a Tiptop Audio Z3000 oscillator; a Make Noise cue system; a Mutable Instruments Ears envelope follower; a Pittsburgh Lifeforms System interface mixer; an ALM Pip Slope envelope generator; a Doepfer A-145 LFO; and a Keith McMillen QuNexus keyboard.

Buccelli's snare is fitted with a Sennheiser E604 mic, sent through a DBX 166 compressor/limiter/gate and to the following pedals: an Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail Nano reverb; a BOSS DD-7 delay; an MXR bass D.I.+; a Hermida Audio spring reverb; an MXR Carbon Copy analog delay; a TC Electronic Thunderstorm flanger; and a Boss PSM-5 power supply and master switch.

original band before deciding to attend Berklee College of Music in Boston. "The foundation of my background is more in rock, post-rock, and punk rock," Buccelli says. "But when I moved to the U.S., I went on a mission to learn jazz. I think that jazz music is probably the most interesting art form that the U.S. has created. I moved here from Italy and wanted to make sure I was taking advantage of it and learning it from the people who made the stuff."

After finishing school, Buccelli got an offer to do a tour with Geoff Farina and his band Glorytellers. The drummer jumped at the chance—Farina's band Karate had been one of Buccelli's favorite groups while growing up. "I asked questions about Karate that I'd always wanted to ask: 'How did you guys do such and such a song? Where did you record it?' We were talking once, and he said something like, 'You know, when I was your age, all I wanted to do was be in a band and make my own music.' I couldn't stop thinking about that. I realized that I don't really care much about being a session player, about playing on three million records or with seven thousand different artists. The thing I like to do most in music is to be creatively involved in a project from the beginning and try to develop it.

"That's how the production aspect

became more and more clear in my mind," Buccelli continues. "I was thinking about starting a band or being a collaborator for projects, and that's what happened with Xenia. I produced her first and second records, and then essentially became her musical director. Xenia and I found the right formula. She is an artist with a very strong personality, so it took us a second to tune. Four years ago we were able to see the thing in a more focused way, and we started collaborating the way we have been."

Buccelli has come to understand Rubinos' sometimes deceptive songwriting style. "Xenia's incredible," he enthuses. "She naturally plays something, and I'm not sure what time signature we're in. Oftentimes it's actually in four, it's just that she's putting an accent where you wouldn't expect one to be. She very naturally comes up with interesting patterns. They always sound hard, but if you listen, Xenia is very organic. If you listen to the melody, everything will all of a sudden make sense. Every time I have a problem, I listen to the melody, and I'm like, *Okay*."

The drummer, who in addition to Rubinos and his own work has also produced albums by Neopolitan multi-instrumentalist Giovanni Truppi (*Giovanni Truppi, Il mondo e come te lo metti in testa*) and American singer-songwriter Lady Lamb (*After*), says he's influenced by all kinds of musicians. "Very often I start being obsessed with a piano player or trumpeter or producer, more than drummers," he says. "That happened with J Dilla. What he did with samples is incredible. I definitely got into his idea of collage, which is very well represented on his album *Donuts*. That gave me inspiration for working effects on the drums.

"I've been effecting my snare with guitar pedals for a while now," Buccelli says. "I've also been using modular synths to create kick drum sounds. I trigger the modular

Influences

Queen "Dragon Attack," "Now I'm Here," "Brighton Rock," "You're My Best Friend," "Innuendo" (Roger Taylor) // **Lucio Dalla** "Anna e Marco" (Giovanni Pezzoli) // **Led Zeppelin** "Black Dog" (John Bonham) // **the Police** "Demolition Man," "Walking on the Moon" (Stewart Copeland) // **Pearl Jam** "Porch" (Dave Krusen), "Present Tense" (Jack Irons) // **Fugazi** "Smallpox Champion" (Brendan Canty) // **Bad Brains** "You're a Migraine" (Earl Hudson) // **Ornette Coleman** *Skies of America* (no drumset) // **J Dilla** "The New Stop" (J Dilla: programming) // **Max Roach** "The Drum Also Waltzes" (Max Roach) // **Beastie Boys** Paul's Boutique (Mike D, samples) // **Busta Rhymes** "Gimme Some More" (DJ Scratch: programming) // **Autechre** Untitled (Rob Brown and Sean Booth: programming) // **Battles** "Tonto" (John Stanier) // **Deerhoof** "The Perfect Me" (Greg Saunier) // **Brian Eno** "St. Elmo's Fire" (Eno: "synthetic percussion") // **Portishead** "Silence" (Geoff Barrow, Clive Deamer, samples) // **Tom Waits** Mule Variations (Andrew Borger, Brain Mantia, Christopher Marvin, Stephen Hodges, Tom Waits, Jeff Sloan) // **Burial** "Archangel" (William Emmanuel Bevan: programming) // plus various recordings featuring La Monte Young, David Tronzo, Tony Allen, and Elvin Jones

Marco Buccelli

synths with a trigger on a kick drum, or a pad that's connected to the synth. That idea was prompted by *Donuts*—this idea of layers and having sounds that you would not expect, in places that you would not expect them to happen. That's why I started developing the effects part, effecting my drumset to create another layer I could play with and superimpose over the music I'm playing."

Buccelli makes the mashed-up grooves all happen in the live performance with Rubinos. "I approach the application of effects to the drums with a very live mindset," he explains. "I know all these things can be done in post-production, but I like to think of them as a part of my drumming. It puts you in a different mindset and gives you different limitations having to do that stuff live. It triggers ideas and helps you develop techniques because of those limitations that you would not have developed otherwise."

"I play with two snares," Buccelli goes on. "I'll figure out a particular reverb, delay, distortion, or EQ, and I'm able to play around with the chain. It's triggered only when I want it and how I want it, just like a guitar player. I have a master switch between my hi-hat and main snare to turn the effects on and off with my left foot. That allows me to chain effects in very creative ways. I'm constantly reworking it."

"Essentially, I affect the snare using analog guitar pedals, and create a synthetic kick drum using piezo pickups or pads and modular rack synthesizers," Buccelli explains. "I also do work with samples. Near the hi-hat I have an Akai MPC5000, and I like to trigger samples using my fingers. I don't use sticks on the pads; I'd rather find a way to put one stick [down] so that I can play the little pads on the MPC with my hand."

Rubinos' debut album, 2013's *Magic Trix*, was recorded at Buccelli's home studio with engineer Jeremy Loucas. The team went

for big, raw drum sounds. "We wanted a drum sound that had a lot of room," Marco says. "My basement has nice gear and a great vibe, but it's not a great-sounding room. So Jeremy and I were trying to figure out how to make that drum sound roomy without using plugins. So he came up with this idea. We were looking around, and I had another kick drum. And he was like, 'What if we place that kick drum in the middle of the room and mike it? What would you hear? Let's try it.' So I got the kick drum, tuned the heads really high, and placed it in the middle of the room, about four or five feet from the kit that I was playing. We put one mic inside the kick drum and one right outside it, and that did the trick. All of a sudden it sounded like I was playing in a big room. That's how those drums in *Magic Trix* sound reverby and roomy, and kind of rough. It's a particular reverberation that's kind of weird, so we went for it, and we enhanced it by distorting it a little with compression and with saturating the channels of the board. That's how you get that dirty, punchy drum sound."

Black Terry Cat, Rubinos' 2016 sophomore album, was also recorded at Buccelli's home studio, but sound-wise they went in the opposite direction. "I built acoustic panels and put them all around the drumkit to dampen the reflection as much as I could, and I muffled all of the drums," he recalls. "I muffled my snare a lot. At some point I even put a carpenter's clamp on it, so that the head would be completely muffled. Not only is the head muffled, but by applying pressure I can also get a different pitch out of the snare."

"Then we wanted to experiment by adding reverbs and gated reverbs to the snare and kick, so again, the opposite of what we did with *Magic Trix*. We tracked the drums super dry, being extremely picky about the way we would place the mics. Once it took nine hours to get the right sound for a snare. Xenia wanted to kill me—she couldn't believe that after nine hours we were still placing mics on the snare. But Jeremy and I come from the philosophy that the first step in a recording is placing the mic. When you start EQing stuff too much, it means that the mic wasn't placed correctly."

"The post-production was done in Sear Sound here in New York," Buccelli adds. "We did plate reverbs and tape echo, and sometimes I ran the snares through my effects. In *Black Terry Cat* we were going more for a hip-hop type of sound. We wanted the kick and snare to sound super punchy and dry, so that we could treat the snare with reverb later."

"The tracking, mixing, and pre-production of *Black Terry Cat* was about trying to find a balance between elegance and roughness," Buccelli continues. "We wanted to retain certain rough elements that would connect the music to the previous record, but on top of that we wanted to use some high-end and super elegant things, [like] an Oberheim OB-X synth. We used gear that gives the sound a taste that is the opposite of roughness, but we like to mix the two things and find the sweet spot in between."

Following a performance with Rubinos at New York's Museum of Modern Art this past August, Buccelli told *Modern Drummer* that he was looking forward to beginning work on her next record, anticipated for an early 2019 release. "As far as the drums go, I predict experimenting more with the blend of acoustic and electronic, as well as walking the line between live recorded drums and samples, either of prerecorded takes of mine or of other records. I'll keep incorporating different types of technology in my setup, moving from analog devices such as Eurorack and effects pedals to digital ones like computers and samplers. The quest remains the same: to forge a unique and innovative sound without compromise."



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Keith Moon:

“In an egotistical way I always prefer my demos to what the Who does.”

—Pete Townshend *Rolling Stone* interview with Jonathan Cott, May 14, 1970

There is a silver lining to the devaluation of recorded music that has accompanied the streaming revolution. Legacy acts and record labels that have grown accustomed to the passive income generated from their old master recordings are continuously returning to the vaults to pad out rereleases of classic albums with outtakes, demos, and other material that were usually only of interest to scholars and maniacal fans.

The release of a new deluxe edition of Pete Townshend's *Who Came First* got us at *Modern Drummer* thinking about process: how do the beloved versions of these classic songs and drum performances come to be? Now that we have access to various consecutive versions of these tunes, can we get any closer to the *je ne sais quoi* that equals Keith Moon's contribution to the timeless, tumultuous music of one of the greatest acts in history, the Who?

On a basic level—and possibly the main takeaway for drummers—is the fact that Keith Moon's dramatic orchestral-style drum arrangements on the songs on *Who's Next* and *Quadrophenia*, which are considered by many to be the band's two greatest recordings, indisputably elevate the material. Moon's drumming is at once singular and masterful on a level that transcends technique, and it is a major contributing factor to the continued fascination with this music by listeners and drummers. Decades after Moon's tragic death at the hands of his nonmusical appetites, his legacy remains strong. Stray no further from the pages of *Modern Drummer*, and you'll find his inspiration mentioned in just about every issue.

This examination uses as a starting point some mid-period (1970-73) Pete Townshend demos for Who songs in which

he recorded all the instruments (including his simple yet adroit drumming), and compares them to various versions that include Keith Moon, studio and live. We wanted to see what happened between the demos and the final recordings, and if we could discover anything about the process that Moon took to get the songs to their beloved state.

Townshend wrote in the introduction to *A Tribute to Keith Moon (There Is No Substitute)*, “Of course [Moon's] drumming style was important to the way I wrote songs. I produced demos of most of my songs, and as soon as I had the space I started to play the drums myself on those demos on a small kit Keith gave me, [which] I still own.” Townshend's Premier five-piece kit included two rack toms, a floor tom, a kick, and a snare, and it appears in photos from the time period.

Weighing the relative merits of some of rock 'n' roll's most famous drummers, the perennial argument that has migrated from drum schools to message boards to Twitter and beyond draws a comparison between technique and soul, chops and feel. Keith Moon is perhaps the most revered character from the classic-rock era (along with John Bonham), celebrated by drummers for his creativity and spirit and known to more casual fans of the music for his outsized appetite. For a student of the drums, he's a confounding paradox.

In beginning astronomy, students are told that faint stars can be seen more clearly in your peripheral vision than from dead on. When you stare at certain sky phenomena directly, they disappear, but glance away and they clarify around the edges of your vision. There's a similar phenomenon when you try to analyze Moon's drumming, particularly in a live

setting. At times it's sloppy, rangy—watching him on film, you could say that he wastes a lot of energy. Pete Townshend wrote recently, “Some of his fills were incredibly complex, but undisciplined, and they didn't always come off.” But it was a tradeoff. Keith Moon was a supernova of energy—perhaps still the standard bearer for vitality behind the kit. For many readers of *Modern Drummer*, he remains high on our list of greatest rock drummers, despite the fact that according to him and his longtime assistant Dougal Butler, he never practiced!

