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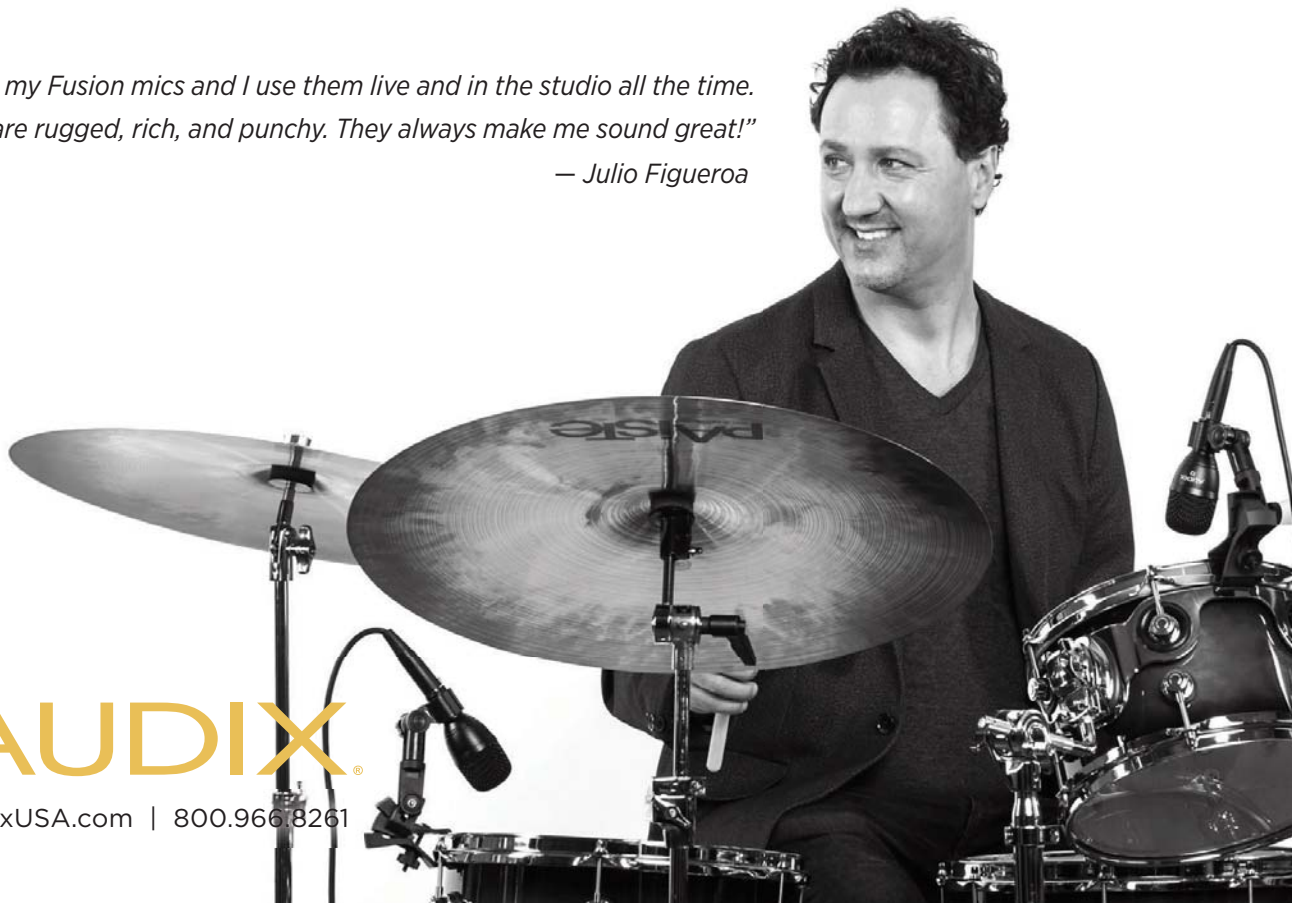
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ON THE COVER

26 IRON MAIDEN'S NICKO MCBRAIN

He's an '80s metal icon whose inimitable groove has roots in the '60s and '70s—and he's still going strong well into the 2010s. If ever there was a drummer for the ages, it's him.
by Ilya Stemkovsky

36 INSIDE CRASH: THE WORLD'S GREATEST DRUM KITS

Including ten pages of photos from the coffee-table book.
by Billy Amendola

46 TYSHAWN SOREY

Exploring the inner and outer reaches of modern music, via composition and improvisation.
by Michael Parillo

54 DEBBIE KNOX-HEWSON

The drummer with Charli XCX, James, and now Nasty Cherry is down with DIY.

Bonus Lesson: Debbie's warm-up routine and practice tips.
by Ilya Stemkovsky

LESSONS

- 60 STRICTLY TECHNIQUE**
Eights and Sixes Part 4: Quarter-Note Triplets by Bill Bachman
- 64 ROCK 'N' JAZZ CLINIC**
Creative Cymbal Chokes Adding Color to Your Fills by Jost Nickel
- 66 JAZZ DRUMMER'S WORKSHOP**
Seven-Note Groupings Advanced Bebop Coordination by Joe Bergamini
- 70 ROCK PERSPECTIVES**
Mobile Madness A Guide to Programming Odd Rhythms by Aaron Edgar

EQUIPMENT

- 12 PRODUCT CLOSE-UP**
Crush Sublime AXM Drumset, M4 Hardware, and M1 Hi-Hat and Double Pedal
TRX DRK-BRT and DRK-X Hi-Hats
Croaker Percussion Wojik Brush Box, Studio and Gig Shakers
CAD Audio Stage7, D88, and D89 Microphones
Calderwood Percussion 3.75x12 Piccolo Snare
- 22 GEARING UP**
Shania Twain's Elijah Wood
- 74 NEW AND NOTABLE**

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Page 87



DEPARTMENTS

- 4 AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW**
Boom, Ba-Boom, Crash!
Boom, Ba-Boom, Crash!
by Billy Amendola
- 6 READERS' PLATFORM**
What's Your Favorite Nicko McBrain Track?
- 8 OUT NOW**
Bobby Jarzombek, Thomas Lang, and Mark Zonder on Arch/Matheos's *Winter Ethereal*
- 10 ON TOUR**
Rich Mercurio with Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul
- 76 RETAILER PROFILE**
Philadelphia Drum & Percussion
- 80 CRITIQUE**
Phil Collins live reissues and freelance compilation, Andrew Cyrille solo album, and more.
- 84 INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS**
The Honeycombs' Anne "Honey" Lantree remembered
- 88 KIT OF THE MONTH**
The DrumGarden



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Boom, Ba-Boom, Crash! Boom, Ba-Boom, Crash!

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the July 2019 issue. If you're into gawking at wild and famous drumkits, then you're going to enjoy our photo-essay on *Crash*, the new coffee-table book by drummer, collector, and studio sound technician David Frangioni. In addition to talking to the author about it, we couldn't resist reprinting a whole host of its photos, as well as a couple that didn't make the final product.

Among the drummers whose iconic kits are featured is the great Hal Blaine, who died this past March shortly after celebrating his ninetieth birthday, and who we'll be honoring with a full tribute in an upcoming issue. I was blessed to become close with Hal, and like so many who knew him, I was heartbroken over his passing. Hal lived a pretty incredible life, and his career trajectory will likely never be repeated. He paved the way for so many drummers and musicians, and the phone calls, text messages, and emails I received on the day of his passing only emphasized just how much he was loved by musicians and music fans all over the world.

Also like so many of us, I grew learning to play "for the song" by studying and playing along to Hal's drumming on the countless hit records he made in the '60s and '70s. One of the first times I saw one of his mammoth Ludwig studio kits—David Frangioni owns the original, and you can see it in our feature story—was in a photo that Hal took of George Harrison sitting behind it, when Hal was recording a Jackie Lomax album for the Beatles' Apple Records. George loved that kit so much that he bought a set for Ringo Starr. Not being a fan of multiple toms, however, Ringo stripped it down and only kept the one extra tom. Ringo subsequently used that Ludwig maple wood kit for all of *Abbey Road* and *Let It Be*. He also used it to record his 2005 solo album, *Choose Love*.



"George really loved those drums," Hal told *Modern Drummer* years later. "Then Karen Carpenter saw them and absolutely wanted them. I had two sets myself, identical, so that I could go from studio to studio. Producers would say, 'We want that big set.' The thing about my big set of drums is that I gave it all to Ludwig. I expected them to call it the Hal Blaine Super Set or something. But they called it the Octa-Plus, and it was one of their biggest sellers. I didn't know in those days about getting a design patent.



"I did *The Ed Sullivan Show* with Nancy Sinatra," Hal went on, "and I did a solo. It was the first time anyone ever saw that set, and everybody just went crazy. They were single-headed toms. That was something that I learned from using my old timbales. I used to use timbales as tom-toms. I loosened them up and they'd go boom, but then they would trail off. I would have the toms on rolling racks so that I could still just play my four-piece set, and then I could roll in four on each side and have another octave to play with."

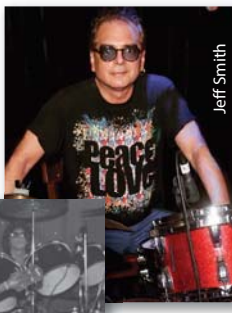
I purchased my own set of Ludwig Octa-Plus drums in the early '70s after seeing them on the back of the *Beck, Bogert, and Appice* album. Carmine Appice was another huge influence on me, and I wanted the same kit he had—though I only wanted one bass drum. Incidentally, you can see one of Carmine's other classic kits in the *Crash* feature, where you'll also see a unique set once used by Iron Maiden's Nicko McBrain, who appears on the cover of *MD* for the first time this month. Enjoy the issue!



Billy Amendola
Editor at Large

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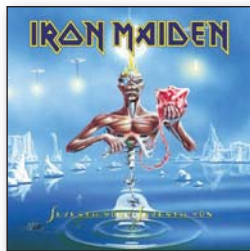
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What's Your Favorite Nicko McBrain Track?



To coincide with Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain's cover story this month, we checked in with our readers and social media followers to find out which performance from the metal heavyweight's lengthy career stands out for them. Here are some of the responses.

"Caught Somewhere in Time" from *Somewhere in Time* is an absolute beast of a song on drums. The breakneck pace and complex fills make it nearly impossible to duplicate with a single pedal. How Nicko pulled that one off without collapsing when he was done is still beyond me, and I don't think he's come close to that song before or since.

John Cahill

Everything Nicko does is gold, but a personal favorite is "Powerslave." That groove is so tasty, and the fill work is superior.

Don McNair

I'd say every track on *Piece of Mind*. That was his debut album with Iron Maiden, and from that point on that beautiful heart-pounding sound has defined and influenced a generation of metal drummers, including myself.

Tony Louis Pirotta

In "Where Eagles Dare" from *Piece of Mind*, McBrain's flammed "bucket-of-fish" fill at about 150 bpm created one of the greatest hard-rock drum intros of all time. The single bass drum 8th-note triplets that recur throughout the song also showcase Nicko's classic mastery.

David Gold

If I had to pick one, it'd be "Revelations" from *Piece of Mind*. I replayed that track to the point where I swear the vinyl must have worn through to the other side. The drums sound incredible, and those Paiste 2002s are just sublime. McBrain takes you on a truly wonderful rhythmic journey, and it's a track that I will never tire of listening to.

Rob Booth

The opening track from 1983's *Piece of Mind*, "Where Eagles Dare," introduced McBrain's all-around impeccable technique, precise attack, and supreme right foot.

Sun King

"Wasted Years" from *Somewhere in Time*.

The way that McBrain accents the bass line in the intro with the hi-hat is so intelligent. And his intense playing during the guitar solo culminates in an epic drum fill that delivers the band into the chorus. It's pure magic.

Javier Nunez Estrada

"Where Eagles Dare" because of the intro, the main groove, and the fills. The whole song is just pure class. When I was a kid, I had McBrain's *Rhythms of the Beast* video, and watching him explain how he developed that pattern and play through it was just one of the coolest things a young drummer could see.

Leon De Beer

I always thought of McBrain as an R&B/swing drummer playing metal because his feel is so strong. His great, fluid motion is also probably the reason he still can play with the same intensity today. And I love his 16th-note-triplet fills and offbeat ride

bell patterns. Check out "Alexander the Great" and "Stranger in a Strange Land" from *Somewhere in Time* and "Brighter Than a Thousand Suns" from *A Matter of Life and Death*. I could go on because he's such a big influence.

Michael Dumont

"Stranger in a Strange Land" from *Somewhere in Time* has a unique feel compared to most Maiden songs, and McBrain's choices of accents feel spontaneous yet also deliberate and memorable. Nicko's fills are often like rhythmic hooks, and that song has several examples.

Allen Jones

"Caught Somewhere in Time" from *Somewhere in Time* has great footwork and amazing, dynamic fills. McBrain is always playing for the song. He's one of the greatest without a doubt!

Ramiro Zamudio

I'd say "The Trooper" from *Piece of Mind*. It's got it all: the fills, the groove, and space. It was McBrain's first album with Iron Maiden, and he showed the world that not only could he come up with great parts, but he also knew when not to play.

Liam Archer

"The Wicker Man" is a great song on *Brave New World*. The snare sound pierces through your brain, and the kick pedal work in the chorus is outstanding. Most people would play it with a double pedal, but not Nicko.

Andrei Scott Vladimirov

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Bobby Jarzombek, Thomas Lang, and Mark Zonder on Arch/Matheos's *Winter Ethereal*



Three metal and session powerhouses serve up a drumming feast on the revered prog duo's newest effort.

In 1982, along with guitarist Victor Arduini, bassist Joe DiBiase, and drummer Steve Zimmerman, vocalist John Arch and guitarist Jim Matheos cofounded the venerated prog-metal group Fates Warning. And although the band enjoyed success and established their rightful place among other genre heavyweights such as Dream Theater and Queensrÿche throughout the ensuing years, Arch parted ways with the group in 1987.

In 2010, Arch and Matheos reunited under the Arch/Matheos moniker for their debut record, *Sympathetic Resonance*. And this past May 10, the duo released their explosive second full-length, *Winter Ethereal*. For the effort, the two recruited three drummers: previous Fates Warning collaborators Bobby Jarzombek and Mark Zonder, and the monster player and educator Thomas Lang.

Each drummer on *Winter Ethereal* received stems, click tracks, and suggested programmed drums from Matheos. And from their own home studios—and drawing from their past experience—the three worked on their tunes separately with Matheos and Arch to create an album stuffed with blistering yet carefully placed chops, tasty personal takes on the duo's material, and a veritable heap of prog-drumming bliss. We spoke to Jarzombek, Zonder, and Lang about their contributions.

MD: What was the recording process like for *Winter Ethereal*?

Mark: Since I've worked with Jim for years in Fates Warning and other side projects, it was like going home. Jim is very organized, and all the files he sent loaded perfectly. I'd work up a part and send him an MP3 to check out. He'd have a couple small fixes, and that was it.

Bobby: I recorded "Wrath of the Universe" and "Straight and Narrow." Being that "Wrath" is over eight minutes long, I probably spent two weeks creating the parts. Jim and I went back and forth with the sections until everything was good.

The verses were interesting because they're lengthy. I demoed six different ideas for the verses, and Jim placed them how he wanted within those sections.

MD: How did you approach your parts?

Bobby: After working on two Fates Warning albums and *Sympathetic Resonance*, I'm used to how Jim works. Depending on what I'm hearing with his drum programming, I either stay close to his ideas or try something different. But it's up to Jim whether my parts work.

Thomas: The songs are very well composed, very riff-driven and melodic, and they immediately inspired specific ideas. I like to record full takes of songs to create a flow that feels organic. I usually play along to the song several times and jam over it along with any demo drum programming. I record these jams, listen

back to my spontaneous ideas, and select the ones that I think are appropriate.

Especially with progressive music, I think it's important not to overthink parts on paper before recording. Whenever I do that, the parts may be more complex and impressive drumming-wise, but they often feel detached from the music. When I listen back to my first instinctive ideas, I find that the parts sound more emotional and more like they were created together with the band as if we'd been in the same room writing the material.

MD: Were there any influences you had in mind when recording?

Bobby: When Jim sent me the song "Straight and Narrow," to me the drum intro he programmed was reminiscent of "Exciter" by Judas Priest. Of course, Les Binks was amazing on that classic. I thought that was interesting, so I did my own take on that and busied it up a little with occasional triplet flurries on the bass drums and toms. We released a video for "Straight and Narrow," but I haven't seen any comments about any "Exciter" comparisons. So maybe it was just me who heard it that way. [laughs]

Thomas: I only let myself be influenced by the music, the vibe and energy of the songs, and the programmed drum demo. I do have a specific sound in mind, though, which may be inspired by a recording of another drummer who I admire. In this case I went for a classic rock sound,



Francesco Desmaele



Stephanie Cabral

hopefully reminiscent of Cozy Powell, Tommy Aldridge, and Bill Ward, all with a twenty-first century approach.

MD: What do you practice for technique to play this material?

Mark: I practice groupings of three and four with one foot. I try to get away from double bass as much as possible, as I love the hi-hat and don't want to sacrifice it. I've found many ways to use one foot playing three or four 16th notes while incorporating the toms to give it that thunderous sound that two kicks give.

Thomas: I try to keep my hands and feet nimble and able to execute more demanding drum parts like these by practicing standard hand and foot exercises and rudiments. The challenges with this kind of material are not physical or technical for me—it's more about knowing the material

and remembering parts and arrangements. I've learned to navigate these kinds of songs efficiently by transcribing key sections and making charts. Take your time with the material, be creative, and infuse the songs with your personality and energy.

Willie Rose

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Thomas Lang endorses DW, Meinl, Vic Firth, Remo, Audix, Roland, and Ahead Armor gear.