Butler writes in his book *Keith Moon: A Personal Portrait*, “There was never any jamming going on [at Moon's house Tara], as Keith never kept a drumkit in the house and never seemed interested in that kind of thing.... At times it was hard to believe that he was really a professional musician.” In Moon's last interview in *International Musician* in 1978, he says, “As you know, I don't practice on my own.”

It's a phrase that detonates the advice and pedagogy of this magazine and could also be one source of Moon's popularity: that he's just natively brilliant. But Keith Moon is one in a million—the ability to improvise on cue is usually a highly studied pursuit. You could even call it an illusion. Brilliant drummers are showing the proverbial tip of the iceberg when they perform. Their years and years of practice lie beneath the surface. What makes Moon different? How did he create these incredible performances?

We spoke with the Who's longtime sound man Bob Pridden to try to find keys to Keith Moon's process. Despite the rumors that Moon never practiced, Pridden was not so sure. He assumed that Moon would work on demo arrangements on his own. But he

An Examination

By John Colpitts

knew when the band was in the studio, it was alchemical. "Keith would work those parts up in the studio," says Pridden. "He was just a natural. It was amazing to watch."

Let's take a few of these Townshend demos and put them up against studio and live Who performances, and see if we can find the spirit of Keith Moon.

"Baba O'Riley"

A fascinating version of this seminal Who track called "Baba O'Riley Instrumental" appears on the new *Who Came First* collection. Townshend was pioneering the use of synthesizers in pop music, and the title references his guru, Meher Baba, alongside minimalist composer Terry Riley, whose own "A Rainbow in Curved Air" is an acknowledged inspiration for Townshend. In the liner notes for the new edition of *Who Came First* Townshend writes of this demo instrumental, "I think this is a masterpiece."

My first impression listening to this early version of "Baba O'Riley" is that Townshend's drumming completely denatured the tune. Townshend even acknowledges that when he was listening to the track again to prepare the new liner notes: "I kind of missed... Moon's drums." But on further listening, Pete's simple drum arrangement does allow the synthesizer's mesmerizing pattern to take a center role. Once you understand these demos as personal messages to the rest of the Who, especially to Moon, some of Townshend's sloppy fills take on a different intent. They point towards the performances that Moon will eventually give the song, and as such open up a fascinating window into the band's communication. It also shows us exactly what kind of energy Keith Moon injects into this music.

"When Pete writes something, it sounds like the Who. The drum phrases are my



For a student of the drums, Keith Moon is a confounding paradox.



Keith Moon

phrases, even though it's Pete playing. He's playing the way I play. He's playing my flourishes."—Keith Moon from a 1972 *Rolling Stone* interview.

"When I was writing, I tried on my demos to indicate what Keith might like to play to suit the song."—from Pete Townshend's introduction to *There Is No Substitute*.

These early versions can be seen as true demonstrations, the drumming a framework that Keith Moon could build and expand upon—occasionally injecting the music with a transcendent life that brought the material

into a rarefied realm.

There are a few live versions of the tune available for us to listen to and watch—and you *need* to see Keith Moon play to fully understand the magic.

In an *NME* interview from 1972, Keith explains something about his inspiration: "I love to see people laugh, and I love it more if I can make them laugh. I think this comes across in my drumming.

"I watch a lot of Marx Brothers movies," he continued, "and they were doing the same sorts of things.... It's a question of taking

somebody else's music, but not sending it up in a derogatory sense. Just injecting your own personality. Pete [Townshend's] music allows me to do just this."

A live version of "Baba O'Riley" from Houston in 1975 is readily available online, and the drum-less synthesizer intro is a perfect example of Moon's epic clowning. He stands on his drum stool, strikes absurd poses, points faux-dramatically into the cheap seats, and twirls and spins his sticks constantly, sometimes in sympathetic rhythm with the synth burbles. It's a brilliant showbiz performance, inserting comedy and farce into the pretension of Townshend's brilliant composition. Is it a necessary piece of the whole? I'm voting for a resounding yes. As Townshend's aspirations stray further from the blistering simplicity of their early singles, Moon reframes the tunes with his comedy and joy. As he says above, it's not derogatory, and clearly Townshend does not take it as such.

Cut to a later version of the tune from 1978's *The Kids Are Alright* film and album, and "Baba O'Riley" sounds somewhat plodding and restrained. This was a small concert filmed at the Who's film production center, Shepperton, during the end of their initial run as a band, and accounts from the time describe it as a very tough performance for Moon. He struggled to perform the entire concert and took a number of breaks to catch his breath. Staying locked to those synth backing tracks seems to drag the band down a bit. Moon seems to be champing at the bit with each big chordal hit, but the push/pull tempos that we've grown used to in their other tunes are absent here.

We know that playing to a backing track does not necessarily equal a poor drum performance, and watching the live video, you can see some of the showmanship that Moon contributed. But this late performance a few months before his death is not very strong. Even Moon's original performance had to be overdubbed later in the studio, and in Tony Fletcher's great biography *Dear Boy: The Life of Keith Moon*, he describes the painful struggle those sessions were for Keith. Fletcher writes that after those overdubs, which did not really improve the performance markedly, "Keith never played the drums again."

But the *Who's Next* version of the tune is stunning, and as Townshend explains in *There Is No Substitute*, "Keith could play to a prerecorded tempo exceptionally well, something that every good drummer can do today, but was unheard of in 1971."

Cue up the gorgeous studio performance on "Baba O'Riley" that ended up on the

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The advertisement features a black and white photograph of Thomas Lang, a professional drummer, sitting behind a drum set. He is wearing a dark jacket and is holding a large, black, soft-shell instrument case. The case has the AHEAD logo prominently displayed on its front. The logo consists of a shield-like shape with the word "AHEAD" in a stylized font and "ARMOR CASES" below it. In the bottom left corner of the advertisement, there is a larger version of the AHEAD logo. At the bottom center, the website "WWW.AHEADARMORCASES.COM" and the phone number "818.727.1127" are listed. In the bottom right corner, there is a small copyright notice: "©&P/PHOTO BY F.DESMAELE".

final album, and compare the ways that Townshend and Moon introduce in the drums. Keith gives Townshend's suggestion a bit of additional mustard, adding some snare and tom syncopation to the phrase. Once we get a few measures into the tune, Moon's drums are fairly close to Townshend's save the orchestration and an additional kick hit on the "&" before 1 of the beat. Moon accents the descending chords of the main riff with emphatic crashes. Snare and tom flourishes occasionally burnish the static pulse of the synthesizer. What was more of a meditation on Townshend's instrumental demo becomes enlivened.

There's been a lot written about this era of the Who, and the implicit battle between man and machine as expressed by those amazing synthesizer experiments stacked up against the eros of Keith Moon's drumming. Each section of Townshend's composition is engaged head on by Moon's playing, and when the tempo increases at the end of the tune and is paired with the violin solo, Moon's snare matches and then raises the intensity perfectly. It's a drumming tour de force.

I agree with Townshend's assessment—both versions of the song are worthy of exploration, but this is a drum magazine, damn it—I'm coming down on Keith's side!

"Pure and Easy"

Why isn't "Pure and Easy" on the officially released *Who's Next*? This was supposed to be, according to Townshend, "the fulcrum song" for the concept album project called *Lifeshouse* that remained unrealized until a few years ago. In this song Townshend describes a kind of all-knowing note that transcends all, and connects all humans. It's pretty heady stuff, and even though it's an essential piece to his *Lifeshouse* concept album and was recorded at the Olympic Studio in New York, then later for the final *Who's Next* sessions, and performed live a number of times during that time period, it was left off *Who's Next*.

If we examine the song and extrapolate from the lyrics, we find a conceptual piece of music that seeks unity; it is aspirational and programmatic about harmony—human and musical. A case could be made that it's one of Townshend's greatest songs. It's certainly one of my favorites. However, the Who, while trafficking in a more rarified conceptual air since the rock opera *Tommy*, were not best known for this kind of inclusive, love-is-all kind of philosophizing.

True to form there is a dark edge to the lyrics, and the Who, with their voracious appetites and their nightly instrument destruction, exhibited a kind of counterpoint

to the "love everyone" pablum that shared the stage with them at the Monterey Pop and Woodstock Festivals. The Who performed the dark side of love and were the yin to the Woodstock generation's yang. Keith Moon's drumming and Townshend's guitar smashing made explicit the deeply unsettling fact that as the West was self-actualizing, a large cohort of their audience were killing and being killed on the other side of the world in Vietnam.

"Pure and Easy" emerges out of this stew of anxieties, after the psychodrama of *Tommy* and the powerful and nascent early albums and singles. The version of this song released on *Who Came First* was recorded entirely by Pete at his home studio using that small five-piece Premier set given to him by Moon. While exhibiting some home-brew charm and a few stumbling moments on the drums, this is in my view the definitive version of the song, though it's a serious toss-up.

Townshend's drumming is solid, and occasionally confident, with a tricky intro drum fill that lands on the 1 with a sustained guitar chord supported by an organ drone programmatically suggesting the harmony note that will unite all of humanity. Pete's drums support the song without elevating or superseding the lyrical content. There's a steady kick pulse on the "&-1, &-3" between 4/4 backbeats. It's at the service of the song, and there are a number of rolls that might point to Keith Moon's signature four- and five-stroke flourishes.

There's nothing to really indicate Moon's presence until the final section of the tune, which starts around 4:40. During the outro Townshend really blasts, sending a few chaotic fills all over the tape (abetted by some bongo overdubs). Then some hand claps replace the drumset, and the final chorus repeats into a fade out.

The outtake version from NYC's Record Plant of "Pure and Easy" from the deluxe version of *Who's Next* starts very strong with Moon's intro fill. Keith brings an immediacy and restlessness to what in demo form was more of a meditation. Initially I felt that perhaps Moon's emphatic energy was too much of a counterpoint to the idea of the song and that the simple drive of Townshend's original drumming was better suited to the lyrics. But of course the band performance revealed some nuances and darkness that the original demo elided, so I'm torn. Moon's drumming is excellent on the "Pure and Easy" studio performance, restrained during the verses, and even completely absent during the suggested explosive part from Townshend's demo. I'm wondering if they muted his drums during

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Keith Moon

the 2003 mix of that material. Either way, it's another great Moon performance, and I'm back on the fence.

The live version of "Pure and Easy" from the deluxe *Who's Next* was recorded in 1971 at the Young Vic as the band was working up the concept of *Lifehouse* in front of a small audience a little more than a month after the initial studio sessions in New York. The energy is palpable in the performance, as Moon's gleeful fills raise it to original heights. It's not a perfect performance, but that's rock 'n' roll. I start to wonder about the complexity that *Who's Next* sacrificed when the band left this song off the album.

There is one final version of the song to examine from the rarities album *Odds & Sods*. This was an outtake from the Glyn Johns-engineered Olympic Studios session, from which most of the final *Who's Next* album emerged. The pace is slower than other band takes, but it's a confident version—a little less grasping and unhinged. It's the kind of performance that would pass a producer's muster when "master takes" are being compiled. Every fill is executed clearly and cleanly, but it lacks some of the Dionysian craziness we associate with the best Keith Moon performances. I can see why they left it off *Who's Next*, but I'm not sure that was the best decision. Of course now all the versions are here for us to explore, and the concept of a discreet album has been left pretty much moot. Keith Moon's performances bring out the nascent clashing energies in the song, and his raucous fills counter the "pure and easy" note.

"Behind Blue Eyes"

This next track is kind of a given, but let's take

a look anyway. In Townshend's great 1983 collection *Scoop* we're presented with an acoustic demo of "Behind Blue Eyes" without drums. The penultimate dramatic moment from *Who's Next*, it's a song meant for a nemesis character in the original *Lifehouse* project. Townshend writes in the *Scoop* liner notes, "The demos I made to accompany the *Lifehouse* [project] I wrote in '71 are among the best I have ever produced." Producer and engineer Glyn Johns agrees in his *Sound Man* memoir: "I was permanently intimidated by Pete's demos, as I was constantly challenged to make what we did sound as good [as] or better than the original."

The simple presentation displays a more purely melancholic side of Townshend, but as he writes in the *Scoop* liner notes, "The band later added a passion and fire that really made it blossom from the sad song it appears to be to the proud self exposed it became on *Who's Next*."

For the New York Record Plant sessions, Moon finds that rock energy to accompany the middle plea section, "When my fist clenches, crack it open!" It's a great version of the tune, but compared to the final session at Olympic Studios where there's a comfort and tenacity to Moon's performance, there's no contest. The drums sound better as well! Hats off to Glyn Johns.

In the live version recorded at the Young Vic about a month before the New York session, Moon emphasizes the power chords that introduce the middle full-band section, instead of using those "&-1, &-3" bass hits as a jumping off point like he does in the final studio version and subsequent live performances, like the one found on *Greatest Hits Live* that was recorded in San Francisco in

December of 1971.

There's really no contest here; in each version of "Behind Blue Eyes" Moon dramatizes the narrator of the song, expressing his anger and power while plumbing the ineffable violence of the clenched fist. Keith finds the fluid spaces between those power chords, and in doing so gives the composition its longevity and life.

"Bargain"

"Every piece of music we played... was different immediately after Keith joined. The chemistry changed, and it was quite clear from day one."—Roger Daltrey *Rolling Stone* interview, November 6, 2013, with Andy Greene.

A clear illustration of the feel and groove contribution that Keith Moon gave to Townshend's compositions can be found perhaps most dramatically in "Bargain." On the *Scoop* demo there is a 16th-note feel to the kick and snare pattern, giving the tune a decidedly funky feel.

The live version from the Young Vic concert recording (*Who's Next* Deluxe Edition) is a glorious train wreck. It seems as if Keith Moon is still finding his way with the tune. Moon plays the first few lines of the song in double time before suddenly dropping to the demo's groove for a measure or so—and then revving up to double time again. Okay, it's actually a pretty terrible performance; by 1:30 the tempo has already fluctuated wildly a number of times. The band recovers throughout the final few minutes of explosive shredding, but it's definitely a work in progress.

Something ineffable has happened once the band settles into the studio with Glyn



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Johns for the Olympia Studio sessions. This is probably one of the most obvious transformational moments for Keith Moon's playing. The neat, funky groove of Townshend's demo is completely upended by the surging fills and mere suggestion of the original feel. That pulse is left to bassist John Entwistle and Keith's kick drum to outline, but it's often just a touchstone that Keith will reference at the start of a line from the song—by the end of the line he's jumped into a fill. It's remarkable playing.

In one of Keith Moon's final interviews, published posthumously in *International Musician* in September 1978, he talks impressionistically about his playing: "I believe very positively in color in drumming. You know, there's so many drummers that can go through the routine but they don't add color anywhere. They don't paint with the kit. That's what I like doing. I like painting, adding color and effects and shocking people. Constantly, while I'm playing, I'm thinking two bars ahead."

This coloring and painterly effect can be found on another live version of "Bargain," from the San Francisco Civic Auditorium in December of 1971, included in the *Thirty Years of Maximum R&B* box set. That performance is probably definitive. It's striking how far Moon's playing has advanced from February of the same year, when they were hacking around at the Young Vic. It's a truly extraordinary performance without a precedent. Very few bars go by with an unadorned beat. This is *drumming*, this is Moon's gift to Townshend's song made real.

It brought out a question for Bob Pridden that I had to ask: did Keith Moon ever warm up before concerts? Did he have a routine? "He just jumped out on stage," Pridden answered. "He was always one fire. He never needed to warm up—he was already there!"

"The Real Me"

"The high period of Keith's drumming was, of course, *Quadrophenia*, and my drumming on the demos was probably at its best around this time. Later (with *The Who by Numbers* and *Who Are You*) I became very conventional and actually started to play like a session player, and the link between my songwriting demos and Keith's playing was broken."—Pete Townshend from *There Is No Substitute*.

"It's really difficult for me to talk objectively about a song that I've been very closely involved with on a creative level, drumming with and singing with and just going through the whole process."—Keith Moon with Joe Collins on *King Biscuit Flower Hour* from 1974.

For the final tune in this piece we examine a track from the Who's celebrated concept

double album *Quadrophenia*—a moment when Townshend's communication with Moon reached its apex.

The demo on the *Quadrophenia* Deluxe Edition is unusual in this examination because it starts with a drum machine that suggests some wild syncopated tom fills. Townshend's acoustic drum track is, as we've come to expect, fairly straightforward—with some nice fills and a hi-hat breakdown that leads into a surprising Curtis Mayfield funk feel. There are great off-accent sections, crisp tom fills, and a high level of energy to this demo.

"When we were recording *Quadrophenia* it was basically like a live show in the studio," Bob Pridden told *Modern Drummer*. "We had a lot of influence from the Band's album *Music from Big Pink*. We more or less set that up the same way [in one room together]. I was in the studio mixing their headphones. Basically they were playing a live performance."

Moon's drumming on "The Real Me" is another jaw-dropping tour de force. He took the suggested fills and funky feel of the demo and ran through it like a train.

Some live performances of the tune from

1973 show similar power and boisterous energy on display. It's another powerful transformation of a promising demo.

Whether we've gotten any closer to how Keith Moon created his drum arrangements for the Who songs, I'm not sure. The availability of these recordings might help us pinpoint how Moon's contributions brought out the best elements of these songs. Even Townshend's demos, as accomplished and powerful as they are, benefit immeasurably from Moon's drumming.

Keith's longtime assistant, Dougal Butler, should get the last word: "The hairs on your neck still stood up even if you were seeing them every night," he's quoted as saying in the new edition of *Full Moon: The Amazing Rock and Roll Life of Keith Moon*. "The same with watching them in the studio. Their musicianship, and the transition from Pete's demos to the final songs...the way it came together, with the producer's input, and Pete's input, and John Entwistle's too. And then Keith just had a natural knack for what the song wanted, his fill-ins were always brilliant...it was magical."



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The Modern Drummer Guide to Reading Rhythms

Part 1: Fundamental Elements of Music Notation

by Miguel Monroy

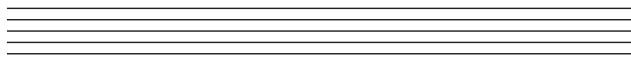
Learning to read rhythms can open a whole new world of musical opportunities. It can facilitate growth as you learn from the countless educational resources that are available today. And it can equip you with more options as a working player, no matter what your level.

Imagine being in a rehearsal and coming up with a perfect groove or fill for a song, and wanting to remember it for your next rehearsal. While capturing it on a portable recorder is one option, what if you didn't have one with you? Being able to write the part down in detail on any available sheet of paper would be a powerful skill to have in that moment. Or imagine being called to sub for a gig with only six hours' notice. Having the skill to quickly jot down crucial parts—or sight-read a provided chart at the gig—could alleviate having to quickly absorb so much musical content by ear. These are merely two examples of the many advantages gained from being able to read music.

It's never too late to start learning and enjoying the benefits of reading rhythms—no matter how long you've been playing. In this series, we'll start with the fundamentals of reading rhythms and develop the skills to take our notation from one drum to the entire drumset. Go slowly with this material, and keep in mind that certain definitions and concepts will become clearer the further along you progress. Let's get started!

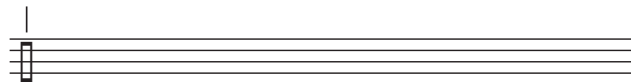
Anatomy of the Staff

All music is notated on a **staff**. Although some snare drum music is written on a single-line staff, drumset music is typically written on a standard staff with five lines, as shown here.



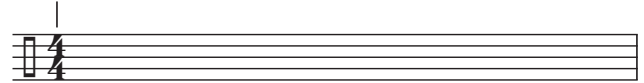
The drumset staff typically includes a clef, a time signature, measures, and barlines. In musical notation, the **clef** is used to indicate the range of pitched or nonpitched notes for a given instrument. Since the drumset is a nonpitched instrument—meaning that we typically don't play melodic notes on a scale—we use the neutral clef, which is also known as the percussion clef.

Clef

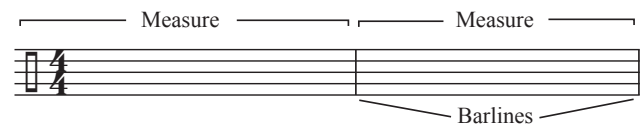


The **time signature** is placed after the clef at the start of a piece of music and defines that music's meter or pulse. In the examples in this guide, we'll be using a "4/4" time signature, which has four quarter-note beats per measure. This will be explained further when we start covering notes and rests.

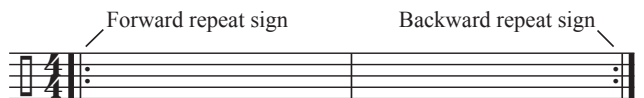
Time signature



Barlines are used to divide the staff into individual **measures**, as notated below. In musical notation, a **measure** is a division that's defined by the time signature. Again, this will be explained further as we explore notes and rests.



You'll also typically see forward and backward **repeat signs** in music notation; they prompt you to repeat a given section. When encountering a backward repeat sign at the end of a measure, you'll go back to the preceding forward repeat sign and repeat the section once, then continue onward with the piece.



Notes and Rests

Music notation uses a series of symbols that tell you when to play and for how long, as well as when not to play and for how long. We call these symbols **notes** and **rests**, respectively. Notes and rests last for a set amount of **beats**, which are divisions of time within a measure.

We'll use the following series of note and rest durations in the majority of this introductory guide.

Notation That We Play

A **whole note** is held for four beats. In a 4/4 time signature, a whole note lasts for an entire measure, and is notated as follows.



A **half note** is held for two beats. In a 4/4 time signature, two consecutive half notes last for one measure.



A **quarter note** is held for one beat. In a measure of 4/4, four quarter notes fit within one measure.



An **8th note** is held for half of the duration of a quarter note. Eight 8th notes can be played within one measure of 4/4.



A **16th note** is held for one half of an 8th note's duration. Sixteen 16th notes can be played within a measure of 4/4.



Notation That We Don't Play

Remember: While notes tell us when to play and for how long, rests tell us when *not* to play and for how long to remain silent. The following demonstrates how rests are notated.

A **whole-note rest** is held for four beats. When reading a whole-note rest in a measure of 4/4, you would remain silent for the entire measure.



A **half-note rest** is held for half the duration of a whole-note rest. In a measure of 4/4, a half-note rest tells us to remain silent for two beats.



A **quarter-note rest** is held for one beat, or half of the duration of a half-note rest.



An **8th-note rest** is held for one half of a quarter-note rest.



And a **16th-note rest** is held for one half of an 8th-note rest.



In the previous examples, each type of note or rest lasts exactly half as long as the preceding type that was demonstrated. For instance, two half notes last the same amount of time as one whole note. Likewise, two quarter-note rests last the same amount of time as one half-note rest, and so on.

Putting It All Together

Returning to our full staff, let's take another look at the time signature. The top number tells us how many beats, or pulses, are in a measure, while the bottom number tells us what type of note duration (division) takes up the value of one individual beat. (Although that may sound a bit confusing at first, it'll begin to make more sense as we progress through the series.) In a 4/4 time signature, the top number tells us that there are four beats (pulses) in each measure, and the bottom number tells us that a quarter note takes up the space of one beat. Here's an example of two measures of 4/4 time.



Goals

Before moving on to Part 2 of this guide, be sure you have a firm grasp of the following concepts.

1. Be able to identify the anatomy of musical notation: **staff**, **clef**, **time signature**, **barline**, and **repeat sign**.
2. Be able to identify the most common notes and rests: **whole note**, **half note**, **quarter note**, **8th note**, **16th note**, **whole-note rest**, **half-note rest**, **quarter-note rest**, **8th-note rest**, and **16th-note rest**.
3. Understand what the **time signature** is and what the top and bottom numbers signify.

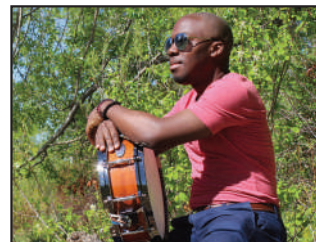
Next time we'll start reading whole-, half-, and quarter-note notation.



On Relaxation

An In-Depth Study to Develop Consistency

by Josh Jones



When executing individual stroke types, it's important that our approach remains consistent no matter what type of stroke is played. It's very easy for drummers to be more aggressive when playing a downstroke, or rapidly pull away from the drum when playing an upstroke, all while subconsciously playing a completely relaxed full stroke. When we suffer from having these types of habits, the sound and timbre that we produce on the drum can change drastically between each stroke, causing our playing to sound random and displeasing. Also, when the physical approach changes between strokes, the efficiency of those transitions suffers, inevitably causing problems with the ease of playing. Let's work on fixing these discrepancies, first by discussing them in depth, and then by exploring a study I've written to help you concentrate on relaxing while playing different stroke types.