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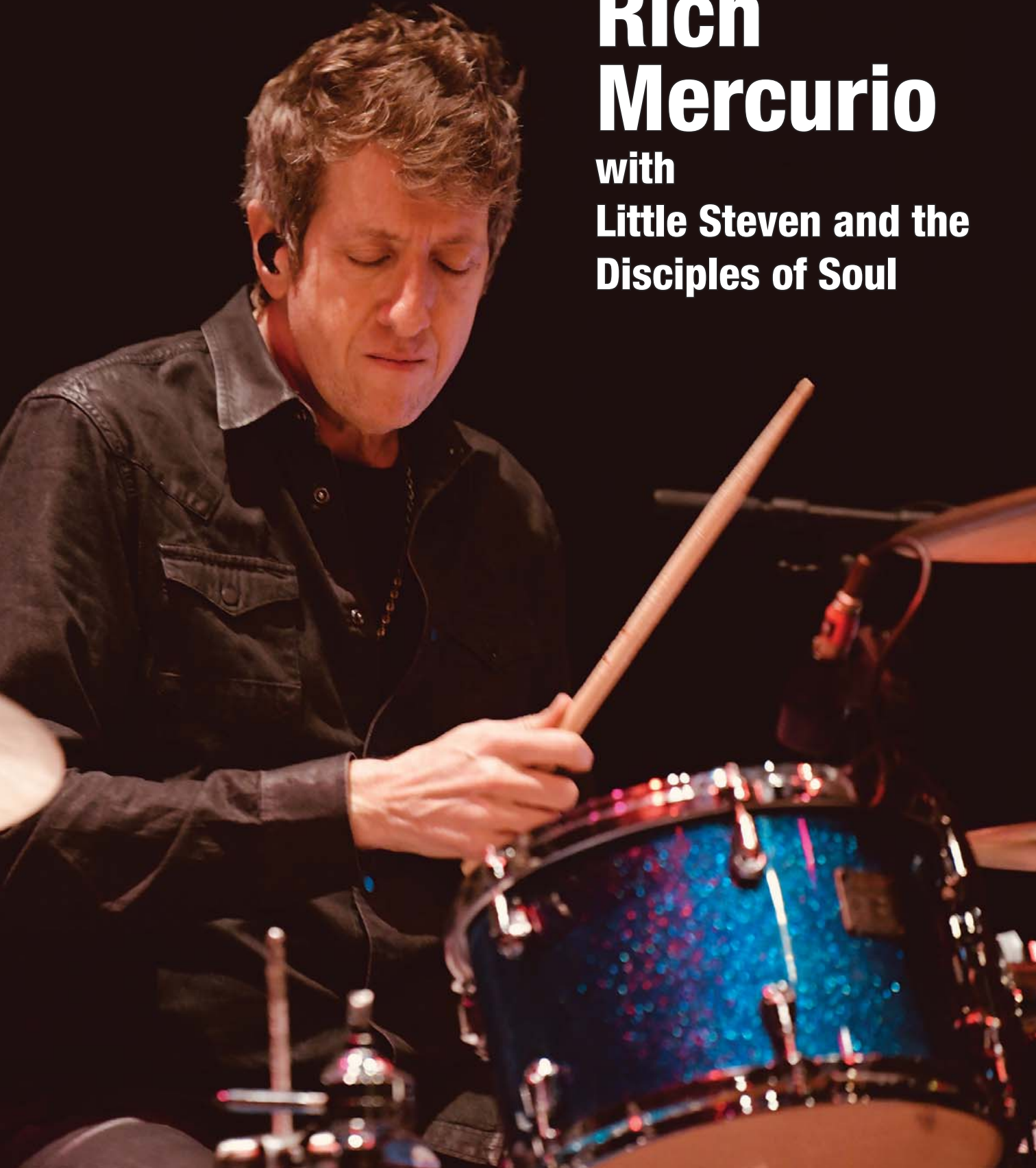
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ON TOUR

Rich Mercurio

with

Little Steven and the
Disciples of Soul



The seasoned New York-based sticksman hits the road with rock royalty.



Ryan Celli

This past May 3, the longtime Bruce Springsteen collaborator Steven Van Zandt released *Summer of Sorcery*, his first album of new material in more than twenty years. Now on a monster run that lasts through November, the singer/guitarist will be touring in support of the soul-infused rock 'n' roll effort. The Broadway and New York-session vet Rich Mercurio, who's been playing with Van Zandt for the past few years and recorded *Summer of Sorcery*, joins him live behind the skins.

Along with the Disciples gig, Mercurio holds the chair on the Broadway show *Waitress*, which was written by Sara Bareilles, and he performs regularly with the vocalist, actress, and songwriter Idina Menzel, among other session gigs and tribute bands. "Somehow I've managed to keep all of those things rolling," Mercurio says. "Once in a while things work, you know? [laughs] There have been a couple tricky moments, but I feel fortunate to be able to work on other projects while I'm here in town."

Mercurio stresses that to get the Van Zandt gig, he had to be out playing all the time. "I was gigging with a blues band here in New York with a sax player who's a friend," he says. "One night I got text from him at 1 A.M. 'Hey, man, are you available for a session tomorrow morning at 10:30?' I have a recording studio here in town, and I had my own session at my place the next day. I said, 'Jesus, I don't know if I can cover it. What is it?' He said it was a session for Steven Van Zandt. I said, 'Yep, I'll be there.' [laughs] It was for a Darlene Love record that Steven was producing, and I ended up doing maybe nine tracks on it over the next week."

Mercurio says that a year later, another friend, guitarist Marc Ribler, had become Van Zandt's music director. When the group needed a drummer, Ribler called. "It just kind of happened," Mercurio says. "But there are no tricks to the game. You just get out there and try to play good music with good people, and that's how things can happen."

On the road with Van Zandt, Mercurio tells *MD* that it's the most physically demanding gig he's ever had. "We play for two hours and forty minutes," he explains. "And when one song ends, we go right into the next one. There are maybe one or two spots in the set to rest. And when Steven comes onstage and he's in front of you, it's like you're now officially with a rock star. He has a command and a presence up there that's awe-inspiring. It brings out everything you have—and some stuff that you didn't even know you had."

To handle the gig, Mercurio maintains a twenty- to thirty-minute warm-up routine before each show. "I also go to the gym and keep in shape," he says. "Soundcheck with Steven could be a half hour, or it could be two and a half hours. You just never know if we're going to rehearse one song for a live album or learn a new song, so the soundcheck is full-blown, and you might as well be playing the gig. You're playing at that intensity level with him, because that's what that gig demands."

Mercurio shares similar drumming influences with Van Zandt, such as Gary Chester, Hal Blaine, and Buddy Saltzman. "I mean, you listen to the tracks with those guys, and what those drummers have done speaks for itself," he explains. "And Steven has an incredible ability to know where simple, classic grooves and fills belong. There's a great language between the two of us. Now we'll do a record and in rehearsal, he'll just turn around and move his hand a certain way, and there are no discussions. We can just start playing, and it sounds like us. Especially if you're a sideman by trade, having something like that is pretty rare."

Live, Mercurio learned a few lessons powering Van Zandt's fifteen-piece band. "It's a freight train, and you better be the guy who's driving," he says. "There's stuff going on all over the place. You have to stay the course and be strong, and be responsive when necessary. But you have to help keep this thing moving along so that everybody has something to hold onto. This slick little drum fill that you thought was cool all of a sudden isn't, because when you hear it recorded, it doesn't really set something up as well as you thought it did. Subtlety is sometimes overrated, and little things might not translate. In a fifteen-piece band, whatever you do, it better be strong. People better know it's there."

Willie Rose

Rich Mercurio plays Yamaha drums and Zildjian cymbals, and he uses Vic Firth sticks, Remo heads, and Ultimate Ears monitors.

Also on the Road

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The Sublime AXM series, introduced in 2013, is a production line kit designed in the U.S. and built in Taiwan. Shells are constructed of inner and outer plies of European ash and center plies of North American maple. Kits are available in three different four-piece configurations: the SMA406 model features

a 6x13 snare and a 16x20 bass drum, the SMA428 (our test kit) features a 6x14 snare and an 18x22 bass drum, and the SMA448 features a 6x14 snare and an 18x24 bass drum. All feature an 8x12 rack tom and a 14x16 floor tom.

Sublime AXM bass drums have 8-ply shells with double 45-degree bearing edges on the batter side and fully rounded edges on the resonant side. Tom shells are 6-ply with double 45-degree bearing edges and maple reinforcement rings. Snare shells are 10-ply with single 45-degree bearing edges on top and bottom.

The hardware is satin chrome finished and includes 2.3 mm hoops on the toms and 2.3 mm reverse flange hoops on the snare. The High Gloss White with Silver Sparkle lacquer

finish is stunning—I initially thought it was a wrap—and the satin hardware complements it perfectly.

This kit comes with several features that drummers have come to expect from modern builders, including hoop-saver bass drum claws, minimalistic lugs to promote resonance, memory locks that interlock with the tom leg brackets, and durable two-position bass drum spurs for ease of setup and breakdown. The Sublime AXM also comes with Crush’s X-Suspension Mount system for the rack tom that attaches to four lugs (two top and two bottom) via rubber washers. It’s very easy to install and remove if you choose not to suspend the tom. The mount is also lightweight and stays out of the way. These are all nice additions to a kit

that demonstrates thoughtful design and high-quality construction at a price that doesn't break the bank—the SMA428 shell pack retails for about \$1,200.

Sound

I'm very familiar with the sound of maple drums, and the addition of the ash in the AXM shells was a nice touch. Ash is often compared to birch, mainly because of its precision and focus. Combined with maple, which is warm and round, you theoretically get the best of what both woods have to offer. This theory definitely translated in practice. The drums did exhibit the attack and punch from the ash and a warm, full range of frequencies from the maple.

This is a rock kit, so my testing focused mainly on low to middle tunings. I started with the rods just past finger-tight and worked up to about a half turn more than that. Throughout this range, the drums remained responsive, punchy, and full. Immediately evident was the aggressive kick drum, which delivered full low end without too many overtones. The only muffling used was a rolled tea towel placed between the pedal and the batter head. Without muffling, the toms had few overtones as well. They were focused and cutting.

I tested the snare across a wider tuning range than the rest of the kit. The reverse flange hoops kept the tone focused, even at low tunings. Regardless of tuning, the AXM snare was responsive and felt great to play. The volume ceiling on this drum was a bit higher than what's typical with wood ply-shell drums, likely because of the addition of the higher frequencies of the ash. Rimshots sounded especially satisfying and open.

M4 Series Hardware

The Crush M4 series hardware set we received consisted of a boom cymbal stand,

a snare stand, a hi-hat stand, and a single bass drum pedal. These are all medium-duty pieces that are competitively priced but designed to last.

The boom stand is triple-tiered to maximize adjustability and features sturdy memory locks. It also has a toothless cymbal tilter with a big plastic lever that's easy to grasp when making adjustments. Since it's toothless, it moves freely, but once tightened down, it never loosened during our review period.

The snare stand features the same high-quality design as the boom stand, including memory locks and a toothless tilter for the snare basket. It was on par with any other medium-duty stand, but the toothless tilter put it over the top. For anyone who wants a snare stand with infinite adjustability, this is the way to go.

The bass drum pedal is surprisingly rugged for a medium-duty pedal. It's double-chained and has brass bearings, which aren't always seen on pedals at this price point. The pedal was easily adjustable, smooth, and responsive. It's a great buy for anyone looking for something simple.

The hi-hat stand features a similarly robust design and smooth play, but it has one flaw. The footboard is attached to the base by three screws—one at the back and one on each side of the base—but can only be folded up if these screws are completely removed. This doesn't bode well for quick setups and breakdowns and offers ample opportunity to lose the screws.

Overall, though, the M4 series hard-

M1 Series



ware is a great option for medium-duty use. A five-piece hardware pack can be purchased for \$499.99.

M1 Series Double Pedal and Hi-Hat Stand

The M1 series is Crush's high-end hardware line. It's designed to compete with the best in the business and has some features that certainly measure up.

Let's start with the double pedal. It's constructed of cast and machined aluminum, so it's strong but lightweight. It can accommodate chain or direct-drive systems, and switching between the two was fast and easy. The cams are completely adjustable for any style of playing, and the pedal was equally responsive and smooth at all angles. And the footboard can be easily changed to a long-board configuration with the included pedal tool. I found that the M1 performed just as well as any high-end double pedal on the market, and it comes with a quality hard-shell case.

The M1 hi-hat stand is constructed with the same aluminum materials as the double pedal and comes with standard and short pull rods. Again, I found this stand comparable to other high-end stands on the market. It was smooth and played nicely with just enough resistance. The main difference between the M1 series and other stands is Crush's quick-folding locking system. The footboard is attached to the base via aluminum tracks that slide easily when folded up or down. It makes for quick and easy setups. Although it only has two legs, the M1 hi-hat didn't wobble and felt sturdy beneath the foot.

The M1 double pedal and hi-hat stand are priced competitively at \$399.99 and \$239.99, respectively.

Christopher Kozar

M4 Series



TRX

DRK-BRT and DRK-X Hi-Hats

Cross-matched options for a blend of grit and crispness.



TRX was founded in 2006 in an effort to provide traditional Turkish-made cymbals for modern applications. All of its professional-level models are made from high-quality B20 or B20-plus bronze, and the company has been careful to curate the series in its catalog so drummers can dial in their setups quickly and easily depending on their specific needs.

Three of the series—DRK, BRT, and X—exemplify the range of tones TRX offers: DRK provides dark and earthy sounds, BRT is bright and powerful, and the X line is characterized by a traditional, warm, and complex sound. The company recently began combining these three series in 13", 14", and 15" hi-hats that consist of either a BRT or X series top and a DRK bottom. We were sent all six pairs to review.

DRK-BRT

This highly contrasting pairing combines a heavy, polished BRT top with a heavy DRK bottom that's lathed on the bottom side and raw on top. Aside from the differences in hammering and finish, the BRT and DRK cymbals are identical in size and shape, sporting the same profile and cup. Due to their weight and design, I expected the DRK-BRT hi-hats to have a limited sound that would only work in loud, aggressive situations. What I found, however, was that they were surprisingly versatile and musical, with a ton of articulation as well as a full-range wash.

The 13" pair reminded me of a combination of the infamous crispy yet warm hi-hat sound used on many mid-'90s fusion records by legendary drummers Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl and the dry, sample-type tone of modern electronica master Jojo Mayer. The 13" DRK-BRT pair spoke very quickly and had a strong foot





chomp, as well as a throaty but controllable wash. They'd be a great choice for contemporary R&B, hip-hop, fusion, electronic, or any genre requiring fast, focused, cutting hi-hats.

The 14" DRK-BRT had a similar sound, response, and feel to the 13" pair, but they had a lower pitch, a broader wash, and more power. They worked best when played at higher volumes and in more aggressive styles. The 15" were surprisingly articulate and clean while producing a big, broad tone. Rather than recalling the wispy timbre of two washy crashes used as hi-hats, the 15" DRK-BRTs performed more like crisp 13s with a lower pitch and deeper roar.

DRK-X

Contrasting the DRK-BRT, the DRK-X hi-hats consist of a heavy, raw DRK bottom cymbal and a traditionally lathed, medium-weight, and slightly flatter X series top featuring additional wide and deep hammering. The X top introduces darker and more complex tones, and it has a slightly softer and more broken-in feel.

The 13" DRK-X hi-hats were even more Weckl/Vinnie-like, and they had a more nuanced wash and stick sound that would make them appropriate for more dynamic playing styles, like classic jazz and soul. The 14" DRK-X pair would be great for all-purpose recording and gigging. They were articulate without being bright, and the open sound was breathy without losing presence. The 15" DRK-X were the funkier of the bunch, inspiring me to play big chopping beats, à la Sly Stone's Greg Errico, as well as denser funk/rock grooves where the deeper texture of the hi-hats blended seamlessly with ghost notes on the snare. They were chunky enough to produce a strong, powerful sound while remaining expressive and musical at lower dynamics. Very cool.

Michael Dawson

Croaker Percussion

Wojik Brush Box, Studio and Gig Shakers

Small-batch, handcrafted instruments for acoustic applications.

Croaker Percussion was founded in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 2015 with an emphasis on handcrafting high-quality acoustic instruments for live and studio applications, starting with meticulously designed flamenco and Peruvian cajons (\$249–\$315) that exhibit crisp, snappy slaps and deep, clean bass tones. In 2017, the company developed the portable Wojik Brush Box (\$189) in collaboration with percussionist Mike Wojik, and this past year they introduced aluminum Gig (\$39) and titanium Studio (\$89) shakers.

Wojik Brush Box

The Brush Box is an 18x16x2.5 hexagonal instrument featuring a maple body and a playing surface comprising a makore veneer over birch plywood. The playing surface has a gritty finish that produces

strong, smooth sweeps when swiped with brushes. A subtle snare sound is produced by four strands of guitar strings that are looped in a strategic manner beneath the faceplate so as to maximize crispness while minimizing sympathetic buzz.

The Brush Box also comes with a guitar strap and Schaller-style quick-release connectors, so that you can play the instrument while standing upright or secure the box in your lap when playing it without a snare stand. The front wall of the maple body features three 1.25" sound ports that help increase resonance, and the faceplate is secured to the body with two stainless-steel screws on each side.

The Brush Box sits easily within most snare stand baskets. The hexagonal sides align perfectly with the angle of the arms of the stand, so the Brush Box won't slip out of position once it's secured in place. If you opt to use the guitar strap, it's easily adjustable for an around-the-waist

placement for lap playing or for an over-the-shoulder setup for standing. I tested the Brush Box in a snare stand, so I could also play bass drum, hi-hat, and other percussion instruments like shakers and tambourines.

When struck or swiped with brushes, the Brush Box produced a rich, earthy tone with a hint of woodblock-like "knock," a convincing cajon-type "smack," and a subtle snare "snap." The only thing it lacked was the deep, rich sub-bass tone you get from palm strokes on a cajon, but I didn't need that sound when supplementing the Brush Box with an acoustic bass drum. For low-volume acoustic gigs or sessions that might typically call for Latin or other hand percussion, the Brush Box would be a great alternative. I loved that I could build funky, organic-sounding grooves without having to adjust my playing technique or tweak my body into an uncomfortable position like I do when playing cajon.



Brush Box in Ebony



Brush Box in Sycamore



Gig Shaker



Studio Shaker



Studio and Gig Shakers

Croaker currently offers two shakers. Both measure 2x7 and feature a thin 6.5" metal tube and .25" machine-cut cedar end caps. A thin cedar divider inside the tube creates two chambers, allowing the beads to emit consistently clean and crisp sounds from forward and back motions. The Gig shaker has a brighter and more open sound that provides more cut and projection for louder situations or denser mixes. The Studio shaker has a deeper and tighter tone, which allows it to sit more comfortably within the music. I wouldn't say one is better than the other, or that either should be used exclusively for live or studio applications; I can see carrying both to any gig or session where they might be needed. Between the two of them you have enough contrast to find an ideal timbre for the music without having to lug around an entire arsenal of options.

Michael Dawson

CAD

Stage7, D88, and D89 Microphones

A complete seven-piece mic pack and two high-quality upgrades at prices that are hard to beat.



CAD (Conneaut Audio Devices) was formed in 1988 as a division of commercial audio products manufacturer Astatic, which was founded by amateur radio operators Creed M. Chorpeneing and F. H. Woodworth in 1933 in an effort to develop a static-free microphone. The company restructured in 2000, and eventually all assets were combined under the CAD Audio brand.

The CAD catalog boasts a wide range of products, including affordable but high-quality drum microphones. We were sent the all-in-one Stage7 seven-piece mic pack (\$229), as well as the D88 super-cardioid dynamic bass drum mic (\$199) and the D89 super-cardioid dynamic snare mic (\$89).