Drummers have often been told to relax while playing. But what does that mean? What do we relax? Why do we have to relax? What happens when we relax in a certain area but not in another? In general, if our approach to playing begins in a relaxed physical state, the sounds, motions, and strokes will be relaxed. To do this we first have to establish what being "relaxed" means for us individually, and I've found that comparing normal everyday activities to the way we play drums is a good way to begin that process. How easy is it to brush your teeth, lay in bed, or walk down the street? If we play each stroke as easily as we accomplish these daily activities, more than likely we can conclude that we're relaxed in general when playing.

This is a broad perspective on relaxation that can be extremely useful for increased efficiency and aesthetic consistency. However, unnecessary tension can creep up in many areas of the body, inhibiting certain movements and changing the timbre of the strokes subtly. Being aware of your body and how it's responding or reacting to what you play can inform you of where these tension points are. For example, when you approach a floor tom on the far-right side of your kit while your left foot remains on the hi-hat, how does your body respond to this movement? How can you make this position feel more natural? Perhaps you can simply bring your right arm to the drum, or maybe you need to turn slightly to execute this. Does your shoulder lift? If it does, is that movement necessary? You can ask yourself these types of questions for a while, and at the end of this exploration, hopefully you'll be able to determine and practice how to execute the action in a relaxed manner.

This process can be made less daunting by beginning at the foundation: stroke types. Consider your approach to a full stroke. Are you letting gravity take the stick down to the drum, or are you influencing the stick in some way? Are your shoulders relaxed? Are you squeezing your fingers on the stick at any point? Starting with these small details informs you and prepares you to expand to larger muscle groups later.

To start off, be aware of your basic posture and hand position, and be sure that they both are as relaxed as the everyday activity you're comparing your position to. After

that, begin playing the individual stroke types with slow, deliberate movements, and see if that relaxation changes in any way. When the addition of movement fails to negatively influence your relaxed state, you've achieved the goal of removing unnecessary tension from your stroke.

Here are some tips for accomplishing relaxation with each stroke type:

When executing a **full stroke** (in which you throw the stick down toward the drum and let it rebound off the drumhead so that it returns to the height where it started), focus on allowing gravity to drop the stick for you. The wrist follows the rebound of the stick after it has contacted the drum and guides it back to its starting position.

When executing a **downstroke** (in which the stick starts high and stops close to the head after contact), focus on allowing gravity to take the stick to the drum and relaxing your grip when it strikes the drum. Don't squeeze your fingers upon impact; instead, allow the stick to rebound into a tap position.

When executing an **upstroke** (which starts low and ends high, and is usually employed to transition from a soft note to an accent), begin low off the drum in a tap position. Allow gravity to drop the stick to the head, and lift from the wrist only after the rebound occurs. Do not squeeze the fingers, particularly at the fulcrum.

When executing a **tap stroke** (a soft, low free stroke), focus on your posture and hand position. Be sure you're not trying to stabilize or hold yourself in place, and try to remain completely at ease physically. Allow gravity to take the stick to the drum, and let the resulting rebound bring the stick back into the tap stroke's starting position.

This is very detailed work that can seem tedious. But the results you achieve will be very apparent and can be extremely useful to your playing. When you're more relaxed, you can play longer, increasing your endurance. If you let gravity and the rebound do the work for you, it makes playing easier and allows you to play faster. By working with gravity and staying relaxed upon impact, you can play louder and decrease the occurrences of broken drumheads or sticks and prevent injuries to yourself.

When you approach playing the drums as leisurely as you would walking down a street, it makes the activity second-nature, and you feel more connected to the instrument, as if it's an extension of your body. These are ongoing challenges to me as a drummer, and I continue to dissect my playing to ensure that it's as relaxed as possible so that I can perform to my maximum potential.

As an orchestral percussionist, I need full control of my movements to the smallest degree, as well as full control of the sounds I create. Following along this particular career path helped me gain that control, essentially because I simply let myself go and allowed the most natural movements to guide my technique. But these concepts are not limited to that professional path. We can all exploit rebound, relaxed movements, and the many color palettes that can be created

through different combinations of the two, and I hope these tips help on that journey of exploration.

Utilize the following study to achieve relaxation through each stroke type. “F” represents a full stroke, “D” represents a

downstroke, “U” represents an upstroke, and “T” represents a tap. Spend time with these exercises while concentrating on and internalizing the concepts in this lesson. Happy practicing!

1 F F 2 T T 3 D D 4 U U 5 D D U U
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

6 F F F F F F D D T T T T T T U U 7 F F D D T T U U
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

8 F F F F D D U U 9 D D T T T T U U 10 D D D D D D D D U U U U U U U U
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

11 D D D D D D T T U U U U U U F F 12 D D D D D D U U 13 U U U U U U D D
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

14 D T D T 15 T U T U 16 T D T D 17 T U T D 18 T D T U 19 T F T F 20 F T F T
 R R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L L R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

21 F U F U 22 F D F D 23 F U F D 24 F D F U 25 U F U F 26 U T U T 27 D F D F
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

28 U F D F 29 D F U F 30 U D U U 31 U D U T 32 U U U T 33 D U U D 34 D D D U
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

A native of Chicago, Illinois, **Josh Jones** began his studies in percussion during a tenure at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program. Throughout his career, Josh has performed at Carnegie Hall and on radio and television, and has had two short documentaries made about his musical development and experience. For more information, visit drummojo.com.



Roy Haynes' Phrasing

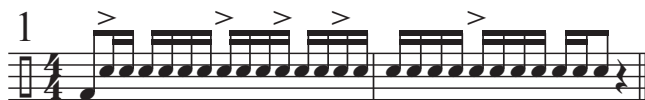
Modern Interpretations and Variations

by Mike Alfieri

Over time, transcribing can become a hobby for serious jazz musicians. Jazz students in conservatories often hang together and share their latest transcribed licks. And part of the fun of writing out others' parts is listening for hours and scouring obscure records to find material that speaks to you. With practice, experimentation, and time, the licks that you "stole" to imitate your idols can become a valid part of your personal vocabulary. In this lesson we'll explore a transcription of a Roy Haynes phrase and vary it to demonstrate ways to make it your own.

When you transcribe from a video of a live performance, there's an advantage of seeing how a drummer executes ideas. However, when you write out the parts solely from a record, it's usually difficult to make out exactly what sticking is employed. But with repeated listens, we can often logically discern right- and left-hand stickings. Also, the guidance of a great teacher can answer phrasing questions because those instructors may have seen first-hand how previous generations of drummers played certain phrases. It's important to know the history to make informed choices about your language. Eventually, after spending time with transcribed material, you can diverge from the tradition and interpret what they hear.

Let's check out a phrase Roy Haynes played during his solo on the track "Evidence" from Thelonious Monk's *Thelonious in Action*. Note the accent pattern that Haynes uses in this figure.



Exercise 2 demonstrates one example of how Haynes could have performed the previous phrase. The right hand leads, embedding a swing ride pattern within the paradiddle-diddles.

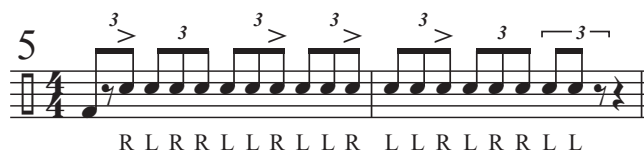


Here are a few more sticking possibilities.

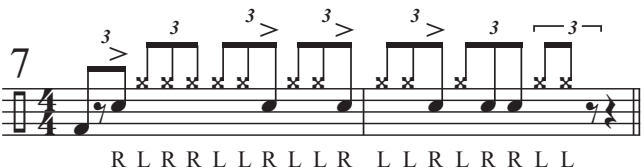


Tom Copi

We can also modify this phrase by changing the rhythm and orchestration. Let's apply a triplet subdivision to it.



By moving some notes to the hi-hat in an open-handed style, we get more contemporary ideas reminiscent of Mark Guiliana's and Nate Wood's inspiring styles.



By developing your craft in this manner, you can play with respect to the masters while carrying their torch. Happy practicing!



Mike Alfieri is a Brooklyn, New York-based drummer and educator. He has a bachelor's degree in music education from the Crane School of Music and a master's degree in jazz studies from SUNY Purchase. For more information, visit mikealfieri.net.



ORIGINAL CONTENT

ALEX RÜDINGER / TAMA S.L.P.



Alex Rüdinger (Rudi) · Frederick, Maryland

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Alex relies on [@officialtamadrums](#) to create his music and craft his sound. Lately, he's been exploring the rich, warm, and resonant sounds of the new **S.L.P. Dynamic Kapur** kit. Learn more from Alex as he discusses working with his S.L.P. Dynamic Kapur kit at [tama.com](#).

Samba Rhythms

Part 1: The Importance of the Tamborim

by Kiko Freitas

Hello, and welcome to a new series on Brazilian samba drumming! It's a great pleasure to be discussing Brazilian rhythms and my approach to this style on the drumset.

Generally, I feel that Brazilian rhythms can be divided into three layers of sound:

Bottom layer: low-pitched instruments, which are responsible for the rhythm's pulse.

Middle layer: medium-pitched voices, which maintain the feel and subdivision of the groove.

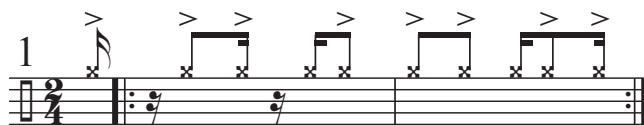
Top layer: high-pitched instruments, which are responsible for the rhythm's melodies and the syncopations and filigrees that create colors inside the groove.

In this article we'll focus on the tamborim, a small, single-headed frame drum that sits in the top layer of sound in sambas.

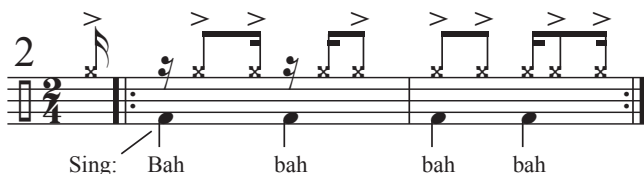
Most good samba melodies are based on tamborim rhythms and are, normally, very syncopated. Great composers from samba's "golden era" of the 1930s through the '70s, such as Donga (who composed the first recorded samba, "Pelo Telefone"), João da Baiana, Noel Rosa, Silas de Oliveira, Ary Barroso, Armando Marçal, Bide, Cartola, Paulinho da Viola, and João Bosco, utilized tamborim rhythms (which they sometimes played on a small matchbox when a tamborim wasn't available) as a basis for their works.

To understand and play any style of music, you should start by listening. Immersing yourself in a new language that you want to speak is essential to feel comfortable enough to express yourself. And when considering the samba style, I believe that it's important to sing each percussion part that contributes to the groove in order to have an intimate understanding of the rhythms and to internalize the real feel of the style.

Samba is usually written in 2/4, with an emphasis on the second quarter note within a 16th-note feel. The tamborim pattern normally starts on a syncopated pickup, as demonstrated in the following example.



First let's play the tamborim pattern on the hi-hat while singing "bah" on each quarter-note.



Once that feels comfortable, practice singing each offbeat 16th-note partial ("e," "&," and "a") individually while playing the tamborim rhythm.

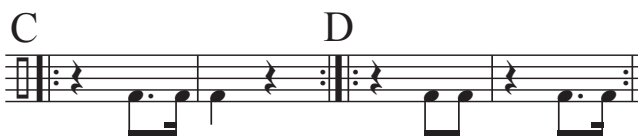
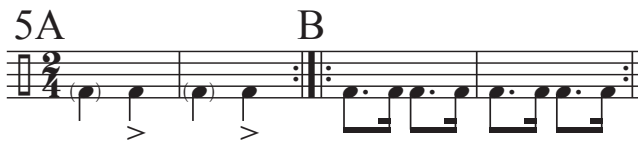


Exercise 4 demonstrates combinations of 16th notes that we'll be playing on the snare in the coming examples. First try singing the figures while playing the tamborim rhythm on the hi-hat. It's important to repeat each example many times so that you're comfortable with the pattern before moving on.

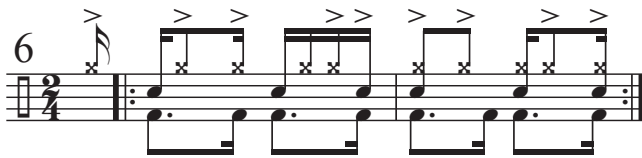


The next step is to orchestrate Patterns A–I on the snare while maintaining the tamborim pattern with the ride hand on a closed hi-hat or cymbal. We'll also incorporate the kick.

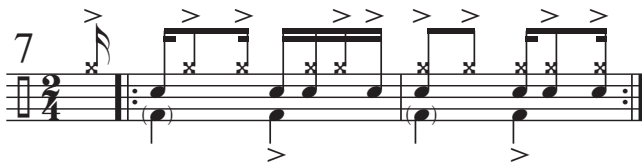
Here are four bass drum figures to play with the hand patterns. Practice these slowly and individually while trying to feel the samba atmosphere.



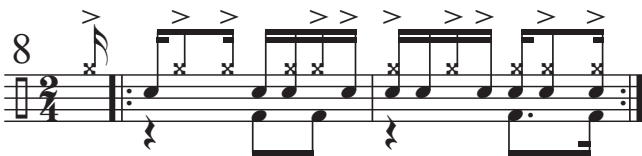
Once you're comfortable with the previous examples, combine the hi-hat tamborim rhythm with one of the previous snare figures and one of the bass drum patterns. Let's start with Snare Pattern A and Bass Drum Pattern B.



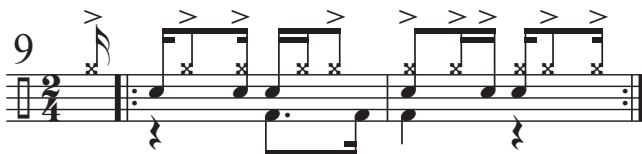
This next example combines the tamborim rhythm with Snare Pattern B and Bass Drum Pattern A.



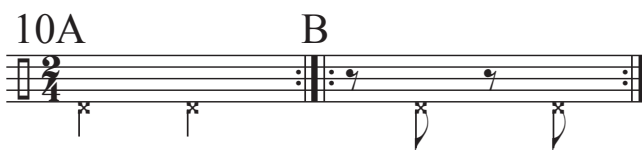
Here's the tamborim rhythm with Snare Pattern H and Bass Drum Pattern D.



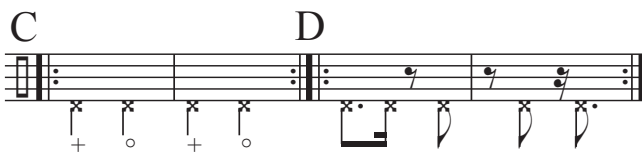
And here's a samba groove that employs Snare Pattern C and Bass Drum Pattern C.



After you've practiced the previous variations, try moving the tamborim rhythm to the ride and incorporating your hi-hat foot. Mix the following hi-hat foot patterns with the previous snare and bass drum combinations.

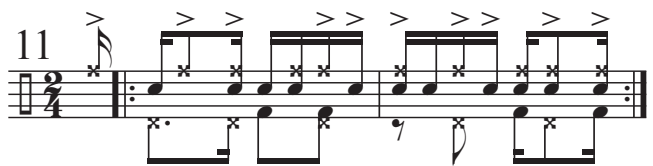


B



D

Exercise 11 demonstrates an example that utilizes all four voices to create a full samba groove. We'll play the tamborim rhythm on the ride, Snare Pattern I, Bass Drum Pattern D, and the fourth hi-hat pattern. Remember that it's important to sing each individual snare, bass drum, and hi-hat part along with the tamborim rhythm before playing the complete phrase.



Always remember, music is not on a piece of paper—it's inside you and must come from your heart through the tools and vocabulary you've practiced and the musical references you've listened to and learned from.

It's very important to listen deeply to the styles you want to play until they're a part of your vocabulary and you can speak the rhythms freely and comfortably. Head to modern drummer.com to check out musical examples in which I employ the concepts explained in this lesson. See you next time!



Kiko Freitas is a Brazilian drummer, educator, and international clinician who's performed with João Bosco, Michel Legrand, Nico Assumpção, Milton Nascimento, Chico Buarque, and Frank Gambale, among others. Freitas endorses Pearl drums, Paiste cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, and Gavazzi cases. For more information, visit kikofreitas.com.br/en.



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Polyrhythmic Rudiment Applications

Using Standard Stickings to Tackle Odd Groupings

by Aaron Edgar

Last month we explored different sticking patterns within quintuplets and septuplets to make learning subdivisions easier and clearer, and we concluded with paradiddles that yielded polyrhythmic phrases within our quintuplet and septuplet groupings. In this lesson we'll expand upon those concepts with more rudiments.

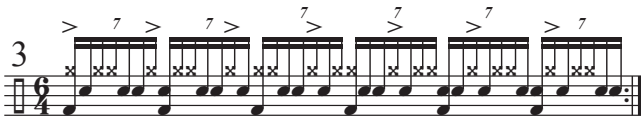
Let's start with a paradiddle-diddle. Exercise 1 places this six-note figure into a 16th-note groove. When the pattern feels comfortable, try playing the second right-hand accent on the snare. The two right-hand accents yield a two-over-three polyrhythm, and the kick drum solidifies the 3/4 pulse.



Exercises 2 and 3 place a paradiddle-diddle sticking into quintuplet and septuplet subdivisions, giving us five-over-six and seven-over-six polyrhythms, respectively. Since we're playing a six-note grouping that's one note longer than our quintuplet subdivision in Exercise 2, the accents shift through the quintuplets one partial at a time per beat. This exercise is great for isolating any problematic quintuplet partials that you might need to spend extra time practicing.



In Exercise 3, the paradiddle-diddle groupings are one note shorter than the septuplet subdivision, so it feels like the groove is shrinking as the accents shift one partial earlier per each beat. Just as in Exercise 2, every partial of the odd grouping is accented individually throughout one measure.



Exercises 2 and 3 can uncover any glitches in your quintuplet and septuplet phrasing. For example, if you're having trouble getting the third partial of the septuplet to sit right as an accent—which occurs on beat 5 of Exercise 3—practice beats 4 and 5 as an isolated example, as demonstrated in Exercise 4. You can loop these two beats to help solidify the rhythm before playing the full pattern.

If you're having trouble with a specific beat in these examples, it can be helpful to concentrate on the preceding beat that leads up to the problem. Sometimes an almost unnoticeable fumble leading up to a figure can be a bigger challenge than the beat itself.



Next let's check out the five-stroke roll. First we'll place it within 16th notes. Our right and left hands will alternate between the floor tom and rack tom on every third 16th note, and we'll play doubles on the snare on each of the two 16th notes between the tom accents. This pattern creates a four-over-three polyrhythm.



When we employ a quintuplet subdivision, things start to get interesting. As we saw in Exercise 2, the following pattern accents each partial of the quintuplet individually. If you haven't tried playing doubles in quintuplets before, practice this on a pad first. Start by playing straight quintuplets for a few bars, and then while maintaining the same motion, add in the double strokes. Spend time counting and feeling the double-stroke roll as quintuplets before trying to add the tom accents.



We can also accent polyrhythmic groupings with flams. With flam taps (Exercises 7 and 8), we have a two-note phrase. Swiss Army triplets and alternating flam triplets (Exercises 9–11) give us a three-note phrase. And four-note phrases can be created with flammed paradiddles (Exercises 12 and 13). We can create these groupings with other flam rudiments, of course, and we can stretch the phrases out with combinations of each. For now, let's just focus on these three ideas.

Flam taps sound great when they contrast with the pulse. Because the rudiment is two notes long, they fit well within any odd subdivision. Exercise 7 first explores this with 8th-note triplets, resulting in a three-over-two polyrhythm.



7

I R R r L L I R R r L L I R R r L L

In Exercise 8 we'll incorporate quintuplets and displace the accented flam to start on the second partial instead of on the downbeat. Once this feels comfortable, add quarter notes on the bass drum and accents on beats 2 and 4 to turn this into a twisted, flammed train beat.

8

R r L L I R R r L L I R R r L L I R R r L L I R

Exercises 9–11 explore three-note flam rudiments within 16th notes, quintuplets, and septuplets. We'll start with Swiss Army triplets because the sticking repeats every three beats—this should give you one less aspect to think about while exploring these accent patterns. Once that feels comfortable, you'll have great fun going through these examples while leading with your weak hand. The sticking pattern reverses on repeat in Exercises 10 and 11 with the alternating flam triplets.

9

I R R L I R R L I R R L I R R L
and: I R L R r L R L I R L R r L R L

10

I R R L I R R L I R R L I R R L I R R L
and: I R L R r L R L I R L R r L R L I R L R

11

I R R L I R R L I R R L I R R L I R R L I R R L
and: I R L R r L R L I R L R r L R L I R L R

Finally, we'll explore flammed paradiddles. To add a melodic element, we'll orchestrate the primary note of the flam on the toms. Let's start with 8th-note triplets, as shown in Exercise 12. This phrasing sounds especially interesting when we're playing quarter notes with the bass drum and splashed hi-hat. Exercise 13 incorporates quintuplets.

12

I R L R R r L R L L I R L R R

r L R L L I R L R R r L R L L

13

I R L R R r L R L L I R L R R r L R L L I R L R R
r L R L L I R L R R r L R L L I R L R R r L R L L

It's important to remember that in all of the examples in this lesson, the bass drum or hi-hat foot maintains the pulse. Your hands play patterns that contrast with that foundation, and as such, their accent patterns need to feel like syncopations of the pulse. If your perception starts to shift to where you're hearing the pulse in the hands with offbeat rhythms in the feet, stop to correct yourself. Count out loud to get the feel of the quarter-note pulse back, and then try again.

Next time we'll explore flam rudiments further—and more aggressively, in a metal framework.



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 modern drummer.com.



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Drumset Ergonomics

Part 6: Positioning Secondary Suspended Instruments

by Brandon Green

In this final installment of this series, we're going to address how to position the instruments that we only play five to thirty percent of the time, such as splashes, Chinas, cowbells, electric pads, additional rack toms, and auxiliary crashes. The goal when determining the placement of these instruments is to maintain optimal shoulder mechanics and joint health.

There are no set rules dictating how you should place your secondary instruments. We tend to make those decisions based on what we see our peers and favorite drummers within different musical genres do. For example, it's common in heavy metal for a China to be placed to the right side of the kit, over the floor tom. But in jazz, that spot is often used for a secondary ride. While you can give those setups a try to see if they work for you, let's start by identifying if your body can be put into a position that helps you play those setups safely and comfortably.

External Components

I consider a secondary instrument to be any component placed just beyond comfortable reach. It's important to be aware of what your body is doing when you have to reach for something. The increase in torque puts much more strain on your body. When playing secondary instruments, this strain isn't usually a huge issue because the amount of time you're reaching for them is minimal. But those forces are still there.

Internal Components

With secondary instruments, we should focus on their impact to the shoulder complex and neck muscles. The shoulder complex consists of the sternoclavicular joint (the collarbone to the rib cage), the acromioclavicular joint (the collarbone to shoulder blade), the glenohumeral joint (the connection of the shoulder, arm, and shoulder blade), and the scapulothoracic joint (the shoulder blade on the rib cage). We also need to be aware of what effects the ligaments have on

these joints. I will also briefly explain the effects that reaching for secondary instruments can have on some of the larger neck muscles.

Ligaments

The ligaments are collagen-based wires that help hold our bones together. They act much like guardrails on a freeway. They aren't intended to take a lot of force for long periods of time, but they can when necessary. But with enough repetitive impact, ligaments can fail and potentially break.

An amazing feature of ligaments is in how they help transmit force and increase joint stability. When the shoulder is moved to an extreme position, the ligaments act like a washcloth being drained of water. The shape of the tissue doesn't change, but the twisting motion compresses the structures inside. When you reach to your far right to hit a cymbal, your shoulder joint is externally rotated. This causes some of the shoulder ligaments to become tighter. While the shoulder has more stability in this position, there's also a lot more compression in the joint. It's usually in these extreme positions that ligaments get damaged.

Neck Muscles

The neck muscles are a typical area of strain for drummers. As you reach farther away from your core, the torque at your shoulder and neck increases. Because these muscles are so large and powerful, they often do a lot of the work to maintain those extended arm positions. We won't focus much on these muscles here, but make sure to follow the advice provided in the last two articles to greatly reduce strain on your neck.

Assessment

Although I'll be focusing on a cymbal placed on the far right, the assessment that follows should be applied to each secondary suspended instrument on your kit.