Stage7 Mic Pack

The Stage7 pack includes everything you need to mike a five-piece drumset for everyday live or project studio use. It comes

with three D29 clip-on cardioid dynamic tom mics, a D19 clip-on super-cardioid dynamic snare mic, a D10 cardioid dynamic bass drum mic, and two small-diaphragm cardioid condensers with swivel mounts, for overheads. All of the mics are stored in a foam-lined case.

The D10 is a little smaller than typical bass drum mics; it's only 2.4" wide by 4.2" long. This allows for great positioning flexibility, especially when you're inserting the mic inside the bass drum via a small port. Its frequency response stops at 50 Hz, effectively removing the sub frequencies that can lead to feedback and rumble when miking a bass drum for live amplification. There's a significant low-end bump that centers at 100 Hz, a wide cut in the muddy midrange around 500 Hz, and upper-end peaks between 3 kHz and 10 kHz. We found that the D10 sounded best when positioned well within the bass drum to draw out as much attack while attenuating low-mid woof. Even when it was placed as far inside the drum as our mic stand would allow,

we still needed to clean up the sound a bit with some high-end EQ to accentuate the click of the beater, some low-end bump for meatiness, and some midrange cuts to remove boxiness. The D10 didn't work very well when positioned a few inches outside the drum, but when used inside the shell to produce a punchy PA-friendly sound, it got the job done.

The D19 super-cardioid snare mic has an integrated clip that's simply designed to lock the mic into place by squeezing the hoop with a vice-like clamp while also providing an efficient amount of control over the height, forward position, and angle of the mic. The tight polar pattern of this mic eliminated almost all bleed from other instruments, including the hi-hat. The best sound we found was with the mic placed as high as possible and aimed at the center of the drumhead. This setup captured a full, punchy sound with a nice balance of resonance, attack, and snare snap. The D19 has a frequency response that drops off at 90 Hz to again eliminate low-end



Stage7 Mic Pack



frequencies that can lead to a muddy live mix.

The D29 tom mic looks identical to the D19, but it has a slightly wider cardioid polar pattern. The only noticeable sonic difference we could detect from the D19 was that the D29 had a more natural yet still controlled decay. (The D19 had a very quick drop-off after the initial note.) The D29 captured a very punchy tom sound with thick, clean attack. Neither required additional EQ, but some extra clarity, snap, and depth could be dialed in with minor adjustments to the high, mid, and low frequencies.

The C9 is a very small (.75" x 4") cardioid condenser designed primarily for overhead miking. Its frequency range is 70 Hz to 13 kHz, with a fairly flat response in the lows and mids and a slight bump in the highs. The small size of this mic made it very easy to place above the drumkit in various stereo configurations while being inconspicuous and out of the way. I'm usually very critical of low-cost small condensers; they usually have a thin, brittle sound that makes the entire mix sound cheap. The C9, however, captured a crisp, clean drum and cymbal sound that was detailed but not overhyped. It didn't grab a lot of low end, so you'll likely want to use C9s as cymbal mics in conjunction with the other drum mics to achieve a full, natural reproduction of your drumkit. But I was impressed nonetheless.

D88 Bass Drum Mic

While the Stage7 mic pack could serve you well for basic everyday drum miking,

when it comes time to make an upgrade you'll want to start with the D88 bass drum mic. This large super-cardioid dynamic mic is custom tailored to capture a punchy, articulate, and deep bass drum sound. Its frequency response extends down to 20 Hz, which is as low as the human ear can perceive, and the high end goes all the way up to 17 kHz. It's also designed to withstand over 150 dB of sound pressure, so the diaphragm won't blow out when miking up a hard-hit bass drum.

We noticed a significantly fuller, deeper, and more "mix-ready" sound from our bass drum when using the D88 in place of the D10. One thing to consider, though, is that the mic jack is located on the side of the body, right next to the stand mount. This setup prevented me from extending the mic fully inside the drum because the mic stand had to be kept at a slight angle. But I honestly didn't feel the need to place the D88 any further within the shell. It had plenty of attack and focus when placed halfway inside the port.

D89 Snare Mic

The next logical place to upgrade the stock mics in the Stage7 pack is the snare. Although the D19 works well for capturing clean, punchy backbeats, it's a little limited in terms of nuance and depth. The D89 is CAD's answer to the industry-standard mic most engineers use on snares. It has a super-cardioid polar pattern, so it has superior rejection, and its frequency response extends from 50 Hz to 17 kHz.



When compared with the sound of the D19, the D89 captured a fuller and more natural tone with additional depth, resonance, and sizzle. You'll need a separate mic stand or clip to use the D89 on your kit, but it would be a worthwhile upgrade in order to achieve a bigger, fuller, and more nuanced snare sound. The fact that you could get all nine of these CAD mics for less than the price of a mid-level snare drum is mind-blowing.

Michael Dawson

Calderwood Percussion

3.75x12 Piccolo Snare

A funky little 7-ply maple drum wrapped in brocade fabric.



Calderwood Percussion is a small Boston-based manufacturer run by former Harmonix Music Systems composer and sound designer Bill Whitney. While at Harmonix (the creators of hit videogame series *Rock Band*), Whitney invented and built a variety of custom instruments, including pitched and non-pitched drums and percussion. Since founding Calderwood, Whitney has earned a reputation as one of the premier builders of historic and modernized rope-tension drums, most notably supplying field drums for the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*. Bill also makes high-quality instruments for classical percussion and drumset applications. The snare we have for review is a funky 3.75x12 7-ply maple piccolo that's wrapped in a pink brocade fabric.

The Specs

This drum is built from a 7-ply Keller maple shell and has precisely cut double-45-degree bearing edges. There are six mini tube lugs that are insulated from the shell with plastic gaskets, and the hoops are triple-flange steel. The throw-off is a

Gibraltar Deluxe Class Piccolo model, which has a small side-release arm and tension thumbscrews on both sides of the assembly. The throw-off and butt plate are each insulated from the shell with gaskets.

The twenty-strand PureSound Custom series wires connect to the throw-off with black grosgrain ribbon, rather than the blue wire that usually accompanies PureSound snares. The batter drumhead is an Evans 2-ply (5 and 7.5 mil) HD Dry, which has small vent holes drilled around the perimeter and a 2 mil overtone ring on the underside. The bottom drumhead is a medium-weight 300 series snare side. The hoops, lugs, vent, and throw-off are powder coated in purple sparkle. Whitney finished the drum with a pink/gold/red Asian-style brocade fabric and a custom badge that's created by layering a small oval of white marine pearl drum wrap over a slightly larger piece of black diamond pearl. Bill signs and dates each drum on the inside of the shell.

The Sound

The most obvious application for a drum this size would be for a super-tight, snappy, and bright "pop," like the sound Steve Jordan used with the John Mayer Trio famous hit 6/8 ballad "Gravity." To achieve that famous

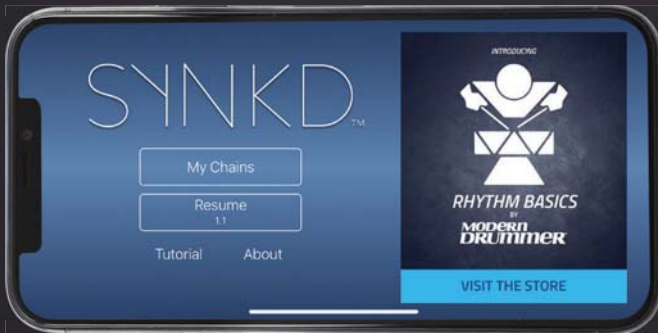
crack, I simply tightened the six topside lugs up to the point where the pitch of the head stopped increasing and then tightened the bottom head about as high as it would go. The 2-ply, premuffled HD Dry batter head maintained some beefiness and controlled the overtones to prevent the drum from sounding choked or brittle. Snare sensitivity was super crisp but not overly buzzy, and the attack had a thick, compressed smack.

I could dial back the tension on the batter head about a half turn on each lug before the timbre shifted from a clean, articulate "pop" to a fatter, wider tone with some slight pitch bend. This drum could also be tuned very low to achieve a punchy, quick LinnDrum-type sampled sound that had some chesty thump but didn't take up too much sonic space. For recording situations, or for gigs where you need to replicate sampled and programmed snare sounds live, it's a good idea to have something unusual like this Calderwood Percussion 12" piccolo at your disposal. And with a price tag of only \$275, it's pretty much a no-brainer. Visit calderwoodpercussion.com to order one today.

Michael Dawson



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GEARING UP ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Shania Twain's Elijah Wood

How many drummers get to open a sold-out stadium show in the spotlight, playing a gargantuan kick and snare beat to tens of thousands of fans? Well, that's exactly what Shania Twain's drummer, Elijah Wood, did on a nightly basis during Twain's *Now* tour. After Queen's "We Will Rock You" was pumped through the PA, to get the crowd stomping and clapping, the house lights would go out and a spotlight would illuminate Wood, positioned on a platform about six feet high and in the center of the audience. Elijah would join in by playing the famous Queen beat on a snare and modified bass drum set up like a giant floor tom.

Wood in fact performs on four stations during Twain's show, starting at the bass drum and snare, then moving to a Roland V-Drum set with an SPD-SX multipad, followed by stints on two identical drumsets. "The floor kit is my A kit and is the one I play for most of the show," says Wood. "It's on a wheeled platform with handles, and the stage crew moves it around. The craziest thing about this show is that I don't stay in one place for more than one song. I have a three-and-a-half-minute interlude where I go off stage, put on a full-body harness, and then walk up the stairs to the flying kit. Another tech hooks me to a safety line, and then I'm pretty much up there for the rest of the show. That's my B kit, which we all call the flying kit."

Once the A kit was dialed in, Wood's drum tech, Colin "Gravy" Strahm, duplicated the setup, but with a few added safety precautions. Everything on the B kit had to be harnessed so that nothing—not even Wood's drumsticks—would fall while being elevated above the stage. "I normally only see that kit for about ten minutes during soundcheck," says Elijah. "I don't get to play with it too much, so I have to have a lot of trust in my tech."

Interview by John Martinez

Photos by Alex Solca

Drums: Gretsch USA Custom in White Glass Nitron finish

- A. 6x14 snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 9x13 tom
- D. 16x16 floor tom
- E. 16x18 floor tom
- F. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: TRX (with CymPad washers)

- 1. 14" hi-hats (BRT top and DRK bottom)
- 2. 16" BRT crash
- 3. 10" ALT splash
- 4. 18" MDM/BRT Blend crash
- 5. 22" BRT ride
- 6. 19" LTD China
- 7. 18" BRT crash

Heads: Remo Controlled Sound Coated snare batter, Emperor Clear tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants, and a Powerstroke P4 Clear bass drum batter

Sticks: Ahead ZB with stick tape and an Ahead stick bag

Electronics: JH Audio JH16v2 Pro in-ear monitors in carbon fiber black

Hardware: Gibraltar, including a rack system with boom arms and attachments, legless hi-hat, snare stand, G-Class double pedal, throne, and percussion tray; DW 9000 double pedal; Lasko Pro fan







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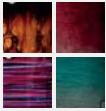


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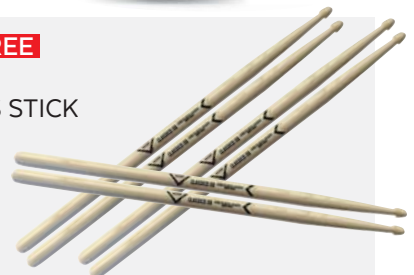


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Iron Maiden's Nicko McBrain

He's an '80s metal icon whose inimitable groove has roots in the '60s and '70s—and he's *still* going strong well into the 2010s. If ever there was a drummer for the ages, it's him.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by John McMurtrie

Nicko McBrain is humble about the fact that it took a while to get on the cover of *Modern Drummer*. "It's just one of those things," says McBrain. "There are so many great drummers out there. You can't all get on there. You wait your turn and now it's mine. Better late than never."

But McBrain didn't have to wait his turn to be at the forefront of a drumming revolution in the 1980s. They say you can't separate the person from the playing, and Nicko McBrain just happens to be quite the character.

McBrain laughs a lot. Equipped with a wonderful sense of humor, he puts the same energy into his stories as he does blasting away with his legendary heavy metal group, Iron Maiden. A conversation with the drummer, who turns sixty-seven this year, goes from self-deprecating analysis of his style to heartfelt anecdotes about his bandmates and his years in the trenches of the heavy metal business. "Passion" is a recurring theme and frequently used term when McBrain speaks.

But McBrain speaks *most* passionately when behind that kit. And he's been behind that kit with Iron Maiden since their fourth album, 1983's *Piece of Mind*, after replacing original drummer Clive Burr. Following a brief time in the mid-1970s session world and stints with Streetwalkers, Pat Travers, and Trust, McBrain took over the Iron Maiden throne as they led the charge of the new wave of British heavy metal. The band's star rose by the mid '80s, and they remain international rock superstars to this day, selling out arenas and stadiums around the world.

Today's Iron Maiden—which, besides Nicko, features singer Bruce Dickinson, guitarists Adrian Smith, Dave Murray, and Janick Gers, and bassist Steve Harris—is a little greyer than before, but packs no less a punch with its commanding and epic sound. McBrain, who now resides in Florida and lines up golf clubs more frequently than beer cans these days, is still a marvel with Iron Maiden, constantly filling the music with fire and color, but always staying true to the strident and aggressive style the band helped invent.

But McBrain remains, as mentioned, humble. He speaks lovingly of his friends, fellow musicians, wife, and band management. He's sincerely glad to have the job. And he gets a chance to express himself with artwork on his drum shells with a cross reflecting his faith or his obsession with Jaguar cars. He's involved with a restaurant in Florida and has recently partnered up with an old friend to open a drum shop in Manchester, U.K., Nicko McBrain's Drum One.

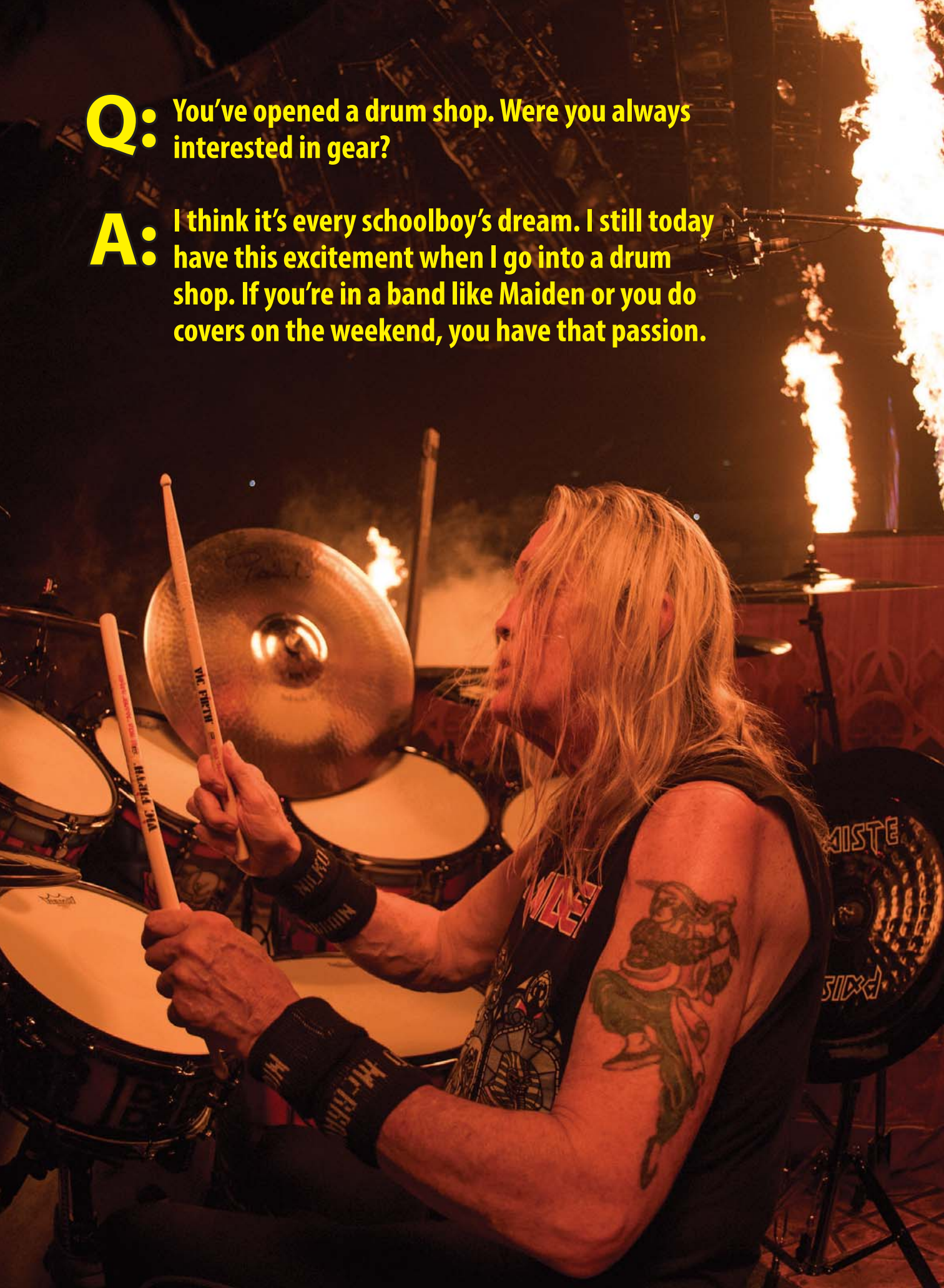
Nicko's day gig still takes up most of his time, though, and Iron Maiden is as busy as ever, traversing the world regularly. The band's current tour is even linked to a mobile game, *Iron Maiden: Legacy of the Beast*, a role-playing adventure inspired by the band's lyrics and album art. The stage is massive, the sets elaborate, Nicko's kit the centerpiece of it all (when it's not covered by camouflage, of course). And he's playing with *such* vigor on all the old stuff while bringing that McBrain attack to newer material. The huge smile on his face is genuinely infectious. No one looks like he's having greater fun playing music or living life than Nicko McBrain.

Writing new songs is important even to many bands who've been around for decades, and thankfully for hardcore fans, Maiden has stayed active recording new music, recently with 2015's album *The Book of Souls*. On it, McBrain brings the speed and power on classic Maiden fare like the urgent "Death or Glory" and the charging, uptempo "When the River Runs Deep." Neither drummer nor band is setting out to re-invent the wheel with new Iron Maiden music. Though McBrain is an influence on countless of today's technically gifted metal players, he himself knows that his band's music and his own playing is of a time, and if it ain't broke.... And while many of his peers and drumming descendants stay concerned with mere chops or robotic precision, McBrain remains a truly soulful drummer in a genre not known for subtlety. He's the perfect guy for Iron Maiden, a serious musician not always taking himself too seriously.



Q: You've opened a drum shop. Were you always interested in gear?

A: I think it's every schoolboy's dream. I still today have this excitement when I go into a drum shop. If you're in a band like Maiden or you do covers on the weekend, you have that passion.



MD: Let's talk about longevity in a band of this stature and influence. How has your role changed interpersonally and within the creative process?

Nicko: The writing process hasn't really changed since I joined the band. Prolifically, Steve [Harris, bass] was the main songwriter in the band in the early days. But people would bring in ideas or tunes, and if it was good enough, it would make the record. There was no favoritism. Nowadays we have home studios, so the guys are bringing full-cut demos in. They've put a drum track on it and fiddled around with a little bass line. But once we've decided to work on a tune, we sit acoustically in the studio; I'll sit and tap my legs and get an idea of what the

rhythms are and what kind of grooves we're looking at.

In the old days I'd write them down—intro, verse, chorus, bridge, solos, how many of each. Nowadays we've got iPhones, and we can press a little button. [laughs] Then I'll sit with Steve, and if he's brought the song and he's got his bass lines and arrangement worked out, he'll tell me if he fancies a classic Maiden gallop, or the triplet feel which we're known for.

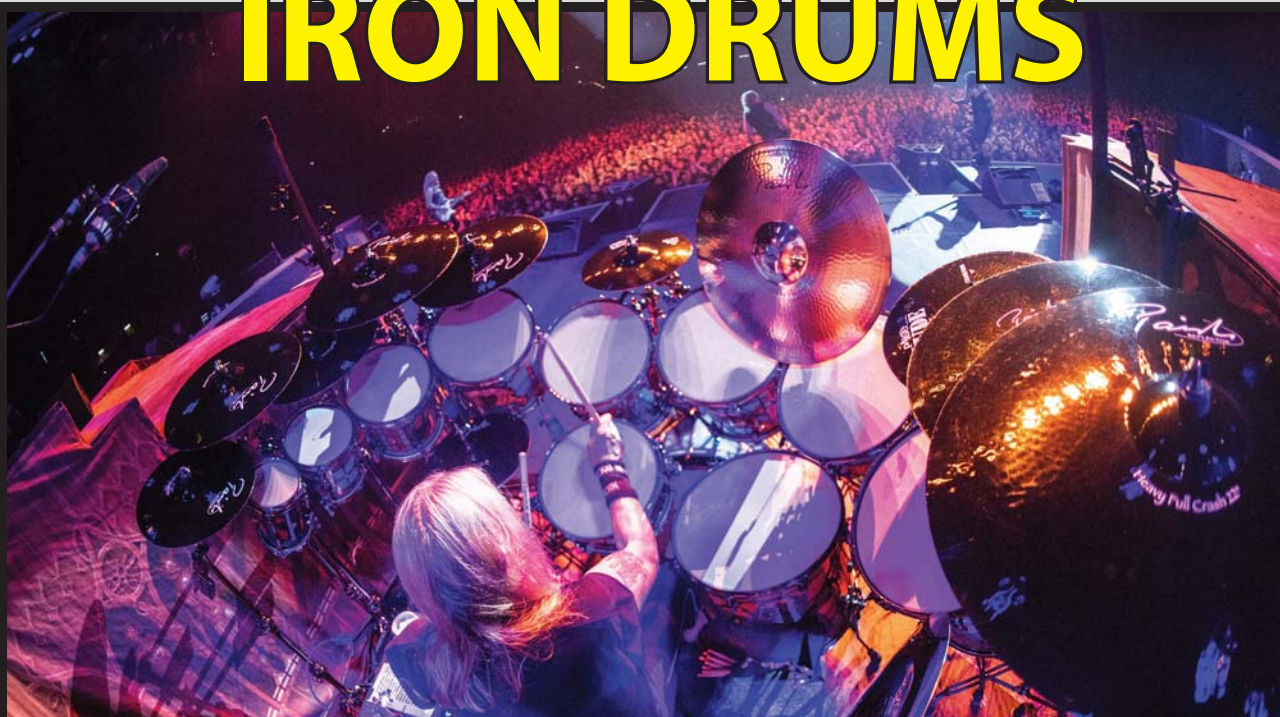
There are certain key feels that we have. "The Trooper" has that fast, gallopy Maiden swing. So Steve and I will work out what I will play with [his bass]. We're the foundation of the band. From 1982's *The Number of the Beast* until 2015's *The Book of*

Souls, Steve used a tape machine for every writing session and album. But the poor old thing died on us. So now we individually put it on our phones with these apps, and we take them home. You have to live with it for a while; otherwise you're floundering to find the right grooves, tempo changes, and what kind of fills you're going to do in each segue.

MD: When you started with the band, you had to come up with your parts right away?

Nicko: In the old days, I had to do it fly-by-wire. I'd get the idea in my head and then change it. It would annoy Steve quite a lot. [laughs] But now we will write four or five tracks and record them when they're fresh. You can get to a period when you're doing a record where there's too much

IRON DRUMS



Nicko McBrain's Legacy of the Beast Kit

Drums: Sonor SQ2 medium-shell 9-ply

- beechwood drums
- 14x6.5 Nicko signature sycamore snare (soon available commercially)
- 6x8 tom
- 8x8 tom
- 10x10 tom
- 12x12 tom
- 13x13 tom
- 14x14 tom
- 15x15 tom
- 16x16 tom
- 18x16 floor tom
- 24x18 bass drum

Note: Shell dimensions are presented diameter x depth.

Cymbals: Paiste

- 15" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash (custom)
- 19" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash
- 16" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash
- 20" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash
- 18" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash
- 14" Signature Heavy hi-hat (custom Reflector finish)
- 13" Formula 602 Heavy Bell (discontinued to general public)
- 22" Signature Reflector Bell "Powerslave" ride
- 17" RUDE crash/ride
- 20" Signature Fast Medium crash
- 22" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash
- 22" Signature Reflector Heavy China (custom)
- 40" Symphonic Gong (custom painted stained glass finish by John Douglas)

All cymbals have a black Colorsound finish, with the exception of the ride and top hi-hat cymbal, which have a standard Reflector side on the top and black Colorsound finish on the bottom.

Sticks: Vic Firth SNM signature sticks

Heads: Remo

Hardware: Sonor stands, DW 9000 bass drum pedal

Accessories: Randall May internal bass drum microphone mount, Hardcase drum cases

information. The songs all run into each other. You don't want to learn too many new songs without recording the earlier stuff you've already arranged. But in terms of the creative process, there's a "greatest hits" vibe in the studio. You say, "That one works, but this one is a bit left field." And we don't play to a click, except for a couple of tracks on *The Book of Souls*. But we're very much a nine-to-five kind of band. Gone are the days when you have a studio booked for twenty-four hours, and, "Let's go make an album." Because it's different for us now.

MD: But even after all these albums and new technologically enhanced writing processes, *The Book of Souls* sounds like a band in a room.

MD: What's different this time around gear-wise?

Nicko: Of course, the change from Premier to Sonor, which happened around 2013. I played Premier for twenty-two years, but before that I played Sonor for nineteen years, starting when I was sixteen years old. When you get your first kit, you actually buy it. When you've had a nice affair with it, and you've loved it, and polished it. I was so proud of my first kit. But I first joined Sonor when I got the big drumset in 1976 with Pat Travers. And I used Sonor all the way through 1993.

[The first time around with Sonor] I was using beechwood shells. Then when I switched to Premier, I used maple shells. There's a big difference. My Sonors had such a magic sound to them. So now, going back to Sonor, I wanted to go back to beechwood. For the *Book of Souls* tour in 2016, we had a Mayan theme, and the Mayans loved their gold, so I asked Sonor to build me a gold chrome drumset. And when they delivered the set, it was actually 24-karat gold plated, which just blew me away. It was stunning. And we tried on a recent tour with internal drum miking, but it sounded like cardboard boxes to me, so we went back to miking on top.

MD: And it's not like you're flip-flopping and chasing the money at every chance. Those are long tenures with these companies.

Nicko: I have a reputation for loyalty. Like Paiste. And I use the gear because I love it. I use it because I bought it in the first place. [Sometimes] when people get a name for themselves, they get these deals, but they don't really have the passion to use that brand for the rest of their lives, and that's wrong. It's not about getting free gear. But nothing was given to me at first.

MD: And the artwork on the kits?

Nicko: Going back to tours from 2003 on, I've had different artwork, pertinent to the tour. The drumset is my tapestry, the center focal point of the whole thing. You see the drumset, and then you see the rest. Very rarely when the stage is revealed, you're looking at the lights. Mostly you're looking at the handsome drummer. [laughs] It has to look special. So the new Legacy tour kit has drum art that relates to all the different Eddies in the game, and tipping my hat to my faith and my favorite car, the Jaguar. And the hardware is smoked chrome.

There are three themes on the stage: a war theme, a cathedral theme, and, like, a hell theme in the cathedral, where stuff like "The Number of the Beast" is played. So ideally, it would have been great to have three sets of drums, but I thought, *How can I make a drumset sit in with each theme?* So the cathedral is camouflaged, and the front of the drumset is covered with camouflage netting. So you can't even see me. Because the kit art is so bright and colorful, it suited the next two themes.

MD: You're still only using a single pedal, right?

Nicko: I like a lot of double bass drum players. These guy out there today have taken it to another level. When I started out, we only had a couple of those guys. Ginger Baker had a couple of bass drums, Cozy Powell, the great Louie Bellson. But then you look to Buddy Rich, the phenom. There's never been anyone who ever graced us with that style of drumming any

Nicko: A track like "Speed of Light" was done in one take. But if you listen closely to the intro and drum fill, it's not quite right. I do a double snare hit and a bass drum behind it, and it's not quite where it should be, but it still had this magic to it. It was live, and we were so excited when Adrian came up with the riff, we just had to get going on it.

But we're blessed to be able to write an album in the studio where we will record it. And the way the band has progressed over the years, we've all got an amazing love and respect for each other. I love the guys. Is it strange to love five other blokes? The sex is the music. [laughs] But we've matured. It's like a fine wine, as long as it's not corked.

And we've had our corked moments where there have been arguments, believe me, where pressure in the studio gets to each of us. And I want to get it right. I don't want to let people down. But over the years, we've all mellowed out. You have to be able to apologize to each other, even if you're not wrong. And believe me, the drummer's always right!

MD: So when you get some magic today, you're leaving it in.

Nicko: Music used to be analog. Now with Pro Tools, it's all become numbers. A lot of the passion and the groove and the feel of music are lost when it's gone too clinical. And that works for certain styles of music.

MD: Your live set list leans heavily toward

better than that. He was one of a kind. He was a blueprint for so many drummers. I don't play that style, but I still look at these guys, and I respect what they do. And Buddy was amazing, a single bass drum fellow. And he had quite a fast right foot. And he was using [equipment] that was archaic by today's standards.

It's what you've got and how you use it. I just grew up with one bass drum pedal. When I started to play with Pat, my first Sonor kit was a twelve-piece, and I just didn't use the second bass drum. It's just the way I taught myself. I've always just felt comfortable with one. But I did use a double pedal on "Face in the Sand" (from 2003's *Dance of Death*). Adrian had this [double] bass drum part and said, "You can do it." I asked him why he thought that, and he said, "Nicko, you're a man of many talents." [laughs]

MD: And you're still playing barefoot?

Nicko: On and off. I played barefoot way back in Streetwalkers, my first real touring band, after doing all these sessions. And with Pat, I used to use a Speed King pedal, even into the early '80s with Maiden. The problem with playing barefoot with that pedal is the footplate has Ludwig and Speed King written on it, so various parts of the pedal have been cut out to make it lighter. So it was like playing on sandpaper. I started to wear boxing boots with a very thick sole, because I loved to feel the pedal. It's the same kind of thing as feeling the stick in your hand. And then the DW 5000 pedal came out, nice and smooth, so I changed to those and went back to playing barefoot, and have been pretty much doing that ever since. It's a question of balance. I don't like to feel anything between my foot and the pedal, including the hi-hat pedal. Now I use the DW 9000.

MD: And no in-ear monitors or anything modern like that, right?

Nicko: I tried them, but I'm sitting in a cave of drums, and I have all my cymbals, and I'm completely surrounded by an acoustic instrument. When I put something like my fingers in my ears, I can't hear it or feel it when I'm hitting the drums. That's the problem with in-ear monitors. You can hear okay, but you can't feel it. What some bright spark came up with was putting a big fat speaker under the ass with a thumper stool. But that didn't make sense to me. I don't want to feel it from my ass, I want to feel it from my body. And it negates the whole point of having an acoustic drumset. But I tried them and the band sounded great, but I ended up over-hitting the kit because I wanted to hear it. I couldn't emulate the acoustic sound with the monitors in my ears. So I went back to normal monitors. I tried a monitor on the left and another on the right, splitting them. But you're mostly looking left over your hi-hat if you're a right-handed drummer, so I couldn't hear the one to my right. And the monitor is quite loud, because I need to hear the band since I'm behind the equipment. But I've suffered because I'm deaf as a post. [laughs]

MD: Why have you been covering yourself up with your setup all these years?

Nicko: I didn't have much choice. The band said, "We like that big kit—no one can see you." [laughs]

Nicko McBrain

the '80s material. Is it still a joy to play that stuff?

Nicko: Absolutely. On the 2018–19 *Legacy of the Beast* tour, we've introduced "Flight of Icarus," which we haven't played since 1986. We dusted the cobwebs off it and agreed to play it a little bit quicker than the recorded version, but still not as fast as we played it in the 1980s. [laughs] And that was a joy. And the *Legacy* tour gave us an opportunity to go out on a tour loosely based on the game, because there are loads of different Eddies and all these different songs from Maiden on the game's soundtrack. But on every tour,

we play "Hallowed Be Thy Name," and you're always going to get "Iron Maiden." Only the Lord knows how many times I've played that song. But it's always a joy.

But nowadays I do what I should have done in the '80s and '90s, which is mellow out the tempos. And doing stuff from my first album [with Maiden], like "Where Eagles Dare." That was the first track on *Piece of Mind*, so [back then] we'd go out and open with it. Steve wanted to introduce me as the new guy. But it's a triplet on the single bass drum, and when I was a lot younger, I could play it faster. Now I have a tempo

clock metronome on every one of my songs as a reference at the beginning. I start them slightly slower than what we end up playing them at. For instance, in "The Trooper," if I go au natural there and I've got the adrenaline going, I'll play that too fast. If it starts too quick, when you get to the solo section, it's miles too fast by then. Nine times out of ten, I'll feel like I'm dragging the band, because it's the performance that gets you, as long as it's not too crazy. I've done that for the last four or five tours.

MD: Aside from the synthesizers that crept into your music in the late '80s, even your most recent albums sound like tried-and-true Maiden, regardless of how heavy "heavy metal" has gotten. How do you guys stick to your guns?

Nicko: The chemistry of the six guys. Maiden is Maiden. Steve is prolific and his lyrics are amazing, but everyone is a stunning songwriter. Adrian writes some of the really melodic stuff like "Stranger in a Strange Land." But Bruce will come in with an eighteen-minute opus. We did experiment with some songs back in the late '80s and early '90s, but it just didn't suit us. There was a more progressive side to Maiden, which has actually come out on *The Book of Souls* and [1986's] *A Matter of Life and Death*. But our writing stays within a certain parameter.

MD: So you've opened a drum shop, Drum One. Were you always interested in gear?

Nicko: I think it's every schoolboy's dream. I still today have this excitement when I go into a drum shop. Guitar Center and Sam Ash have drums. Or you get something like Resurrection Drums down here in Florida. When I see a display in a window, it doesn't matter what brand it is, I get excited. If you're in a band like Maiden or you do covers on the weekend, you have that passion. A friend of mine, Craig Buckley, who was the GM at Premier, was taking over the Manchester Drum Shop. He phoned me up and said he had this opportunity to buy it and wanted me to go into business with him. We worked out a deal to call it Nicko McBrain's Drum One. We would have a big presence of Sonor and Paiste. But we've got all brands. So I had this feeling of being an entrepreneur instead of just playing the drums. I'll be the bloke selling them. So I realized the dream I always had but didn't know it. We've been open over a year, and it's doing well. It's a very hard and fickle industry. There's a lot of undercutting and sales online. But we had a night with Ian Paice and another with Steve Smith. Those were special.

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NICKO'S TREASURES



Since joining Iron Maiden, **Nicko McBrain** has become one of the most admired and influential drummers in modern times. Tours of the British top metal band are breaking all records, including the 2016-17 **The Book of Souls** world tour, which featured a unique cymbal set crafted for Nicko by Paiste.

Inspired by the Mayan theme of the tour stage set, Paiste and Nicko collaborated to create special silk screens for the cymbals. Elements of the artwork include the sun god Tonatiuh, and the date January 9, 1983 written in Mayan calendar glyphs, the day of Nicko's very first session with Iron Maiden. Paiste logos are rendered in Iron Maiden script.

The cymbal set consists of:
Signature Reflector 14" Heavy Hi-Hat
Signature Reflector 15", 16", 18", 19", 20" & 22"
Heavy Full Crashes
Signature Reflector 22" Bell Ride
Signature Reflector 22" Heavy China
Signature 20" Fast Medium
RUDE 17" Crash/Ride
Formula 602 13" Heavy Bell



Special Laser Engraved
Serial Number



The set comes in a massive custom made wooden crate which features elements of the artwork branded into the wood and on a laser engraved bronze plaque. Added contents include signed CD and Vinyl versions of **The Book of Souls** album, signed **Nicko «Boomer» McBrain** signature drum sticks, and a signed **Certificate of Authenticity**.

Production is strictly limited to a total of **83 crated sets worldwide**. Interested customers should contact Paiste directly for personal assistance in setting up a purchase through an authorized Paiste retailer.

Please contact 4info@paiste.com.

MAIDEN SWITZERLAND

Nicko McBrain

MD: Some famous drummers have coffee or hot sauce, but Nicko opens a drum shop.

Nicko: [laughs] And of course I have my restaurant in Florida. It's not just my drums. What's my passion? Drumming and eating. [laughs]

MD: In 1985, during the *World Slavery* tour, you mentioned to *Modern Drummer* that one of the ways you took care of yourself was to eat twice a day. Now, over thirty years later, does that still hold true? What's new in your routine nowadays? How do you still play this stuff well?