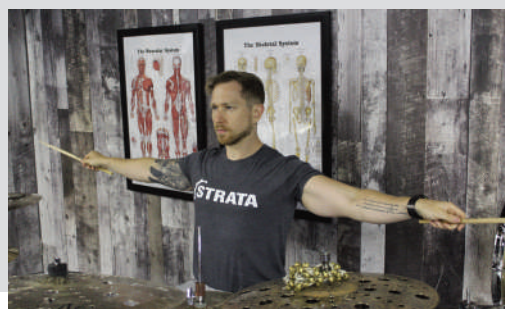
Start by doing gross assessments that combine spinal and shoulder motion to give you a continuum of placement options. If you experience pain at any point during the assessment, move back to a neutral body position, and begin rotating your spine and shoulder until you find the point where pain begins. Do not set up any instrument beyond that position.

Now place your elbow at the side of your body with the elbow bent to a 90-degree angle. Hold a drumstick in your usual grip, and then externally rotate your arm as far as you can away from your body without letting your arm leave the side of your body. When the shoulder starts to tighten up, start to rotate your torso in the same direction. Don't let your wrist rotate out of position. Make note of how far you can go.





Now bring your arm to a 90-degree angle while reaching in front of you with a drumstick in your hand. Move your arm out to the side as far as you can without experiencing any discomfort. Once your shoulder tightens up, allow your spine to rotate with it. Make note of how far you can go.



The summation of those steps will give you a sense of where you can place instruments without changing your wrist position. Try to avoid placing anything outside of these extremes to keep your body safe.

Once you've placed a secondary suspended instrument within your kit, move your arm and torso into position to play that instrument and hold a stick 2" above the surface of it for thirty to sixty seconds. Do you feel any pain or discomfort when in this position? If you do feel pain, adjust the angle and position of the instrument until it feels more comfortable. Repeat this process with each secondary suspended instrument.



If you've read all of the articles in this series, you should have the basic info needed to customize a comfortable setup for your own physical and musical needs. Stay healthy, and happy drumming!



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.



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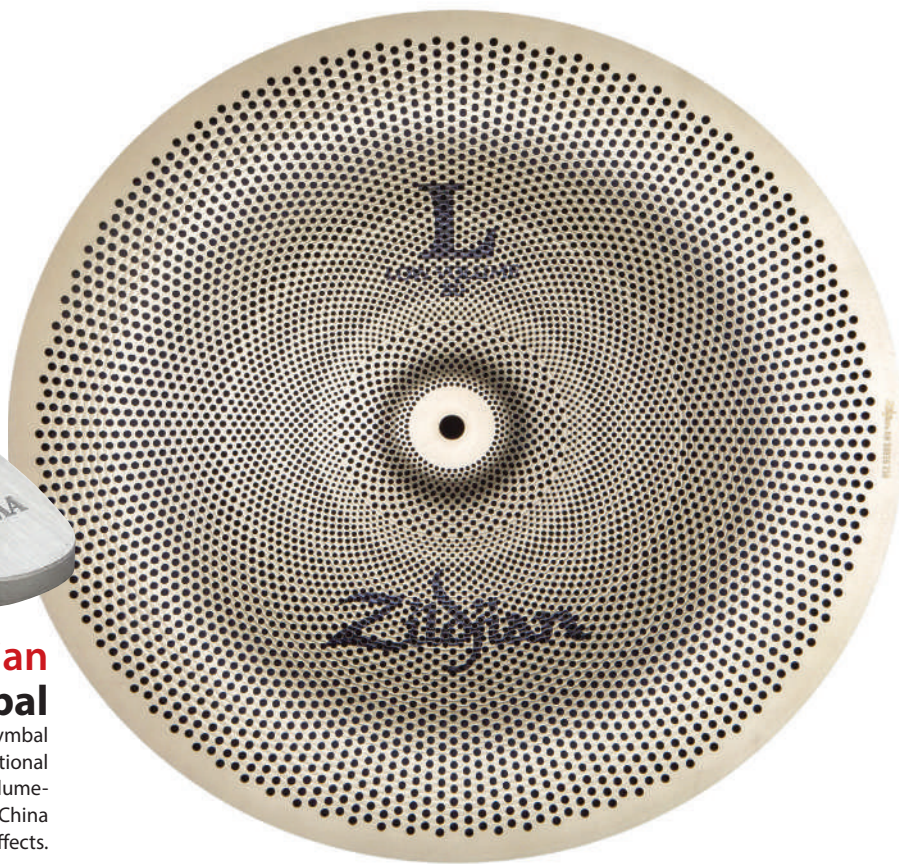


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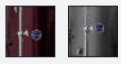
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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Skyharbor *Sunshine Dust*

Indian progressive metal titans release a gripping new album on the heels of successful tours with Babymetal, the Contortionist, and Deftones.

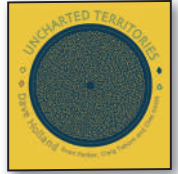
Equal parts ethereal atmospheric, thick and chugging grooves, and soaring vocals, Skyharbor offer some of their finest work to date on their third full-length release. Expertly anchored by Mumbai drummer **Aditya Ashok**, who is also the creative force behind diverse electronic project OX7GEN, Skyharbor ably showcase their knack for blending lush synth/programming textures with thick, syncopated metal. Their expansive compositions serve as the perfect vessel for American vocalist Eric Emery's substantial contributions, as well as those of Ashok. The drummer's clever beat displacement on "Ethos," textured groove on "Disengage/Evacuate," and slippery triple-meter playing on "Menace" stand out, though his playing is dynamic, musical, and muscular throughout the album's thirteen tracks. (eOne Music/Good Fight Music) **Ben Meyer**



Dave Holland *Uncharted Territories*

A return to free expression for the legendary bassist, with a willing and able drummer as copilot.

"He has a great sense of moment in the music," says Dave Holland about drummer **Ches Smith** in the promotional materials for *Uncharted Territories*. "He seems to know just when to end a piece." As a two-CD/three-LP collection of what Holland terms "open form improvisation," the music is a perfect vehicle for saxophonist Evan Parker, keyboardist Craig Taborn, and the rhythm section to find countless moments to say something—either imposing on the proceedings with urgent, traditionally "out" playing, or breaking off into duos and trios for sounds alternately sublime and jarring. And before Smith finds exciting ways to conclude collective statements from the group, he offers lots of sensitive work on vibes and timpani in addition to normal kit sounds. Check out the drummer's jagged swing on "QT12" and the spacious groove he invents for "Bass—Percussion T2." The listener hears these players' minds at work, but where the music comes from and where it's going is still a glorious mystery. (daveholland.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



MULTIMEDIA

Creative Quest by Questlove

Questlove and his writing partner **Ben Greenman** have written an excellent new book that drummers interested in creating their own music should pick up right away.

Slipping in perfectly next to the classics of the genre, like *The War of Art* by Steven Pressfield, *The Creative Habit* by Twyla Tharp, and *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron, *Creative Quest* is a book full of practical ways to unmoor us from the blocks and mental baggage that tend to clog our creativity. It's not explicitly about drums, but Questlove drafts this book like a drummer; he expands on multiple patterns of creativity operating

in concert with each other. This book's mode feels very much in harmony with Questlove's searching and catholic taste. It's casual and conversational at times, but the overall effect is transformative.

Our prescribed role behind the kit is usually to serve music that someone else has written, but for those of us trying to carve our own path, Questlove acts as a powerful mentor here. There are great anecdotes related directly to creating drum beats, but this is mostly a book about inventing things out of whole cloth and how to assemble the tools that can point



you towards making your own music (or following any creative pursuit).

Questlove is working at the crossroads of art and commerce, and from the outside it seems as if he can do no wrong—that his

path has been one success after another. We get some enlightened humility within these pages. Questlove's fallible, but he never stops trying.

Democracy and plurality are the prescription in *Creative Quest*, a platonic idea that our culture seems to be forgetting these days. This book is a great antidote. (Ecco/HarperCollins) **John Colpitts**

Developing Melodic Language on the Drums by Wayne Salzman II

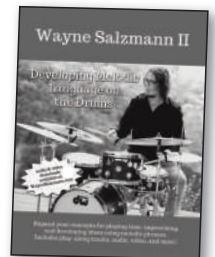
A thorough, step-by-step method for playing time and improvising based on melodies.

Many would say that one of the marks of a great jazz soloist is not losing sight of the melody. This concept applies to comping as well, as those in the rhythm section frame the song and feed the soloist. In Wayne Salzman's new book, the idea is to help drummers learn to keep the melody in mind as they comp and solo.

Salzman teaches drumset at the University of Texas, and the material used is strongly in the jazz tradition. The author opens with five steps to comping around a melody, thinking about the voicing on the drums and the use of space. Theme and Variation, and Call and Response ideas follow.

While this might seem like a collection of exercises found elsewhere, digging in to the book reveals that this is not the case, and brings rewards. Salzman's goal is to take a melodic phrase, relate everything to that rhythmically, and then build on that. The old "sing it before you play it" idea is at the core of this approach. The real strength of this book is found further in, where there is a breakdown of jazz standards based on form (blues, AABA, etc.) and several pages of rhythmic outlines to use for jazz standards.

For the aspiring jazz drummer looking for a resource guide to learning standards, those looking to understand comping better, or those nervous about soloing, this has some valuable info. (waynesalzman.com) **Martin Patmos**





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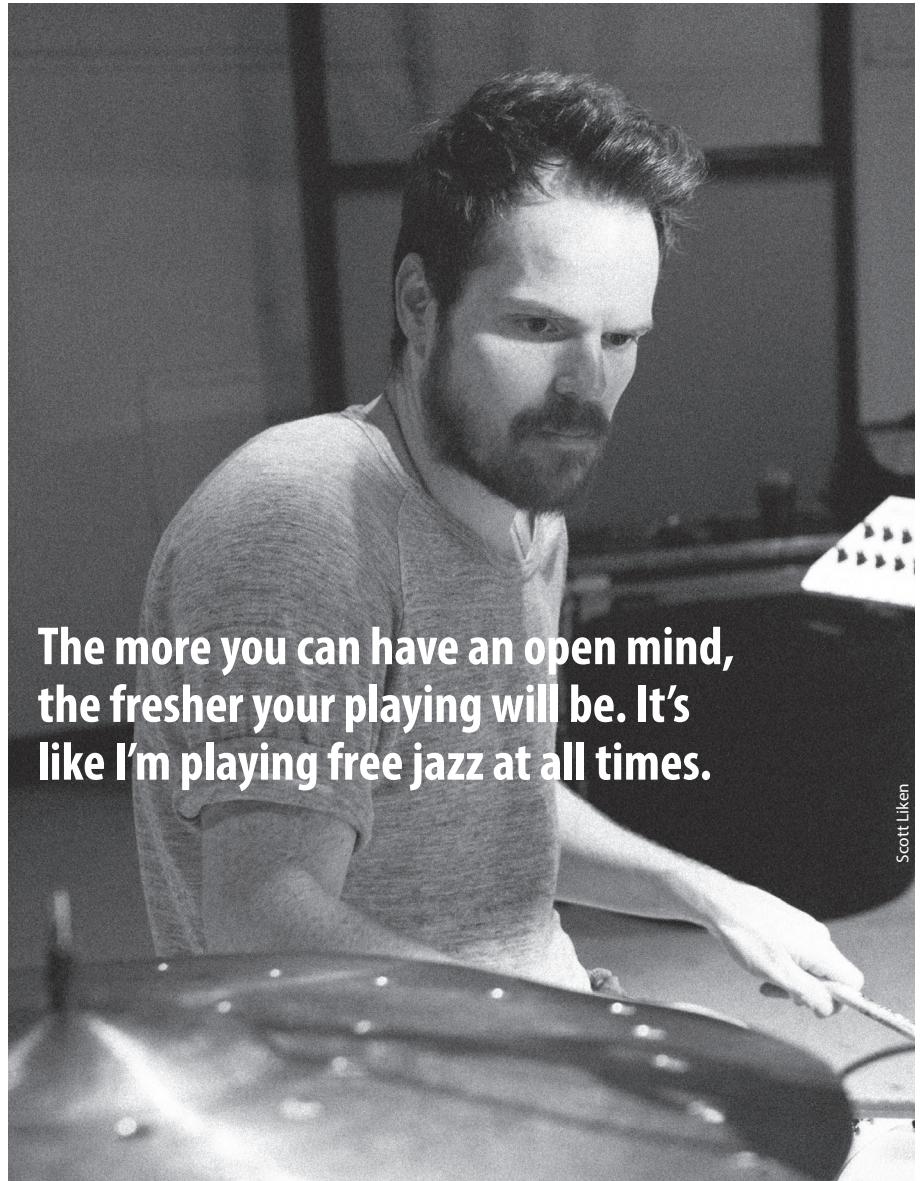
Aaron Sterling's *Sound of Sterloid, Volume II*

Ido almost everything at my place now," says top L.A.-based session drummer Aaron Sterling. In addition to recording about fifteen songs per week for artists and producers around the world, Sterling has created five online master classes that focus on topics for today's home studio drummer, from dialing in snare tones to building full drum tracks. The most recent master class, *Sound of Sterloid, Volume II*, focuses on four distinct drumsets—"big and beefy," "wide open," "Sugar bop," and "super-tight and super-dead"—and includes chapters on experimenting with effects pedals and improvising.