Nicko: It doesn't get easier. But the enjoyment and passion are still there. Age catches up with us all. But yes, I'll eat a good breakfast in the morning and then one square meal on top of that. But the key to my longevity now is I don't drink and I don't take drugs...*anymore*. [laughs] I stopped drugs many years ago, and I haven't had a drink in four years. I'll go out on a golf course. I think walking is one of the best things you can do. But it's a team effort. The people behind the guys, the management is totally there. We wouldn't be doing what we're doing if we didn't have two guys [in management] who had the passion that we do as players. That's important, the support



group. And to have the love and the trust with the people who you work with. But I've been blessed to do this, now in my thirty-sixth year.

MD: You're going to get good soon, Nicko.
Nicko: [laughs] Hey, mate, I might get some of the songs right by the time the Lord calls me upstairs.




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Inside Crash:

David Frangioni has assembled a personal collection of some of the most iconic drumkits in history. But the drummer and entrepreneur is anything but uncharitable, opening his doors to private events and foundations like Make-a-Wish. And now he's released a coffee-table book brimming with photos and detailed descriptions of the drums in his museum, so that even those of us who never make it down to his Drum Experience Center in south Florida can get in on the fun.

David Frangioni's musical aspirations started when he began playing the drums at just two years old, around the time he lost his right eye to cancer. Despite the setback, the toddler continued banging away, eventually realizing his drumming dreams and making contributions to music well beyond the kit.

Frangioni was one of the pioneers of MIDI technology, parlaying that experience into a gig as Aerosmith's in-house engineer/technologist, a position he held between 1989 and 2000. (He continues to work with members of the band today.) Beyond Aerosmith, he's worked as a producer, engineer, and technologist for a who's who of superstar musicians, from the Rolling Stones, Ringo Starr, Elton John, Sting, and Journey to Bryan Adams, Phil Collins, Shakira, Rascal Flatts, Ozzy Osbourne, and Chick Corea. He's also the founder of one of the most successful audio-video firms in the United States, he gained notoriety as the official technologist for the hit MTV show *The Osbournes*, and he's been featured on CNN and NBC and in *Variety* and *Forbes*.

As he moved through his career in the tech world, Frangioni never strayed too far from the drums, keeping his chops up and slowly building a personal collection of outrageous drumsets that were owned and played by some of the most prestigious drummers in history. *Crash: The World's Greatest Drum Kits from Appice to Peart to Van Halen* illustrates the history and details of these one-of-a-kind instruments, containing multiple images of dozens of historic kits played by Ringo Starr, Lars Ulrich, Carl Palmer, Alex Van Halen, Neil Peart, Peter Criss, and many more. Full and inset shots by famed rock photographer Mark Weiss set the kits in high relief, and a

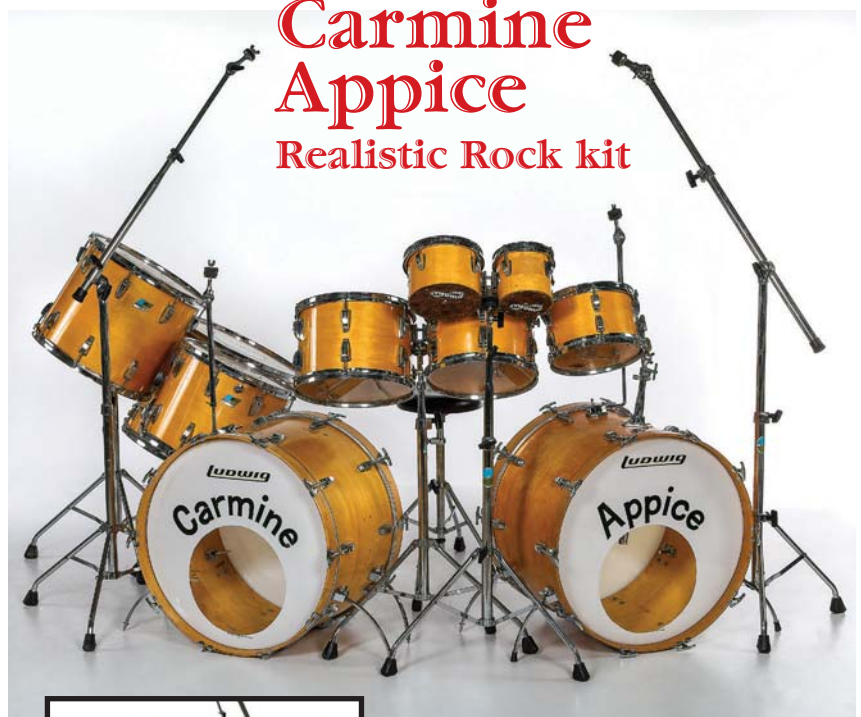
foreword by David's drum hero, Carl Palmer, along with an afterword by Kiss drummer Eric Singer, put the collection in context.

"*Crash* puts drummers and their equipment center-stage for enthusiasts, history buffs, and music fans to explore," says Frangioni. "This book champions each

drummer and what they brought to rock and jazz, plus the extraordinary details of memorable kits."

MD recently discussed the book with Frangioni, who graciously allowed us to share with you many of its images, including some outtakes.

Carmine Appice Realistic Rock kit



This is the drumkit that appears on the cover of Carmine Appice's hugely popular 1979 method book *Realistic Rock*. The 6" and 8" toms house the fairly new (at the time) Syndrum electronic pads inside their shells.

The World's Greatest Drum Kits

Story by Billy Amendola

Photos by Mark Weiss

MD: What was your approach to *Crash*?

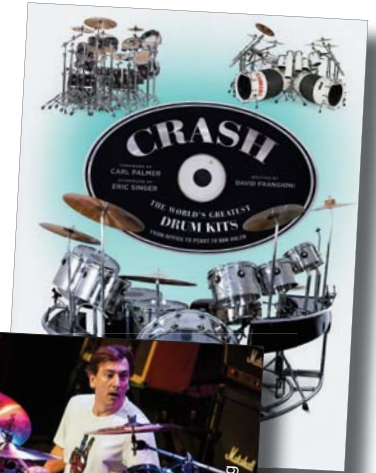
David: I wanted to do something different from the Clint Eastwood book I'd previously released [*Clint Eastwood Icon: The Essential Film Art Collection*]. As a drummer who really gets into looking inside shells to see serial numbers and what year a kit was made, I wanted it to be a bit geeky. But I wanted it to be fun to look at, too, and for the reader to feel like they were sitting behind the kits, as well as seeing them from the front, from the side, and from above. I hired famed rock photographer Mark Weiss to shoot from every angle. I wanted it to be visually

stunning.

MD: How did you get your hands on the kits in your collection?

David: I went after kits that I thought were among the most important of our time. I spent years researching, networking, and relentlessly searching. My goal was to preserve these kits and share them with the world. They're not easy to find, as so many amazing kits have either been dismantled or lost over the years.

MD: Tell us about the connection between the book and the Florida museum you exhibit them in.



David Frangioni

Alex Van Halen Ludwig 1980 World Invasion kit

Alex Van Halen collaborated with Ludwig to put together this one-of-a-kind maple-shell kit. Two pairs of bass drum shells were linked together with large accordion-style rubber tubing to create two massive drums with adjustable depths and angles. The kit also featured two Pearl Vari-Pitch adjustable toms above the floor toms.



David: The collection is on display at the Hit the DEC Drum Experience Center—all possible through Frangioni Foundation—which I'm proud to say is associated with the *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll Hall of Fame. It's quite an exciting haven for drum lovers. It's only open for private events and fundraisers for foundations such as Irie, Musicians on Call, and Make-a-Wish.

MD: Besides the amazing full kits, you have quite a snare drum collection.

David: My snare collection is a true passion of mine. Having one of Ringo's limited snares from Gary Astridge is a highlight, as is the Keith Moon snare drum, Carl Palmer's Paiste snare, and a rare Fibes snare played by Buddy Rich.

MD: Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain is this month's cover artist; can you tell us about the Nicko kit featured in the book?

David: It's a limited-edition replica that Premier made a while back. We also have three Nicko Premier snare drums, including a flying ace model, which is a fairly tough drum to find now. It would be awesome if we could find an actual stage-played kit, but I haven't come across one yet that's available.

To see Nicko's replica kit as well as many more sets featured in *Crash*, turn the page...



Hal Blaine

Ludwig & Blaemire '60s/'70s studio kit

Building from a foundation of the bass drum and floor tom from the blue sparkle Ludwig Super Classic set that Hal Blaine used on countless hit records, the drummer added seven spun-fiberglass, single-headed toms made by A.F. Blaemire and fitted with Ludwig hardware. The toms were then mounted on rolling stands for easy transport. This set is believed to be the inspiration for Ludwig's popular Octa-Plus kit.





Terry Bozzio **DW Collector's Series Maple U.K. 2012 kit**

Few players are more famously associated with outrageously massive drumkits than Frank Zappa/Missing Persons drummer Terry Bozzio. This Drum Workshop setup was assembled by Victor Salazar and features a custom chrome wrap, Slingerland-style hoops, four bass drums, two low-end enhancer woofers, and nine bass drum and hi-hat pedals.





Carl Palmer Stainless-Steel kit

This one-of-a-kind drumkit, which graces the cover of *Crash*, was designed by Mike Lowe and manufactured by the British Steel Company. The drums, which feature quarter-inch-thick shells that were fitted with Gretsch hoops and engraved with woodland scenes by jeweler Paul Ravn, were once owned by Ringo Starr, who later bought the set for his son, Zak. Carl used this kit with Emerson, Lake and Palmer between 1973 and 1979. Onstage, accompanied by Palmer's array of orchestral percussion—see the back cover of ELP's *Welcome Back, My Friends, to the Show That Never Ends* album for the full effect—it weighed two and a half tons.

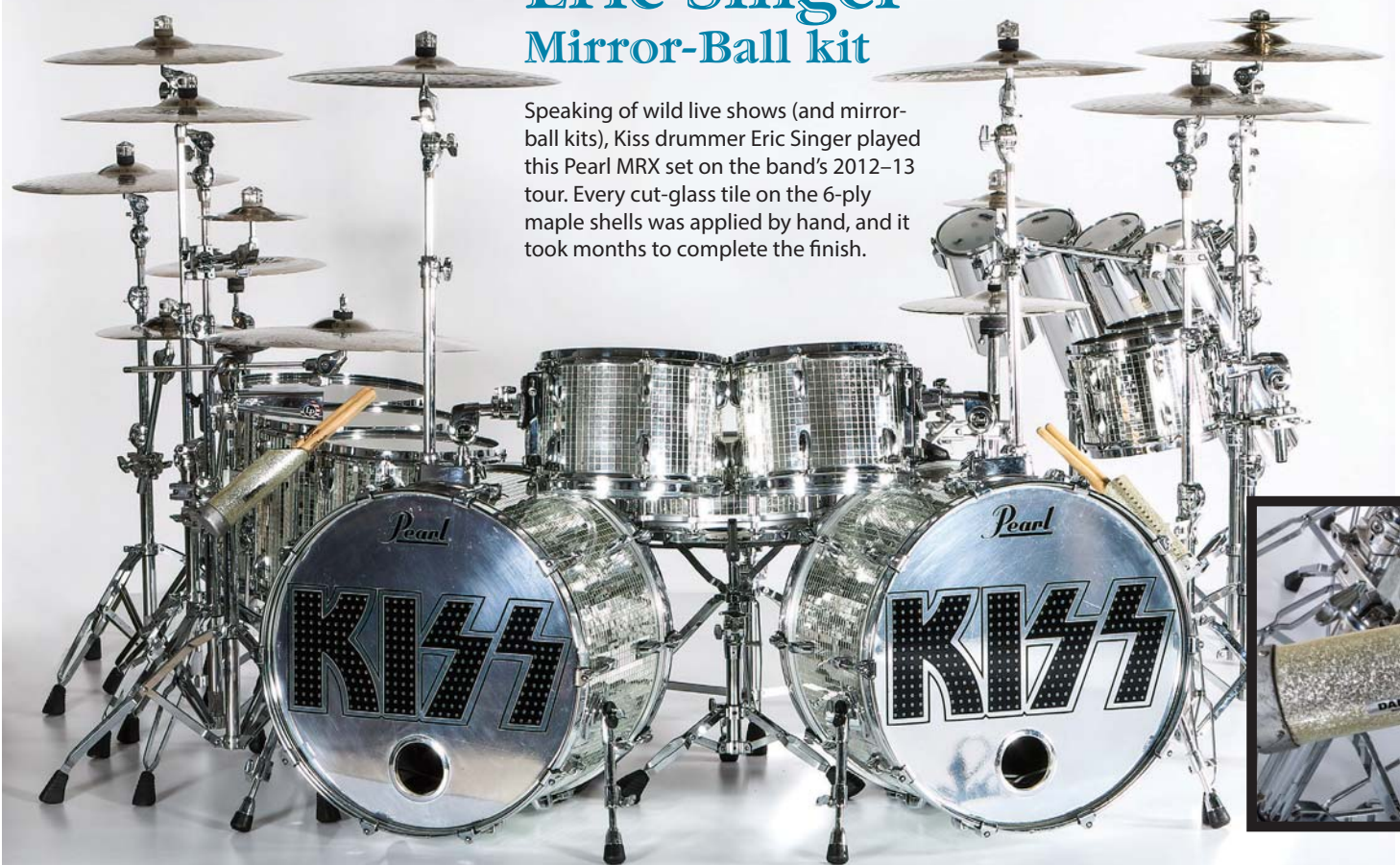
UK TOUR 2012





Eric Singer Mirror-Ball kit

Speaking of wild live shows (and mirror-ball kits), Kiss drummer Eric Singer played this Pearl MRX set on the band's 2012–13 tour. Every cut-glass tile on the 6-ply maple shells was applied by hand, and it took months to complete the finish.





Neal Smith

Premier Alice Cooper Billion Dollar Babies 1973 Tour kit

Alice Cooper's stage show is among the most notorious in all of rock history. Original drummer Neal Smith did his part with wild playing and, on the 1973 *Billion Dollar Babies* tour, this even wilder Premier mirror ball-finish kit, which featured concert toms and oversized rack toms.

Neil Peart

Drum Workshop R30 reissue kit

DW only made thirty of these drumsets, including Peart's original and twenty-nine replicas like this one, which sold out instantly. It's the exact setup Neil played with Rush on the band's R30 anniversary tour. The detailed piano-black lacquer finish includes embedded points of color and unique graphics. The drum hardware, pedals, and stands all feature 24-karat gold plating.



Todd Sucherman

Pearl Masterworks kit

This set was played by Todd Sucherman for more than ten years with Styx. It features a Bubinga-wood finish with 24-karat gold hardware.



Louie Bellson

Gold Rogers kit

This custom-made kit was borrowed and played by the big-band great's good friend Sammy Davis Jr.—until the IRS took it from him! All of the hardware, as well as the metal snare, are plated in gold.





Nicko McBrain

Premier 2010 custom Iron Maiden replica tour kit

The distinctive graphics on the bass drum and toms depict Iron Maiden's long-time mascot, Eddie. The maple snare drum features the band's name.



Tyshawn Sorey

Story by Michael Parillo
Photos by John Fell

He explores the inner and outer reaches of modern jazz and serious contemporary music, putting equal emphasis on composition and improvisation. Yet no matter how far he travels, he remains anchored by a firm sense of tradition.

Tyshawn Sorey doesn't necessarily need you to hear him play drums. He loves to play drums, and he's a wiz at it—that much is clear as soon as you see him at the kit. But he picks his spots to sit down and play.

When it's time, you might catch him at a club gig with pianist Vijay Iyer, or in a live improvisation at John Zorn's New York City performance space, the Stone. Maybe you'll put on pianist Myra Melford's quietly subversive 2018 album *The Other Side of Air*, or you'll stumble on the video of a studio workout from WNYC's *New Sounds* with a new, currently unnamed electro-acoustic ensemble Sorey has formed—a session where the drummer is playing a *twenty-eight-inch* gong snare.

You see, Sorey has other things on his mind as well. On his own seven albums as a composer—the latest being last year's three-volume *Pillars*—you won't find a drumming showcase. Instead, what you'll encounter is likely to challenge your ear, and your mind. "His own

music has a very different sensibility than what he's known for as this volcanic drummer in people's bands," Iyer, a close longtime collaborator, explains. "His music might strike people as the exact opposite of that, because it has this serenity and this hypnotic expansiveness. But then to realize that it's all the same musical spirit, and to know that he contains these multitudes, it's really inspiring."

Indeed, *Pillars* takes the idea of hypnotic expansiveness to an extreme, its trio of seventy-five-minute pieces unfolding slowly and sometimes unsettlingly, but always unpredictably, as members of the eight-member ensemble check in and out, indistinguishably blending composition and improvisation, which is a hallmark of Sorey's writing and drumming alike. "I wanted us to deal with the notated material first, before we dealt with open improvisation," Sorey says. "The musicians got that music in their head, and they were able to see the kind of focus and endurance it takes."



"The pieces were already conceptualized in my mind," Sorey adds when asked about the editing phase that completed the album. "But the musicians didn't know it, and I didn't want them to know it, because I didn't want them to lock themselves to a particular thing."

That last idea—not locking yourself—is key here. As *MD* caught a couple of starkly different performances in New York this past January, just before sitting down with Sorey in the East Village, we got a tutorial in true creative diversity. First, in a dramatic staging on the grand staircase at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, we caught a rare production of *Perle Noire: Meditations for Joséphine*, based on the life of dancer, singer, and civil rights activist Joséphine Baker. Sorey wrote the lush, haunting music inspired by Baker's songs; at the Met he joined a five-piece strings-and-woodwinds ensemble on electric keyboard and a large percussion array that included a concert bass drum, and a kit of sorts. He played sparsely and patiently for the most part, letting things breathe in the actively reverberant hall, as soprano Julia Bullock portrayed Baker beside him.

Then, around a week later, at the Jazz Standard, we caught a whole other thing: Iyer's trio, with Linda Oh on bass. With drummer/educator Michael Carvin sitting in the audience ("When I knew he was there

I was like, *Uh-oh...I'd better be on top of my game*," Sorey says), Sorey was the volcanic drummer that Iyer mentions, whirling around his steampunk-looking A&F kit while remaining locked with Iyer and Oh in delivering deeply demanding music. He swung, he grooved, he exploded—but he also offered the drumming qualities you'll hear on his own albums, like moodiness and whisper dynamics. He can sound warm and soft or cool and sharp; his desire to avoid falling back on old tricks can make it appear as if he's playing a piece for the first time, in a good way.

Roughly two years ago, shortly before being named a 2017 MacArthur Fellow, Sorey relocated from the New York City area to New Haven, Connecticut, to take a position as assistant professor of music at Wesleyan University in Middletown. The drummer/trombonist/key-boardist, who is now also an assistant professor of African-American studies, replaced Anthony Braxton on the composition faculty, after studying under Braxton while earning his master's at the school in 2011. (Sorey received his doctorate at Columbia in 2017.) In becoming a teacher himself, Tyshawn has found a way to pass along to others the kind of mentoring knowledge and guidance that have pushed and inspired him on his own unique path to musical greatness.