Before we dig into the master class, we ask Aaron how he manages his time, since he could theoretically record around the clock. "I created my own system that works around my life and my family," he says. "I typically work from 10 to 5, but there are some days that are shorter because the songs are easier or the session is really gelling. Even in a worst-case scenario, where I have to change all the drums and mics, I can still get most songs done within a certain amount of time."

One thing every session musician working remotely has to deal with is the lag between when a take is recorded and when the artist or producer signs off on the performance. "I try to get a lot of information ahead of time," says Sterling. "And I want to know if there are any drum parts in the demo that they're married to. I also schedule a time with them to have their phone and headphones available so that when I send over an MP3, they can listen to it and get back to me within ten minutes. That system has worked very well for me."

Sound of Sterloid, Volume II begins with a chapter on the big, beefy sounds of a '70s Ludwig kit. When asked if that's the drumset he uses most often, Sterling says, "I don't have a go-to kit; I try to build something that gets whatever the artist or producer describes." A good portion of this chapter focuses on ways to minimize sympathetic resonance, which Aaron prefers to do via tuning and muffling rather than relying on digital tools. "Gating always has a sound to it," he says. "And those sympathetic overtones



The more you can have an open mind, the fresher your playing will be. It's like I'm playing free jazz at all times.

Scott Liken

are spilling into every microphone anyway. So even if you used gates, that note is still going to be popping through."

Chapter two is the first of four open jams with guitarist Tim Young of the *Late Late Show with James Corden*. When asked how improvisation influences his approach to session work, Sterling explains, "It impacts me enormously. The more you can have an open mind, the fresher your playing will be. Even if I'm playing a pop song, there's always a moment where I need to be open to other possibilities rather than staying boxed within conceived notions of how to make music. It's like I'm playing free jazz at all times, where I'm reacting to the sounds that are coming my way."

Sterling employs that exploratory mindset in the early stages

of building drum parts. "I'll play along to the track and try different ideas," he says. "Some things will immediately sound bad, but some things end up sounding cool. It's funny, but that process doesn't work as well when you're in the studio with the artist and producer; it's hard to do that in front of people. But when you just try a bunch of things, you often discover new ideas."

The second kit featured is a wide-open setup with a 26" bass drum and lively Gretsch toms. "The other day a guy came over with some really cool songs," says Sterling. "One of them was very spacious, so it was obvious that the drum part needed to be minimal, and that marching kick drum was perfect. Everything just needed to ring out."

When it comes time to deliver his final tracks, Aaron often includes mix instructions so that the client can get an accurate representation of the intended drum sound. "Sometimes I'll print a stereo drum mix," he says. "And I'll always send a screenshot of my mix so they can set up their session to hear the tracks as I was hearing them."

Chapter five explores ways to create unusual sounds by running mics through guitar pedals. This is something Sterling incorporates into his recording process often. "There's always a mic going through that pedal system," he says. "Sometimes it's a ribbon mic in the back of the room, and sometimes it's a dynamic mic that's very close



to the kit. But I always have a channel dedicated to the pedals. Sometimes it's just adding a little reverb, but sometimes it's the loudest thing in the mix. I did a hip-hop track recently where we used an octave pedal to pitch the drums down by a fifth, and that was the main sound."

The third kit is a gorgeous Sugar Percussion setup with an 18" bass drum, which Aaron grabs when he's looking for a round, electronic-inspired tone. "If I'm hearing a smaller 808 kind of kick sound, I'll use that one," he explains. The final kit is a super-tight James Gadson-style setup that features a single-headed bass drum and toms and a very dry snare with a goatskin batter. At the start of the chapter, Aaron

confesses, "This is my kind of kit."

Does Sterling have plans to produce more online master classes? "I said I was never going to do videos again after the first one, but then I made four more," he chuckles. "I'd love to be able to do them on a somewhat regular basis. But with my schedule being what it is, I have to ask myself how much I want to do this. I do think it's good for your brain—to keep learning new things."

Check out all five master classes at aaronsterling.com/masterclasses.

Interview by Michael Dawson



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Vinnie Paul

Remembering the metal drumming icon, Pantera cofounder, and backbone of Hellyeah and Damageplan.



Vinnie Paul, who died this past June 22 at the age of fifty-four, possessed an unmistakable bass drum sound. But you never just heard Paul's kick drum on a Pantera, Hellyeah, or Damageplan record—you *felt* it.

Whether he was engaging both feet to fire off rapid 16th notes or a complex pattern, or if he was simply laying down gargantuan quarter notes with his right foot, Paul's kick sound was unmistakable—a clipping thud that packed so much attack it felt like his pedal's beater was striking you square in the diaphragm.

Paul's distinct sound should come as no surprise. The drummer, born Vincent Paul Abbott, took an active role in the production, mixing, and engineering of the classic metal records he made with Pantera and his subsequent bands Damageplan and Hellyeah. His inspiration to get involved in the nuts and bolts of recording was twofold. After hating the way his kit sounded on some of Pantera's earliest sessions, Paul learned the studio craft so that he could take sonic matters into his own hands.

The recording bug was also in his blood; he caught it from his dad, a musician who owned a studio and had an inkling to steer his son away from the tuba and toward the tubs during his early years. “[My dad] said, ‘You’re never going to make a penny in this world playing a tuba,’” Paul told *Modern Drummer* in his August 1994 cover story. “He said, ‘Look, you’re going to play drums. You can do really well with them.’ I still wanted the tuba, but the next thing I knew I was trying out the drums, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

With Paul on drums, and his brother Darrell Abbott (“Dimebag” Darrell) on guitar, Pantera ascended from the metal underground to crash into the mainstream in the ‘90s with an unrelenting, grinding sound that drew from thrash, hardcore, hard rock, and heavy metal. They toured nonstop and released three classic metal albums in a four-year span: 1990’s *Cowboys from Hell*, 1992’s *Vulgar Display of Power*, and 1994’s *Far Beyond Driven*, which cemented the group’s rep among fans as masters of metal.

Pantera were outliers amid metal’s new breed, though. They checked all of the genre’s boxes: they were loud and heavy, singer Phil Anselmo was a screamer, and Paul could shred and play calf-burning double bass with the best of them, putting on a clinic

in songs like “Primal Concrete Sledge” (*Cowboys from Hell*) and “Hellbound” (*Reinventing the Steel*). But he was a pocket player at heart, and his massive feel instilled in Pantera a sense of groove and power that few of the band’s contemporaries possessed. It seemed like the slower the tempo and the simpler and further behind the beat Paul played, the more powerful and machine-like Pantera sounded.

“We want everything we do to have all three cylinders—bass, drums, guitar—to be punching together,” Paul told *MD* in that 1994 interview. “In a lot of bands, the drummer will go off and do a fill in the middle of nowhere, and that doesn’t have any power. We always wanted our stuff to be powerful, and the way to make it powerful is to make it like a machine.... That’s the way I play drums: I play as part of the entire song, not as a separate part. I don’t do my own separate thing in this band. We all work together as a unit.”

When that unit splintered in the early 2000s, Paul and his brother formed Damageplan, and the group went back to square one by touring clubs to establish their new project. Tragically, the bond the Abbott brothers shared was shattered in December 2004 when Dimebag was shot to death onstage by a deranged fan during a show in Columbus, Ohio.

In the ensuing years, Paul resisted the urge and lucrative offers to reform Pantera—often saying his late brother *was* Pantera—and the drummer instead focused his energies on a variety of projects, including Hellyeah, and released an album he and his brother had recorded with outlaw country legend David Allan Coe titled *Rebel Meets Rebel*. Outside of music, Paul was also a successful businessman as the co-owner of an adult nightclub and a sports bar.

In a more unofficial capacity, Paul served as a mentor to many rock musicians—and in particular drummers—hundreds of whom took to social media recently to pay tribute to him after he died from complications of dilated cardiomyopathy and coronary artery disease. And given Paul’s rep as a hard-partying, good-time guy, Mike Portnoy tried to find solace in his friend’s passing. “Heaven just got a little crazier with the Abbott brothers back together again,” Portnoy said in a statement. Indeed it did.

Patrick Berkery

Dominic Joseph “D.J.” Fontana

The sticksman accompanied Elvis Presley on his rise to the top.

In the 1950s, there weren't many ways for drummers to prepare for backing up a performer such as Elvis Presley, a singer with a magnetic stage presence and a suggestive hip-swivel the likes of which the world—and especially television censors—had never seen.

Though he didn't know it at the time, a sixteen-year-old from Shreveport, Louisiana, named Dominic Joseph Fontana was already honing his chops for the Presley gig while playing in a local strip club. Delivering carefully timed “ba-booms” and crashes behind the dancers would serve him well several years later when he had to follow Elvis's every move for cues while performing for thousands in concert and millions on television.

Fontana recalled how his club days prepared him for working with Elvis in Max Weinberg's 1984 book, *The Big Beat*, explaining that he had to “play with the crashes and the bumps and grinds.... You had to catch everything, or [the dancers] would get mad at you,” the drummer said. “I guess that's where I learned it. With Elvis, there was no definite pattern to play. A lot of the things I played came about because he'd jump around and cue with his hands or kick his legs. If he'd want a ‘boom’ accent on the bass drum, he'd let you know where he wanted it.”

Fontana, who died this past June 13 at the age of eighty-seven, was more than just an onstage foil for Presley. He helped turn the King's blend of country, blues, and pop into rock 'n' roll with swinging grooves that are as slamming and vibrant today as they were when they were cut sixty years ago. Fontana's dynamic shuffling on “I Got a Woman” and the rattling snare licks he uses to kick off the jump blues of “My Baby Left Me” would sound right at home on the latest records from roots revivalists like Jack White or Dan Auerbach, or from something recent by Bob Dylan, who caught the rock 'n' roll bug as a teen after hearing the sides Presley cut with Fontana.

D. J. anchored the band Elvis used while recording for RCA Records in the late '50s and early '60s—a period many consider to be Presley's golden age. With guitarist Scotty Moore's feisty twang and the rhythmic slap of Bill Black's upright bass being driven by Fontana's powerful backbeat on iconic songs like “Hound Dog,” “Heartbreak

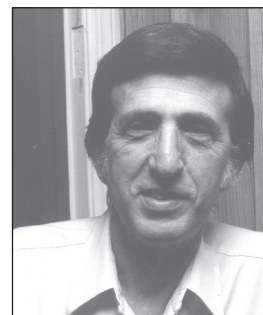
Hotel,” “Don't Be Cruel,” “Jailhouse Rock,” and “All Shook Up,” that unit would influence how countless rock combos subsequently approached their craft.

Fontana was the “new guy” in Presley's group, signing on after the drummer-less trio of Elvis, Moore, and Black was hired for several appearances on the *Louisiana Hayride* radio show, where D. J. served as the house drummer. For a time, he was the highest-paid member of the group, pulling down \$100 a week, a nice bump over his \$15-per-night wage on *Hayride*. Fontana would remain with Elvis until the late '60s, appearing in *Singer Presents...Elvis* [commonly referred to as the '68 *Comeback Special*] on NBC, where he famously played the back of a guitar case with a stick and a brush.

Fontana also appeared in many of the movies Elvis made during the '60s, a part of the gig the drummer wasn't terribly fond of. “It began to be a job,” D. J. told *Modern Drummer* in a 1985 feature. “It was, ‘Get up at 5 in the morning, go through the gate at 7, do makeup, put on uniforms or whatever, stand around until noon, take an hour lunch break, stand around until 4:30, film thirty seconds, and go home.’ That was every day. But you had to be there, and that got old. We'd have to be gone eight, ten, or fifteen weeks at a time. We finally told Elvis that we would just come out and do the tracks. ‘You're the actor; we're not actors. We're uncomfortable. Let us go home.’ He said, ‘Fine, as long as you guys come out and do the tracks, I'm happy.’”

After leaving Presley's band in the late '60s, Fontana played on a number of sessions, including recordings with Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney, while performing at many Elvis-related events and on tribute records like 1997's *All the King's Men*. Though Fontana kept busy, he said to *MD* in 1985 that everything “was kind of downhill” after playing with one of the most influential singers of all time. “We had fun—the people, and the sessions. It all kind of ties in together and flows after a while. There are no highlights, because everything was a highlight with Elvis.”

Patrick Berkery



Richard Swift

A multifaceted solo talent, gone too soon.

Given his singer, songwriter, producer, engineer, and multi-instrumentalist skillset, it's no wonder that Richard Swift, who passed away on July 3 at the age of forty-one due to complications from alcohol addiction, played the drums like someone with a keen understanding of how each piece of a musical puzzle should fit. You can hear his approach throughout his handful of mostly one-man-band solo efforts—in the way he subdivides the 6/8 feel of “Already Gone” from 2009's *The Atlantic Ocean*, for instance, or how he sinks into the sweet McCartney-like groove of “The Songs of National Freedom” from 2007's *Dressed Up for the Letdown*.

There's also his kit work on the Pretenders'

2016 album, *Alone*. Standing in for the legendary Martin Chambers is no small feat, but Swift proved a more than capable sub, with a feel that swings, fills that play like hooks, and a sublime drum sound.

Drumming is one of many things that Swift did extremely well. As a touring bassist with the Black Keys and a keyboardist with the Shins, Swift helped those bands up their sonic game as they matriculated to bigger stages.



Richard Swift's final album, *The Hex*, was released posthumously on September 21 in digital formats and will be available physically on December 14.



Rachel Demy

In the studio, Swift served as a producer, engineer, and/or multi-instrumentalist on dozens of records by artists including Dan Auerbach, the Arcs, Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats, Ray LaMontagne, Guster, Marco Benevento, and Foxygen.

Swift leaves behind a body of work as a solo artist, producer/engineer, and drummer that will serve as an inspiration to musicians for decades to come.

Patrick Berkery



INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

The 2018 Chicago Drum Show

The perennial percussion event once again serves vintage and modern drum lovers alike.

Story and photos by Robert Campbell

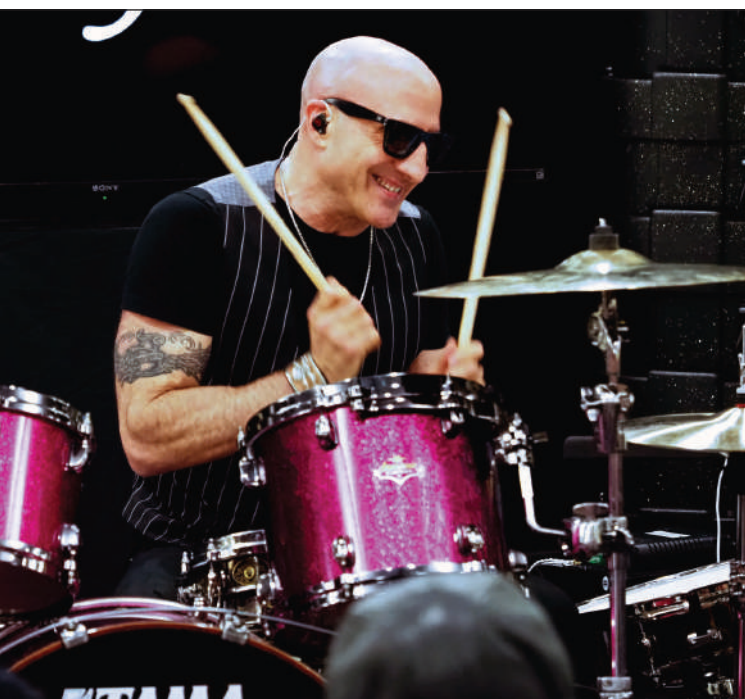
The twenty-eighth annual Chicago Drum Show took place this past May 19–20 at the Odeum Expo Center in Villa Park, Illinois. Rob Cook, a drum historian and the show's producer, organized a world-class set of clinics, master classes, presentations, and exhibits that occurred over the course of the weekend, and plenty of local and international drumming enthusiasts were in attendance. The event

featured the launch of Cook's latest book, *The Leedy Way*, and a commemoration of the Gretsch Drum Company's 135th anniversary. Inspiring, instructive master classes and clinics were held by an all-star lineup that included Danny Seraphine (Chicago, California Transit Authority), Kenny Aronoff (studio and stage legend), Carter McLean (*The Lion King*), and Dom Famularo (educator, clinician, and author).



The Starr Festival snare

Danny Seraphine, a hometown favorite, impressed the audience with a few trademark Chicago and CTA tunes. The drummer also shared a brief history of his career, from his time with Jimmy Ford and the Executives to the genesis of Chicago to his return to music with CTA in 2007 after a hiatus. Seraphine shared some wisdom from his many years of ups and downs, stating, "If you're in a rut, find a new teacher, and they'll get you out of it. As I've gotten older, I've replaced my fastball with a wicked slider. But I think I'm a better drummer than I've ever been. I have better time, and I'm more tasteful."

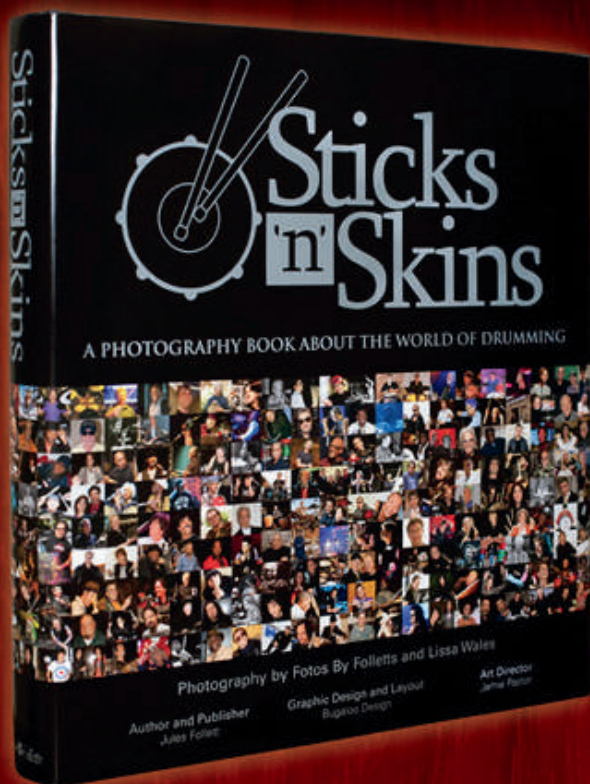


Rare drums spotted at the show included a 1940s Ludwig & Ludwig drumset in a Top Hat finish, 1930s Ludwig & Ludwig Abalone Pearl snares brought by collector Joe Luoma, a 1930s Ludwig 5x14 ten-lug Full Dress Avalon Pearl snare at the Three on the Floor station, a 1960s Trixon Gold Sparkle kit from drummer Chuck Scalia, and a stunning set of well-curated rope drums that date back to the 1800s from collector Brian Hill as part of his "On the Ropes" exhibit. Also on display was a new, limited-edition Ludwig Starr Festival snare drum, which was designed in collaboration with Ringo Starr's gear curator, Gary Astridge, and is a replica of a Ludwig Jazz Festival snare that Ringo used with the Beatles.



In his famously dynamic and engaging manner, **Kenny Aronoff** offered passionate advice for those in the music business: "Never say no, and be true to yourself." Growing up, the drummer played classical, jazz, and rock music, but he thought he'd likely become an orchestral drummer. Aronoff explained that his teacher, George Gaber, once said, "Maybe you'll become a famous rock drummer." At the time, Kenny said that he responded, "I hope not!" Aronoff chuckled as he explained that over time he became the rock drummer he used to make fun of, adding, "I worked hard, developed self-discipline, and kept trudging on despite insecurities and fears."

Aronoff also explained that he's an advocate of functional practicing—practicing things that will make him sound great right away. He demonstrated an exercise using the first thirteen lines of *Stick Control*, dividing the patterns between his hands and feet. The drummer emphasized, "Repetition of any skill is preparation for success." He also shared how his famous drum fill to John Mellencamp's "Jack and Diane" came about—a case where simpler was better—and played along to several hit tracks. Throughout, Aronoff's skill, work ethic, and drive were truly impressive.



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A Unique Insight Into The Community of Drummers

Chicago Drum Show

Dom Famularo, a former student of Jim Chapin and Joe Morello, maintains a busy schedule as a teacher, clinician, author, and public speaker. In his clinic he shared some of his insights on the development and use of the techniques that Billy Gladstone, Sanford Moeller, and George Lawrence Stone pioneered. He described those drummers as “movement scientists” and “the forefathers of modern drum technique.” After an intense and passionate drum solo, Famularo said, “It’s about intensity, [and] intensity is about full commitment. It’s about being there in the moment, and not worrying about the past or future.”



Carter McLean demonstrated his impressive skills and personal “thumbs-up” hand technique for both speed and dynamics. Carter also discussed his drumming philosophy in a master class. “It’s about the space you leave, not what you’re hitting,” McLean said. “It’s also knowing when to say, ‘You know what? I shouldn’t play here.’” He suggested practicing using various dynamics and tempos, emphasizing that it’s harder to play slower tempos than faster ones. In his clinic, McLean suggested getting all the sounds that you can out of your gear. He massively detuned his George Way acacia drumset, showing how different it could be from a standard tuning while still remaining interesting. McLean also demonstrated how the use of other percussive gear varied his sound by incorporating a Big Fat Snare Drum dampener, an Index Drums shaker, HeadHunter specialty sticks with flexible tips, and large Dem’Sticks bamboo rods.

A bevy of drum manufacturers exhibited at the show, including RBH, which displayed a gorgeous vintage-styled drumset in a Full Dress finish; Rogers, which recently announced the return of its Dyna-Sonic snare drum; and WFLIII, which is now producing full drumsets. Also showcasing their wares were A&F, Chicago Drum, Craviotto, Doc Sweeney, Dunnett Classic/George Way, DW, Jenkins-Martin, KAT Percussion, Kumu, Mapex, Sonor, Trick, and Yamaha, among others. Attendees could check out cymbals from Amedia, Byrne, Centent, Istanbul Agop, Matt Nolan, Paiste, Sabian, TRX, and Zildjian. Accessory manufacturers at the event included Aquarian, Evans, Remo, Beato, Humes and Berg, Bopworks, LA BackBeat, Liverpool Drumsticks, RB Percussion, Bum Wrap, Drum Supply House, JamTec, Kelly SHU, and Stellar! Wood Drum Hoops. Instrument dealers such as Chicago Music Exchange, Guitar Center, McCourt’s Music, Skins ‘n Tins, and Vic’s Drum Shop offered special deals for attendees.



The twenty-ninth edition of the Chicago Drum Show is planned for May of 2019.



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An Enduring Kit and an Unforgettable Time

This vintage 1963 Ludwig Hollywood set in an Oyster Black Pearl wrap comes to us from drummer Nelson Hawkins, who ordered it after paging through a Ludwig catalog in the early '60s. The kit came with two 8x12 mounted toms, a 20" bass drum, and a 16" floor tom. Hawkins says that he completed the setup with a previously owned Ludwig Supraphonic LM400 snare and Zildjian cymbals. And in the '70s, he upgraded the hardware with Ludwig's Hercules series of cymbal stands.

Hawkins tells *MD* that his setup holds special significance for him. After he waited several weeks for the drums to arrive, the time finally came on November 22, 1963, to pick them up. "I walked out of the music store, packed the prize into my car, and went next door to a hotel—probably to buy cigarettes," the drummer says. "I saw several people gathered at the lobby desk listening to a transistor radio the clerk was holding. A woman turned toward me, and with a shocked expression on her face

said, 'The President has been shot.' What began as the day I had waited so long for suddenly turned bittersweet."

Hawkins says he returned home and set up the drums in front of his TV while watching the coverage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination unfold. "The confirmation of President Kennedy's death, the swearing in of Lyndon B. Johnson with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis at the ceremony, Lee Harvey Oswald's capture and death on live TV.... The world seemed to stand still for several days before the funeral procession."

Hawkins says that for him, the set would go on to recall another major historical event that occurred just shortly thereafter. "A couple of months later," he explains, "I saw a similar set perched high on a riser as the Beatles made their first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. I still play these wonderful old drums, and they're a reminder of where I was during that period, fifty-five years ago."

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



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