MD: Over the last ten days I've seen you play two very different gigs here in New York, and just before that you did a conducted improvisation in St. Paul. Is there an adjustment process in switching projects like that?

Tyshawn: Not necessarily. It's like code switching, basically—no matter what so-called language you're speaking, no matter with whom you're talking, you should always be 100 percent in the moment and in whatever the conversation is.

MD: Has it been a good month?

Tyshawn: It's been a really great time, being able to make *all* this different music. It's rejuvenating. That rarely happens now, given where my career is, where I'm more of a composer than a performer per se. But I don't necessarily find those two things mutually exclusive.

It's been an exciting time to be able to play drums regularly. I'm starting to carve out more time to dedicate to practicing. I'm also raising a two-year-old daughter. Having a family is so inspirational, and there's so much to gain from that as a musician.

MD: Has settling in New Haven while teach-

ing at Wesleyan helped to ground you?

Tyshawn: It has. I mean, I've been in the New York area for over thirty years. I've had enough of life in this environment. [laughs] My move to New Haven, and my getting this job at Wesleyan University, was the

MD: *That/Not* is a heavy album. To have the courage to make such non-drummerly music...

Tyshawn: ...it's sort of an anti-drummer record!

MD: Getting ready to do these latest gigs in

"I'm not interested in mistakes. I'm more interested in opportunities to create something else based on those mistakes."

best thing that happened to me. I chose [to live in] New Haven because it was sort of where I musically came of age. When I recorded my first album there at Firehouse 12 Studios, *That/Not* [2007], it was a heavy moment in my career as a drummer and a composer. So I have very strong ties with New Haven.

New York, did you have to prepare for *Perle Noire*?

Tyshawn: No, I came cold. I don't have a lot of time to think about what's going to happen. And *Perle Noire* is a composition that doesn't really allow for that anyway. First of all, the music is hard. Second, any mistake can happen in any performance of

Sorey's Setups

"Setups can include additional drums, cymbals, and percussion: glockenspiel, vibraphone, concert bass drum, almglocken, cup chimes, tam-tams, and many other items," Sorey explains. "My mantra, as it relates to gear, is that I try to stay ready for *any* musical situation, so that I don't have to get ready!"



Drums: A&F Drum Co. Maple Club kit in antique red finish
A. 3x10 steel Rude Boy snare (used mostly as auxiliary snare)
B. 14x16 floor tom
C. 12x20 bass drum
Not pictured: 4x14 or 5x14 raw brass main snare, 8x12 tom

Cymbals:

Paiste
1. 16" (or 15") 2002 Big Beat hi-hats
2. 24" (or 22") 2002 Big Beat

Not pictured: 20" or 22" left-side crash, 16" or 18" right-side crash; Sorey also plays similar models from the Formula 602 and Formula 602 Modern Essentials series



Heads: Aquarian Texture Coated

Sticks: Vic Firth

Hardware: Roc-N-Soc Mac Saddle throne; Tama Classic bass drum pedal, hi-hat stand, snare stand, and cymbal stands

Drums: A&F Drum Co. Maple Club kit in black finish

A. 6.5x14 raw copper elite (or 6.5x14 solid core maple) snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 14x20 bass drum

Cymbals:

Paiste
1. 15" (or 14") Masters Thin hi-hats
2. 22" (or 20") Masters Thin ride
3. 24" (or 22") Masters Thin ride

Not pictured: 18" or 20" Masters Extra Thin right-side crash; Sorey also plays similar models from the Masters Dry, Masters Dark, and Formula 602 series

music. But I'm not interested in mistakes, as it were; I'm more interested in opportunities to create something else based on those mistakes. That's what that music means to me: it means *I dare you*. If a mistake happens, how can you get out of it?

So it's a sort of controlled chaotic environment. And to me that's really what defined

Joséphine Baker, as an extraordinary entertainer and an extraordinary figure in the civil rights movement. She embodies that daring aesthetic, where opportunities come about as a result of letdowns, or as a result of mistakes. Sometimes I only wish that we could just take the score away—see what it would be like to play that music with no stands.



MD: I'm not sure why I've been trying to figure out the right way to ask you this, but as you focus more on your own music... you *do* intend to continue playing lots of drums, right?

Tyshawn: Obviously! [laughs] Hell, yeah. I couldn't live without doing that.

MD: It's fascinating—you do gigs where you're really *playing*, yet your own compositions tend to stay away from that.

Tyshawn: Exactly. But I'm making situations now where I'm playing a lot more. My sextet is more toward the quote-unquote modern-jazz side of things, and I'm doing a lot more playing in that group than even in my trio. And there's a sort of electroacoustic group that I formed with Val Jeanty, Graham Haynes, Brandon Ross, and High Priest, where I also do a lot more playing. Even though it's abstract, it has a groove kind of thing to it. Since not a lot of people are calling me anymore to do gigs, I'll just make my own projects.

MD: Do you think you're getting fewer calls because you've made it clear that you want to concentrate on your own music?

Tyshawn: That's part of it, and also I'm expensive. I take no shame in saying that I demand a certain amount of money to perform. I'm not going to sit here doing a bunch of "door" gigs. I've come up doing that almost my entire career.

I think it's the most respectful way that I can be to myself: to not be this quote-unquote drummer for hire, who's kind of a "yes" guy and has no vision of my own. I've always had my own vision; now I'm able to really see it. I had to do the sideman thing for many years, to establish myself, and I don't regret a moment of that. But at the same time I'm like this: if people stop calling me, I'm just going to represent myself as best I can through my own music. And it's even more rewarding because it's my music.

But at the same time, if I do get a call for a gig, I'm down to do it. As long as it's a project that I really feel like I can invest my time in. I want to live a life where I can have that kind of freedom.

MD: You've worked incredibly hard, but you've been uncompromising about doing non-mainstream stuff. You've achieved a rare level of success in that sense.

Tyshawn: It wasn't always so easy for me. I've hit a lot of bumps in the road. And I may have burned some bridges. But we get better, and we live and learn.

Anybody can do it. You gotta be out of your mind if you want to be successful in this kind of thing. [laughs]

MD: You do everything the hard way.

Tyshawn: Exactly. That's the story of my life.

MD: It seems that in each performance situation you really make yourself vulnerable, open yourself up. It's not, "I'm gonna play my licks." Is there a risk in doing that?

Tyshawn: Not for me. If you're not vulnerable in the act of music making—I don't care if you're playing a written-out part—you're not *in* the music. Music is not just playing a written-out part or some kind of pattern; music is a shared experience. It's a special kind of bonding that you can't get any other way.

MD: And to remain a blank slate is not easy. Most people tend to fall back on the stuff they know.

Tyshawn: Yeah. I *hate* that. [laughs]

MD: In terms of putting your personal voice in your compositions, have you learned to achieve that, or did you have that from the beginning?

Tyshawn: It was natural for me to do that. When I wrote the music for *That/Not*, I wanted to challenge myself, but not in a technical way—just more conceptually. In terms of: I'm a drummer, but so what? What is my relationship to the instrument if I don't play it? Does that mean that my compositions are not informed by my drumming? Of course they're informed by my drumming, but they're going the completely opposite direction of what I would play back in those days—2005, 2006, 2007—a *lot* of drums, very dense, all *kinds* of meters, really crazy, wacky music. And I had a



Vijay Iyer on Tyshawn Sorey

"We both do a lot of different things, and somehow we've done just about every damn thing there is to do," pianist Vijay Iyer says of his work with Sorey. "What *haven't* we done?" Sorey agrees. In addition to playing together in duo, trio, and larger configurations—including the Vijay Iyer Sextet's 2017 album, *Far from Over*—the two co-direct the International Workshop in Jazz & Creative Music each summer at the Banff Centre in Canada.

MD: How did you first cross paths with Tyshawn?

Vijay: Our first recording together is my [2003] album *Blood Sutra*. By then he had been in my group for over a year. He was already beyond state of the art, doing stuff I'd never heard anyone do, or really imagined possible. [laughs] He's been a dear friend and collaborator ever since.

MD: Could you describe some of those things?

Vijay: He was able to internalize and retain complex formal details about a composition, basically in an instant. The first time I played with him, I handed him this page of music that had an intricate form that even I had trouble with, and he just sort of glanced at it and handed it back to me. [laughs] And he still remembers it to this day.

But then he would immediately start transforming it and making it better. The written part wasn't



a burden whatsoever; it would organize what he was doing, but he would basically be completely free. And he could hear everything that was happening around him. And by hear I mean decode, and *know*. Like if I played some chord, he would know exactly what notes were in the chord—it was that kind of ears.

I've come to realize over the years, working with people like Tyshawn and Marcus Gilmore, and getting to know Jeff "Tain" Watts and Jack DeJohnette and Ralph

Peterson, that really the drummers are the most complete musicians in the history of this music. They always have been. They're not just people who bang on things on the side. [laughs] It's almost like we're reinforced to think that drummers are basically sub-musicians, that they're the ones that support everyone else but don't really know what's happening.

But what I've learned is that they think like composers; they have a great deal of knowledge about form and harmony and melody and counterpoint and orchestration, and usually a huge range of knowledge about different kinds of music. Extreme sensitivity as listeners.

MD: What kinds of things does Tyshawn do in your Banff Centre workshops?

Vijay: He started doing conducted improvisations—or autoschediasms, as he calls them—and that

would become this galvanizing experience for all the participants, because they're all pushed in a new way. There's this generosity in the quality of his listening, where he brings something out of you that you didn't know you had. He has a sensibility that's very much part of the African-American music-making tradition: to hear the person in the music, and to express one's own personhood in your music. It's like this kind of radical empathy that emerges in the process.

As the years went on, it's like, *Wow, this guy's a sorcerer*, in the sense that everybody would basically be worshipping him by the end of these things. So now we're officially sharing the load as co-directors. And that works really well because we know each other so well, and we've learned so much from each other over the years, I dare say. I've certainly learned from him.

Tyshawn Sorey

lot of fun doing it. But what I noticed was that I didn't get to experience, for example, using negative space. Or what it means to play pianissimo for a *half hour*. That kind of thing.

It was natural for me to do something that was completely opposite to what I was doing before. Because I don't want to make the same records as my bandleaders. Even as a composer—that's why you see that in my discography every record is completely different, in terms of how I play on it, even the compositions themselves.

MD: Let's talk about what studying various musical disciplines can bring to your technique.

Tyshawn: Well, that can be a long story. When I started studying it was under Kenny Washington, in NJPAC's Jazz for Teens program, in 1997, 1998. That was a great experience, because it taught me about the fundamentals of proper technique. I needed some major help with my touch, even though I kind of knew how to play.

One time, when I played something that was heavy handed and very loud, Kenny played the same thing that I played, but with just *no* effort whatsoever. It was amaz-

Influences

"This is a very partial list of albums featuring live drums that have inspired me over the years," Sorey says, "a snapshot of my interests as a drummer, composer, and artist."

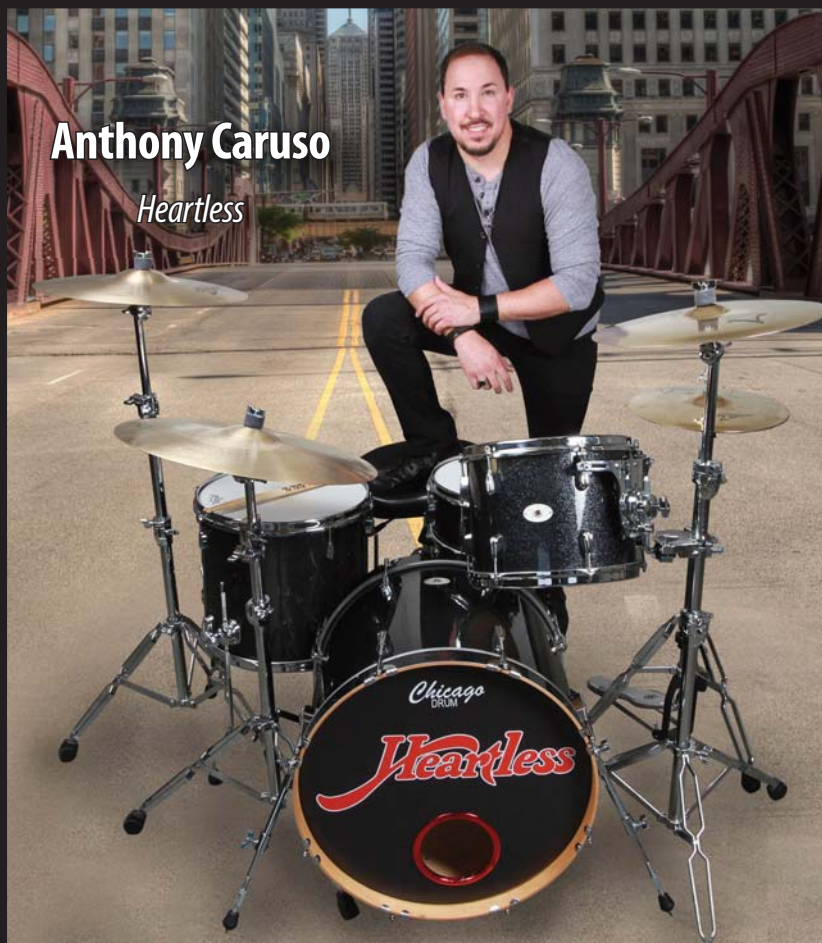
Frank Zappa The Man from Utopia (Vinnie Colaiuta, Chad Wackerman) /// **Dan Weiss** Stare-baby (Dan Weiss) /// **Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers** Buhaina's Delight (Art Blakey) /// **Kate Gentile** Mannequins (Kate Gentile) /// **Jan Garbarek** Sart (Jon Christensen) /// **Miles Davis** Miles at the Fillmore: The Bootleg Series Vol. 3 (Jack DeJohnette) /// **D'Angelo** Black Messiah (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Chris Dave, James Gadson) /// **Gorguts** Obscura (Patrick Robert) /// **Can** Tago Mago (Jaki Liebezzeit) /// **Sly and the Family Stone** Fresh (Andy Newmark) /// **Branford Marsalis Quartet** Braggtown (Jeff "Tain" Watts) /// **Tony Allen Plays with Afrika 70** No Accommodation for Lagos (Tony Allen) /// **Makaya McCraven** Universal Beings (Makaya McCraven) /// **The Flying Luttenbachers** Trauma (Weasel Walter) /// **Jimmy Smith** Crazy! Baby (Donald Bailey) /// **Jerome Cooper** The Unpredictability of Predictability (Jerome Cooper) /// **Cryptopsy** None So Vile (Flo Mounier) /// **Deantoni Parks** Technoself (Deantoni Parks) /// **John Coltrane** One Down, One Up: Live at the Half Note (Elvin Jones) /// **The Music Improvisation Company** The Music Improvisation Company (Jamie Muir)

ing. He said, "You'll be able to get that if you practice the rudiments. You shouldn't have to work too hard to get a full sound."

Another thing Kenny was pushing: it's very important that you know how to read, and how to play another instrument, because that's going to help you play drums better and help you make music better with

other people. As far as playing in a band context, Kenny was very influential, too.

Then I started getting together with instructors like Billy Hart, and John Riley a bit later, which turned my whole world around. And Ralph Peterson after that. Bill Goodwin. It was quite an adventure. When I worked with John Riley at William Paterson,



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the last fifteen minutes of our weekly lesson he would play some kind of international music on the drumset. He gave me a lot of West African, Indian, and Afro-Cuban rhythms and applied them to drumset in his own way. That stuff told me that you're not necessarily going to get by just playing the pattern as written. It's about really getting the *feel* together. It's very hard to play and make it feel good.

I encourage any drummer, no matter how old they are, to seek the masters out and to keep studying. You can never know too much. I'm almost forty years old, and I haven't stopped studying. I'm trying to study with Michael Carvin. I tried to seek out Tony Allen for a lesson.

Milford Graves—when I got together with him recently he was telling me how important it is for young folks to seek these people out. There's no real apprenticeship situations for younger musicians like myself—we don't have any Art Blakeys anymore, these mentors with classic bands. But it's our job to keep the music alive in the best possible way, and the only way we can do that is by getting together with people who have done it. It's vital to keeping the music healthy, and it gives us a sense of humility. People think they know everything: *Oh, I can play more stuff than these people I'm asking to study with.* It's like, *you might*, but what good is it if it doesn't come from a foundation? Some people look at me as this super-avant-garde, "out" kind of drummer, but I come from the same tradition that a lot of other people do. I want to be as informed as possible, because it gives what I'm doing greater depth.

MD: I hope younger drummers will seek you out in this sense, although you're doing something different at Wesleyan, teaching composition.

Tyshawn: I did a lot of drumset instruction at the New School, before I got this Wesleyan thing. I was only twenty-three, twenty-four years old when I started teaching there. I wasn't even out of college myself.

MD: What are you trying to impart to your composition students?

Tyshawn: I try to get them to take their work seriously, and to believe that they can write music and perform their own music if they so choose. The thing I want them to take is mostly encouragement, to pursue whatever they want to pursue.

There was one student in my graduate composition seminar who felt discouraged about her work, because she felt that it

wasn't as advanced as a lot of work the graduate composers were doing. They were required to write a string quartet, and hers had fairly simple notation, and it wasn't as quote-unquote advanced rhythmically as some of the other works. She turned it in, and she burst into tears as she handed it to me.

I was like, "Wow, are you okay? What's happening here?" We talked about what she wanted to do, and she had some really cool ideas but didn't quite know how to

notate them. So we spent an hour or two looking at how she could realize those ideas. She revised the piece, and it came out as one of the best-sounding pieces of the concert. And she told me that she finally got up the confidence to believe in her work, to take herself seriously. So I try to give that same sense of belief to any student. Hopefully I can help them fulfill their dreams—even if it means having to do things over again. That might be necessary to get to the next place.



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

Debbie Knox-Hewson

Though she's traveled down the academic path, at heart she's a do-it-yourself drummer who does not let challenges frighten her off. Today she's put lessons learned toward educating and inspiring up-and-comers around the world, as well as to the betterment of her latest endeavor, the band Nasty Cherry.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky

Photos by Alex Solca



The times, they-are-a-changin'. Just as most millennials don't remember a world before iPhones, today's younger crop of drummers need to have their "hybrid kit" and electronics together *before* they get the drum seat with the majority of current artists. That goes for all genres, including country and even much heavy metal.

U.K.-based Debbie Knox-Hewson might have gone the traditional music school route early on, but she knew that landing a gig like pop singer Charli XCX would require her to command a certain level of technique, as well as knowing how to cue a synth bass patch from her electronic pads. "Charli is very involved with the production of her music," says Knox-Hewson. "And she doesn't like the idea of having to sacrifice anything because it's live. So she doesn't like the idea of a live sound. She'd very much want us to be playing the exact parts that were on the album." And playing those exact parts requires restraint and conviction without resorting to showing off or inserting too much of yourself. Right up Knox-Hewson's alley.

In addition to Charli XCX, Knox-Hewson's economical style has graced records and tours by the band James, singer-songwriter Stina Tweeddale's indie-rock band Honeyblood, and her new project, Nasty Cherry, Debbie's first personal project and medium for songwriting and production. "It's a new pop band masterminded by Charli XCX," says the drummer. "We co-wrote our first single, 'Win,' with Charli, and we've been busy writing and recording our first LP in Los Angeles.

"It's been really exciting writing as part of a band," Knox-Hewson adds, "as well as utilizing the things I've seen over the years as a session drummer and putting them into practice with my own music—creating backing tracks and musically directing, for example. I've also begun to produce some of our music, and that's been really fulfilling."



MD: What did the Charli XCX gig require from you? How much input did you have in the parts that you had to execute?

Debbie: When I first got the Charli gig, it was the most high-end gig I'd taken. So we had a music director, we had management or the label that would come to rehearsals just to see how everything was going. I didn't really have much input at all about the parts that I was playing, which allowed me to build up a discipline of playing exactly what someone wants you to play. It taught me that if you have suggestions, that's great—as long as you've got what's been asked of you down perfectly first. And then you can kind of say, "Oh, I thought this might be cool as well."

But to start with those incredibly disciplined parts...with me, [the challenge] was the ghost notes. In drumming school, you're told the more ghosts notes you can do, the better you are. With that gig, if you've got a snare that sounds like a bag of coins being thrown at the wall, you can't really ghost note it without it being absolute cacophony. Charli wants it to sound like an electronic Ramones on the drums. No

splashy crashes. Anything like that is really not her thing. So you've got to keep that in mind.

MD: How did that gig come your way?

Debbie: I was studying at music school in Brighton, and I'd get in touch with session players in London on Facebook, and I'd say, "If there's anything that you've been offered that isn't quite right for you or you think might be a good opportunity for me to cut my teeth auditioning, please put me forward." And if you're not considered a threat yet, people are often really happy to help up-and-comers out. I got told about the Charli gig, and I got in touch with the tour manager, and he said they didn't need any more drummers auditioning. But I begged, and I got hold of the songs and learned them anyway. I knew a few people going and sort of just turned up, tried my luck, and I got it. I quit music school, and we didn't really stop for two years. It was a really long campaign.

MD: Was there a musical director guiding you about what to play?

Debbie: Charli's tour manager was her old drummer, so we'd geek out, and he'd

suggest things like, "You know, if you hit that as a double-stroke with your right hand, that crash will look more aesthetically exciting." He really got into it with me and helped me work out what looks best for performance.

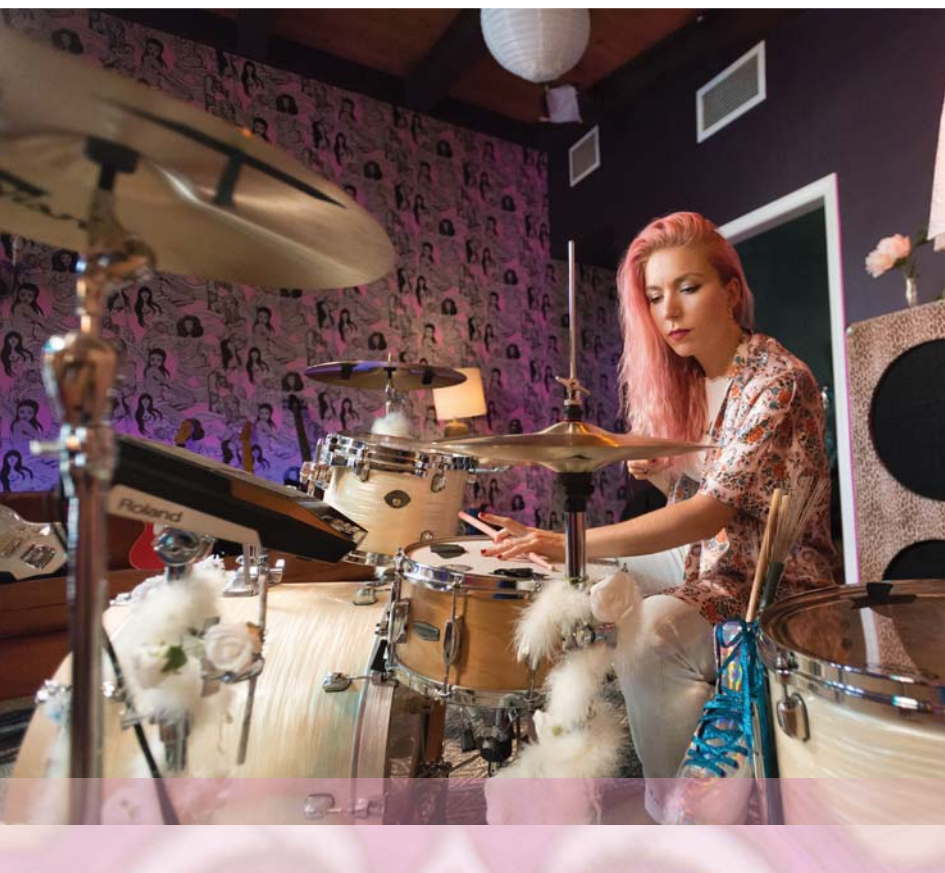
MD: What were you checking out at school?

Debbie: I bought Benny Greb's *The Language of Drumming*, which just blew my mind. And I got *Stick Control*: that blew my mind. And those are my two books. And then I got into the typical student YouTube wormhole of watching Steve Gadd for hours. I went to a music school in London for a year. I found that really overwhelming, and I thought, "I've really got to work hard to keep up with the rest of the students at school." I got a practice log I'd read about—the smartest, most efficient ways to use your time, what you should be practicing. I'd separate practice time between playing different styles, practicing technique, endurance, and reading. And then I went to Brighton music school for a year, and worked very hard and tried to make a name for myself as the person that would just take on anything. I *really* wanted to be a



Tools of the Trade

Debbie Knox-Hewson plays Tama drums and Zildjian cymbals, and uses products by Cympad, GoPro, Vic Firth, Roland, Tuner Fish, Porter & Davies, and Protection Racket.



professional musician.

MD: Talk about incorporating electronics into your setup.

Debbie: When I first got the Charli gig, it was two pads, kick trigger, snare trigger, and a Roland SPD-SX. Then it went more rock for a while, and we lost some of the electronics. And then it went full, standing-up electronics. So that was two SPD-SXs and a rack of pads. Then after that I got other work, because I really wanted to stay predominantly a kit drummer. So I worked with some other artists, Rae Morris, BETSY, and CuckooLander. I got into the swing of a hybrid setup. So I would run everything out from my SPD-SX, and I would then use whatever pads or sidebars for the snare, or triggers I'd like.

Now it mainly will be a bass drum trigger, a snare trigger, and an SPD-SX. I feel like you can do so much with that, because you've got nine pads in front of you on the SPD-SX, and then you've got the outputs as well. And then I moved on to a tour with the band James. They were looking for a backing vocalist who played a little bit of percussion. I was quite a nervous singer. [laughs] But every rehearsal, I'd come with a new drum and add it. So by the end of my time working with them, we had basically a standing-up kit, two floor toms, snare, rack tom, a ride, some crashes, and then an SPD-SX and an Octapad and some more pads coming out of those. So quite a big unit.

MD: And today you demo new Roland gear, correct?

Debbie: I'm lucky to go around the world and demo new equipment from Roland. Most of the time I meet drummers who are as new to it as I was. And that's where I bring out the Holy Grail, the SPD-SX, which I think is superb to start with, if you can invest in anything. If you want to, you can trigger a backing track or synth sounds and take the place of the keys player or bassist. I've played bass sounds with one hand, and played the kit with the other. You can do so much. One of my favorite drummers [does that], Andy Stack from Wye Oak. It's incredible what he does. Every time I see him live, I find myself frowning, my arms crossed, concentrating. I don't look like I'm enjoying the show. How the hell is he doing that? It's incredible.

MD: What kind of things are you hearing from pop producers?

Debbie: I worked with Stina Tweeddale from the band Honeyblood, and she needed a drummer. The producer, John Congleton, had worked on the early St. Vincent stuff and Wye Oak and a load of artists that I really respect. He was very much of the mindset of, "The less you bring, in terms of what you want the song to sound like, the better it is for me." He said, "When artists come in with a fully polished demo, I wonder if they just want me to pat them on the back and say, 'Good job.' It feels a bit like,

a cymbal for every style.



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Debbie Knox-Hewson

'Well, what do you need me for?'

We were really ready for the songs to go in any way. At points he would say, "If you've got just the melody for that song, can I just hear that?" It's petrifying, to be honest, because it just means you can sit there and be asked to do anything. And it probably will be very different to what you think you've prepared for that song. You sit there for hours, and then you'll get the drums done. And you're expected to deliver it within a few takes. So you really have to be ready for that. And Stina was really open to everything John suggested. The sounds and things we used, it was a drummer's dream, basically. You've got woodblocks, things on the snare, and then under the snare—and maybe put another snare on the snare. We were playing xylophones with cello bows and all sorts of madness, so it was really good fun.

MD: What's the best advice to drummers about their online presence?

Debbie: Well, I only really speak about this to people who haven't got gigs yet. I go to music schools, universities around the world, and discuss how to get that first gig. So with that in mind, I think it's absolutely crucial. And my internet presence somewhat chilled out now that I'm in the right circles, and hopefully I'm lucky enough that if anyone thinks I'd be suited for something, they'll get in touch with me and ask me if I'm available. But when you're first starting out, I think it's incredibly important to have something on the internet to say, "Here's a video of me playing—this is who I am; this

is what I do."

MD: So it's not just about meeting people and networking, and because you can't always sit in, you've got to be able to send someone something.

Debbie: Completely. And even if you do meet someone, and they speak to their friend who's looking for someone—"I met this great guy, you know, he's really good, up-and-coming." "Well send me something of his." "Oh, I don't think he's got anything on there." That's dead in the water then. If someone else is recommending you for something, you've got to have something to show the person that hasn't met you. So have all of that stuff on your website. If you've only been in your school band or whatever, well, just don't word it like that. Don't lie, but get everything you've got online. You can rent a really good camera, and even on an iPhone you're going to be able to tell if someone's in time and if it sounds good. If you haven't already done so, get something of yourself up online.

MD: What else do you go over in your classes?

Debbie: People want to know how to get into their local music community. If you're in a position where you can, I would say set up a jam night. Nothing draws session players, musical directors, or musicians together quite like a jam night, even if it's just like a garage band thing. I was speaking to a group of young female drummers in Hong Kong, and they were saying they didn't have a community there. And I said, "Well, there's ten of you in the room with me right

now, and you're all from Hong Kong, so..." [laughs] You're there. You've just got to put it together, just make it more peer-to-peer. If you don't have the opportunity to play live too much, see if you can find a pub or, if you're too young for a pub, a community center, whatever, just to get out. Because if it's a problem for you, it's probably a problem for a few more people. Whatever it is in your area that you feel is lacking music-wise, do it yourself, and it'll probably be very well received.

MD: What about getting called back for gigs?

Debbie: Keeping good, simple time is one of the main reasons I get called to play gigs. I'd say 30 percent is ability on the instrument, and the rest is just, are you a nice person to be with on a tour bus, you know? Do we like you? Are you punctual? Are you polite? Do you work hard? To be good at your instrument is expected. So I think it's really important to remember that you're not going to get it if you turn up late, no matter how good you are.

People also ask about making yourself look professional. We're all in the same boat in between tours. Everyone's looking for the next job. When you don't have a job, you're thinking about it. You've just got to really believe in yourself and hustle for it. In between the Charli tours, I set up a drumming camp in France, and that felt a bit premature, a bit scary, but it sold out, and it was really good fun. So you might surprise yourself how much closer you are to where you want to be if you just go for it.

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Debbie Knox-Hewson's Can't-Miss Wisdom

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An Essential Warm-Up

Here's a simple 16th-note routine that I go through regularly at various tempos before practicing or playing live. Be creative with this exercise—experiment by putting together as many permutations of these patterns as possible on your own.

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

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

Tips on Practicing

1. Always keep a notebook for your practice sessions to log your tempos and your comments on how each exercise feels. This helps you scrutinize patterns while learning. It will also encourage you on days when you might not feel motivated, as you'll be able to look back on your progress to see how much you've improved.

2. Practice with the live gig in mind. Whether this means playing with your eyes closed to prepare for dark lighting or going through songs at gig speed to see where you keep making mistakes, having this mindset will enable you to tackle the problems you'll face while performing onstage and remove any surprises.

3. Practice how you play! A teacher of mine in London once told me that unless you're isolating specific aspects of your technique, there's no point in practicing quietly or timidly if, when adrenaline kicks in during a live show, your velocity changes and you haven't built the stamina to keep up. However, don't confuse practicing at full volume with utilizing bad technique or shedding excitedly.

I realized when I'd go home in between tours and practice for the next run that I was very reserved when shedding. So it's about knowing that you can carry over the same technique you utilize in your live show while you're practicing off the road.

4. Practice improvisation by playing a spontaneous fill, and then afterward, follow it by playing the exact same idea. This is a concept I picked up from a Benny Greb DVD, *The Language of*

Drumming, and it really helps bridge the gap between unconscious and conscious playing. I often keep time with my hi-hat foot and play a part over one or two bars. Then I immediately repeat it. I try to keep the instrumentation, volume, and feel the same between the two versions.

The first time you play something, you're really expressing yourself freely. In a way it's almost like coughing, in that you can't recreate it, and it's not controlled. So this idea of playing it once—while keeping time, obviously—is really important. And by repeating it, you're practicing the discipline of playing something the exact same way and remembering how you played it originally. Also notice that you're probably more likely to only play things within your comfortable realm because you're going to have to do it twice.

5. Record yourself and listen back. The difference between how something seems to sound while you're playing and how it actually sounds while you're listening back can be quite stark. Make sure you scrutinize your playing and learn to critique yourself. Your projected sound is the most important thing to develop.

If you're playing a groove that you really like, you might be surprised at how it barely sounds together after recording it and playing it back. This might be because you're happy with yourself that you've learned it, or you're really enjoying playing it—both of which are justifiable feelings. But often I've recorded a pattern, played it back, and thought, *That's not grooving.*





Eights and Sixes

Part 4: Quarter-Note Triplets

by Bill Bachman

In this fourth and final installment of our Eights and Sixes series, we're going to move accents around within 8th notes and 16th-note triplets while also incorporating a quarter-note-triplet accent pattern.

When you're playing quarter-note triplets, it's beneficial for your timing and pocket if you know where the quarter-note pulse falls within the figure. When played together, quarter notes and quarter-note triplets form a three-against-two polyrhythm. If we dig a level deeper, we can play straight 8th notes against the quarter-note triplets to form three-over-four polyrhythms. Our goal is now to count and feel the straight 8th notes against the quarter-note triplets. This will be helpful when playing slow tempos and will ultimately deepen the well of our rhythmic understanding and musical comfort. As always, it's imperative to set your metronome to an 8th-note subdivision, tap your foot, and count 8th notes out loud when practicing this material.

Let's start with a single-stroke sticking and accent the quarter-note triplet within the sextuplet. Be sure to start slow and count the 8th notes out loud as you play along with a metronome. The 8th notes in the first half of each pattern will be played with a high stick height as flowing free strokes, and the sextuplets will start with downstroke accents followed by low taps. When playing the sextuplets at slow to medium tempos—around 80–120 bpm—strive to play strict and concise downstrokes with clearly defined stick heights. Think about the downstrokes pointing down toward the drumhead at a 10-degree angle and the loose taps coming up to about parallel to the drum or pad. Make sure there is a complete separation between the downstrokes and the loose and relaxed taps.

Utilizing an American grip with the hands at a 45-degree angle and the thumbs on the topside of the sticks is an effective approach for concise downstrokes. In this position, you can squeeze the back end of the stick into the palm or hold the front of the stick down with the thumb. By using both the palm of the hand on the back of the stick and the thumb on the front, you have two ways to stop the stick faster and play lower and looser.

At faster tempos, when there's less time to stop the stick, simply stop the stick less. Now some of the energy of the accents will flow smoothly into the following taps with what I've been calling the "no-chop, flop-and-drop" technique. There's less impact on the accents because they have to flow into the taps, so you can't hit them hard. However, you can still play them with a high stick height, so be sure to maintain some decent height on the accents. The no-chop, flop-and-drop technique should also be developed at slow tempos—both it and the strictly separated downstrokes with clearly defined heights are beneficial and can be guided by musical decisions.

1

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

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

Next we'll play a few variations with two accents based on the quarter-note-triplet pattern. Again, count 8th notes out loud throughout the following exercises.

2

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

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

3

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

R R R R R R 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 L L L L L 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

Now we'll apply a double-stroke sticking while maintaining the quarter-note-triplet accent pattern. When you're playing straight double strokes, there's not enough time to play a strict downstroke on the first beat of the diddle before the following tap. So we'll flow into the tap using the no-chop, flop-and-drop technique. Some of the energy from the accent flows into the following tap in a natural decrescendo. Your fingers can help to steer the rhythms, but don't use them in a way that would support or add velocity to the taps.

4

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

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

Next we'll invert the double-stroke sticking and add rimshots on the quarter-note-triplet accents. The fingers will now have to aggressively snap the stick into the palm on the second beat of the diddle as the arm drops down for the rimshot to add power to each second stroke. This is best practiced on a rimless drum pad so that you can slap the shank of the stick against the rubber.

Whether playing a rimshot or not, all the diddles will be played with a free stroke and downstroke "alley-oop" technique. Focus on starting every diddle with a high and light free stroke followed by an aggressive downstroke that freezes pointing down with the bead of the stick a half an inch off the drum or pad. The rimshot will create an accent, but don't treat this variation as a lower tap preceding a higher accented rimshot, as that's not the context for a smooth roll. The higher-velocity rimshot on the second diddle stroke will be played from a lower height than the free stroke on the first beat of the diddle. The 8th notes setting up the rolls will remain high and loose free strokes.

Rimshot

5

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

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

Now we'll incorporate a few mixed stickings that utilize triple strokes. We'll start with a RRRL/LLLR sticking. Only the first note is accented, but because there's so little time between the accent and following taps, we'll flow into the softer strokes using the no-chop, flop-and-drop technique. As always, keep your straight 8th-note frame of reference as you count through each accented quarter-note triplet.

6

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

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

Next we'll use a RLLL/LRRR sticking. The accents should all be played as big, relaxed rebounding free strokes. The technical challenge lies in the finger control necessary for the low triple-stroke taps. Don't focus on the quarter-note-triplet accent pattern—keep your focus on the straight 8th-note pulse.

7

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

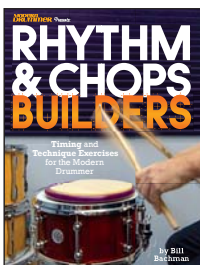
R R R R R R R R L R R R L R R R L R R R L R R R L R R R L R R R
L L L L L L L L R L L L R L L L R L L L R L L L R L L L R L L L

Finally, let's insert paradiddles within the sextuplets. All the previous guidelines factor into the treatment of the accents at different speeds. Be sure to use fingers to support the low and light diddles with a "drop/catch" or low alley-oop technique.

8

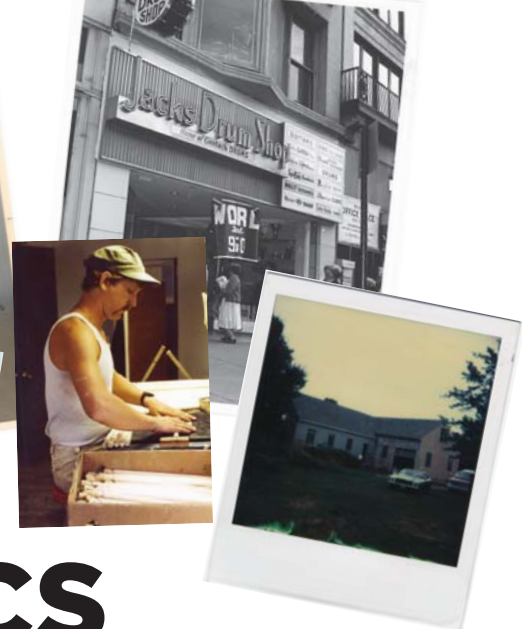
R R R R R L R R L R L L R L R R L L L L L R L L L R L R R L R L L
L L L L L R L L L R L R R L R L L L R R R R L R R R L R L L L R L R R

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



Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* and *Rhythm & Chops Builders* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.





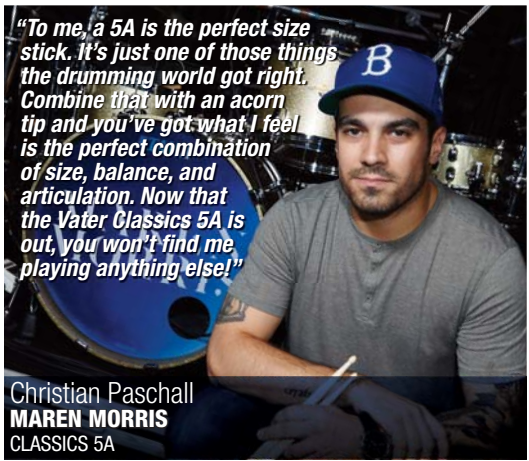
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 D .540" • 1.37cm
 Wood VHC7AW Nylon VHC7AN
 7A made at traditional specs: A half inch shorter than our popular Manhattan 7A model and with a small acorn tip for a broader cymbal sound.



Classics 8D Jazz
 L 16" • 40.64cm
 D .540" • 1.37cm
 Wood VHC8DJW Nylon VHC8DJN
 A 7A grip but at a full 16" in length. The taper and acorn tip combination delivers a stick that plays effortlessly with warm but defined cymbal tones.



Classics Big Band
 L 16" • 40.64cm
 D .560" • 1.42cm
 Wood VHCBBW Nylon VHCBBN
 Just under a 5A in the grip with a gradual taper to a smaller sized tip that will make your ride cymbal sing with clarity.



Classics 5A
 L 16" • 40.64cm
 D .565" • 1.44cm
 Wood VHC5AW Nylon VHC5AN
 5A with an acorn tip for a nice and full sound from drums and cymbals. Solid and responsive model that practically plays itself.



Classics 5B
 L 16" • 40.64cm
 D .595" • 1.51cm
 Wood VHC5BW Nylon VHC5BN
 A little undersized in grip as compared to the popular Vater 5B. Classics 5B is very versatile in many musical applications and playing styles with its very comfortable grip size.



Classics 2B
 L 16 1/4" • 41.28cm
 D .630" • 1.60cm
 Wood VHC2BW Nylon VHC2BN
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Creative Cymbal Chokes

Adding Color to Your Fills

by Jost Nickel

Stopping a cymbal with your hand immediately after playing it creates a unique sound that I often employ in fills and grooves. This technique is referred to as a “cymbal choke,” and in this workshop we’ll explore patterns that utilize it. Be sure to scan the QR codes throughout this lesson to see video demonstrations of some of these exercises.

In the following fills, play and choke the cymbal with your left hand. As such, you’ll need a cymbal that you can easily reach with that hand. Also, play the choke in unison with the bass drum. (Throughout this workshop, the cymbal chokes are marked with an apostrophe in the notation.)

In Exercise 1, the first half of the 4/4 measure is repeated on beats 3 and 4. We’ll play the cymbal as a 16th-note pickup to this fill. For me, the first three notes at the beginning represent the most unusual part of the fill. First we’ll play the crash cymbal, then an accented snare, and then we’ll choke the sustained crash on the “e” of beat 1 while playing the bass drum in unison.

1

L R R L R R L R R L R

Now we’ll shorten the phrase so that it starts again from the beginning directly after the double stroke on the bass drum. This figure is now a six-note grouping that we’ll repeat over one bar.

2

L R L R L R

Now play the previous figure over two measures.

3

L R L R L R



As before, the first three notes at the beginning of this fill—a crash pickup, a snare accent, and a cymbal choke with the bass drum—make up its unique character. Whenever I’m inspired by a motif like this, I try to put it into other rhythmic contexts. This next example demonstrates the fill in another form as a five-note grouping, in which the first three beats are unchanged. Play the five-note grouping as a one-bar fill. I’ve included a flam at the end to give the phrase a nice conclusion.

4

L R R L R R L R R L R

Now play the same figure over two bars.

5

L R R L R R L R R L R



The next example demonstrates the fill in another form as a seven-note grouping. The first five beats are identical to the previous five-note grouping. Play the seven-note grouping as a one-bar fill.

6

L R R R L R R R L R L

Now play the seven-note grouping over two measures.



Finally, here's a combination of the six-, five-, and seven-note groupings from this lesson. Play the six-note grouping twice, the five-note grouping twice, and the seven-note grouping once. We'll also end the figure with a flam.



If you're interested in more ideas on fills in general, check out my latest publication, *Jost Nickel's Fill Book*.



Jost Nickel is a top session and touring drummer in Germany, as well as an international clinician and author who endorses Sonor, Meinl, Remo, Vic Firth, and Beyerdynamic products. For more information, visit jostnickel.com.



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Seven-Note Groupings

Advanced Bebop Coordination

by Joe Bergamini

In my last column (July 2018) we explored playing some challenging five-note groupings against a standard jazz ride rhythm. This time we'll take the concept a step further and experiment with groupings of seven.

As I mentioned last time, I've seen fusion great Steve Smith and others apply odd groupings in a musical way, and I've been inspired by practicing the four-way coordination in John Riley's book *Beyond Bop Drumming*. This article combines ideas from these two heavyweights into some polyrhythmic bebop comping to challenge your coordination. We'll take a seven-note pattern, split it into groupings of three-, two-, and two-note clusters, and play it between our limbs within a swing context.

The first example demonstrates the basic seven-note pattern. You can also rearrange the order of the notes to create different groupings within the phrase.

First, omit the bass drum, and play only the snare. Try not to listen to the groupings of seven, and instead just approach the example by hearing the triplet subdivisions. Once you get comfortable with these patterns, you'll be able to "stand outside yourself" and listen to the groupings of seven cycle over the 4/4 measures. For now, just think of these figures as triplets in 4/4.

In any example throughout this lesson in which the hi-hat foot isn't notated, play it on beats 2 and 4.

Next, try playing the previous comping pattern on the bass drum.

Now split the previous rhythm between the snare and bass drum, alternating between the voices.

Reverse the previous example, and start the seven-note grouping with the bass drum.

Now play the full grouping between the snare and bass drum against the jazz ride pattern.



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Next, try reversing the snare and bass drum.

7

You can also replace the bass drum with the left foot on the hi-hat, as demonstrated in Exercise 8.

8

Next, introduce three-voice comping by using the bass drum and hi-hat foot along with the snare. Split the notes that were played on the bass drum, alternating between the two feet and starting with the kick.

9

Now reverse the order of the feet, and start the figure on the hi-hat.

10

In the accompanying videos at moderndrummer.com, I play the examples fairly slowly to clarify these ideas. I've found that every new tempo presents a different challenge of balance and coordination with this material. Be patient, and enjoy!



Joe Bergamini teaches privately in New Jersey, runs the Sabian Education Network for drum teachers, is the senior drum editor for Hudson Music, performs regularly on Broadway, and can be seen performing across the U.S. and Canada on tour with the Doo Wop Project.



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Mobile Madness

A Guide to Programming Odd Rhythms

by Aaron Edgar



When I first started exploring odd rhythms while coming up, the tools available to help were virtually nonexistent. You had metronomes that were limited to quarter notes, 8ths, 16ths, and if you were lucky, triplets. If what you were working on didn't fit within that narrow framework, all you were able to do was count meticulously to work out other odd subdivisions and polyrhythms. Or, if you were technologically savvy enough, you could program something more complicated into a DAW.

These days technology has come a long way. Now there are incredibly powerful metronomes and music sequencers available on your smartphone or tablet. Synkd is an excellent example of a highly programmable metronome and sequencer. It's powerful enough that every single wacky rhythm in my book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is meticulously laid out in an add-on pack that corresponds with the chapters. There are of course some limitations to the app, but you'd need to be exploring the very edges of rhythmic theory for those to come into play.

One of the best things you can do when shedding anything—odd rhythms being no exception—is to practice within the context of musical phrases. Something as simple as being able to hear the beats you're working on with bass or synth lines can do wonders for your perception of the exercise. It's a common issue when isolating unique rhythmic ideas to lose sight of how they work in context. Without music, they can become virtually useless rhythmic tricks with no application.

In our age of smart mobile electronics, there's a vast array of powerful sequencer, synth, and drum-machine apps available. While most of them are incapable of phrasing eleven-note tuplets or certain advanced time signatures, many of them can be "tricked" into simulating these ideas musically. The remainder of this lesson explores a handful of my favorite apps, their functionalities, and how to use them.

Korg iDS-10

In iDS-10, you can easily program patterns based in quintuplets to practice in and out of 16th- and triplet-based ideas. You can also manipulate time signatures fairly thoroughly, even into phrases of partial quintuplet- or triplet-based meters. And in this app you can

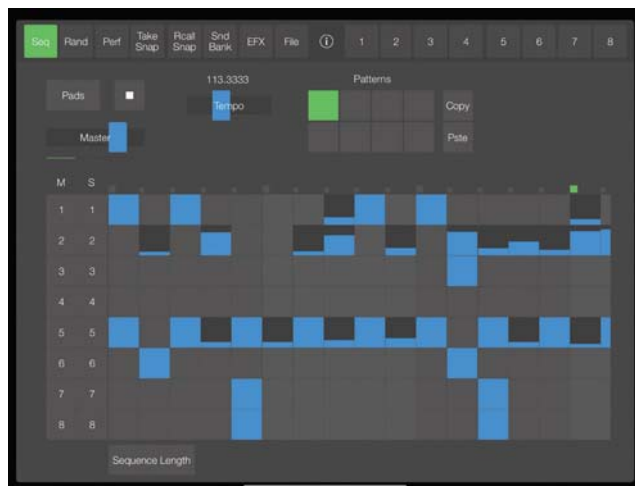


create multiple synth and simulated voice lines or program drums to use either as a click or as a pattern to jam with.

The default setting is 4/4 with a 16th-note subdivision. To adjust this, click Main on the top bar and navigate to Set to bring up options for BPM Ratio and Last Step for each pattern in the sequencer. BPM Ratio has a lot of different options—my favorite being 1.25, which equals quintuplets relative to the default settings. Clicking that and adjusting the Last Step to 20 will give you a bar of quintuplets in 4/4. Alternatively, a BPM Ratio of 0.66 and a Last Step of 12 would equal 8th-note triplets in 4/4. You can tailor the Last Step to anything you want between 1 and 64. With quintuplets, any multiple of five will give you a quarter-note-based meter in which quintuplet rhythms make the most sense. However, you can choose any subdivision or meter that you want. For example, a Last Step of 23 would give you four full quintuplets with three additional quintuplet partials as your bar length.

Seek Beats

Rhythmic manipulation in this app is quite advanced. To start, tap Length at the top of the screen in the middle, then Advanced. Here



there are two values: the Number of Steps and the Steps per Beat. Each value is adjustable from 1 to 32. Staying with our quintuplet theme, change the Steps per Beat value to 5 and the Number of Steps value to 20 for a bar of quintuplets in 4/4.

This app is especially cool when you explore its randomizer function. But before we get there, in the sequencer put a kick (Sound 1) at the beginning of each beat and a snare (Sound 2) on beats 2 and 4. Once you've got that set, add a handful of notes wherever you feel like it between them using Sounds 3–8. On the right side of the screen, touch Rand to open the randomizer. Drag the blue All box right up to the top, and your notes will start to warp into crazy synth and electronic sounds. I find these incredibly fun contexts with which to practice drum ideas. You can always drag your kick and snares individually back to normal to give you a solid groove instead of a click for practice.



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Rock Perspectives

Korg iElectrify

This simple yet powerful sequencer app is fantastic for practicing odd time signatures that are shorter than 4/4. The simplest place to start is 15/16. To do this, click Settings, which is to the left of the knob in the center of the app, and change Last Step from its default of 16 to 15. You can adjust the Length value to be anywhere from one to four bars. I usually like to write a drum pattern initially before exploring some of the synths and other sounds in this app on top of it. Once you have a pattern you dig, you can either mute the drums and jam with it yourself or counter the rhythms with your own patterns. Even keeping the drums in, you can play with the various effects and settings until they sound completely alien for a crazy backing track to jam with.

There's a vast array of mobile music apps that are capable of these types of adjustments. It's not always obvious within a particular app's features that you can manipulate them in this way. Look for apps that have flexible time signature functionality at the very least.



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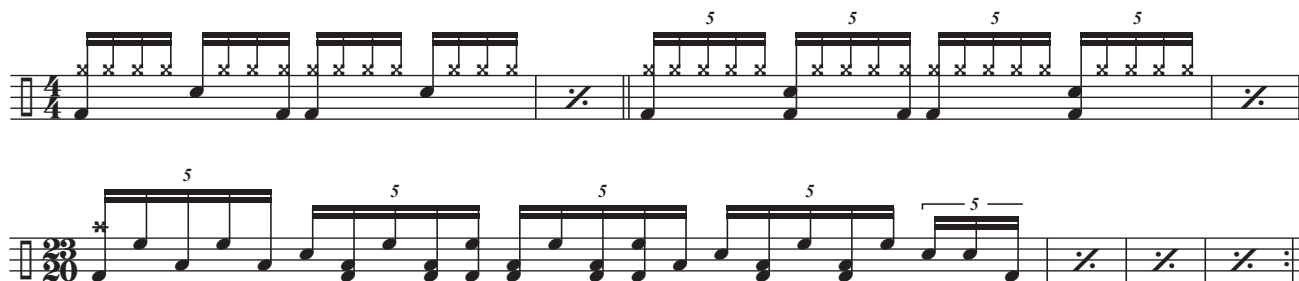
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In Practice

Taking time signatures out of context can also be useful for simulating odd subdivisions. For example, in iEctricbe you could change the Last Step value to 7 and Length to 3 to simulate a bar of septuplets in 3/4. You'll need to crank the tempo up a little, but playing with arpeggiated sounds in this framework is really fun. The game essentially becomes "complement or contrast" in this regard. You can create anything you want to dress up the patterns you're working on, and you're limited only by your imagination.

To try the type of meters mentioned in the iDS-10 section based on 23-quintuplet partials, check out the eight-bar phrase below. It starts with a typical 16th-note beat in 4/4 for two bars before moving into a similar 4/4 beat based on quintuplets for two more measures. Then we dive into a driving quintuplet tom beat in 23/20. This time signature means that there are 23 beats or steps in each measure, and the 20 on the bottom signifies that each of those beats lasts for as long as a quintuplet partial. Play this pattern for four bars before repeating back to the beginning.



Practice the bar of 23/20 on its own until the pattern is comfortable. Once you've got the hang of it, try playing the full eight-bar phrase. It's designed to reinforce the quarter-note pulse. This will do wonders for your ability to feel quintuplets once you can twist your way through the figure effectively. We'll continue exploring these ideas more in a future article.



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.



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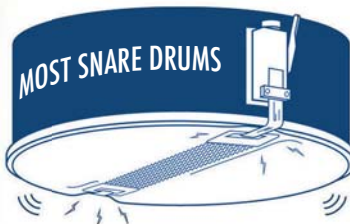
The La Salsera Timbale Bell produces a medium-pitched tone, while the Cha-Cha Bell offers a medium-bright tone. Both are designed to be mounted but can be handheld for muted tones.

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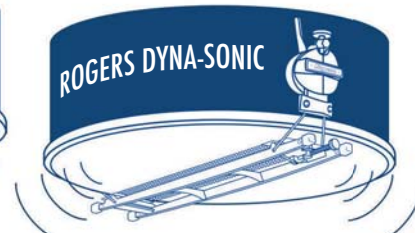


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Philadelphia Drum & Percussion

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

When the late, great Sam D'Amico closed up shop in 2007, Philadelphia was without a dedicated drum retailer for the first time in nearly thirty-five years. That gong-sized void was finally filled in November 2016 when Brandon Pfundt opened Philadelphia Drum & Percussion in the city's Fishtown section.

Though Pfundt arrived a good decade after gentrification began to transform the once predominantly blue-collar neighborhood into a haven for artists and young professionals, the thirty-one-year-old former sales rep for Bosphorus has carved out a niche for himself in an area that lacks no shortage of venues, recording studios, rehearsal spaces, or working drummers who live within walking distance of the shop. Touring drummers and local players alike regularly swing by to pick up the essentials (heads, sticks), artisanal-leaning dampening accessories (Snareweight, Roots EQ), and sometimes even the high-end kits and snares Pfundt carries from boutique companies like Q, Noble and Cooley, and A&F. *Modern Drummer* visited the shop recently to get Pfundt's story.

I'd been really into music and playing in bands and was interested in the recording side. My idiot brain thought that it would be a good idea to go to recording engineering school and learn that trade. So after high school, I went to Full Sail University for a year, and then the music industry pretty much tanked. The technology got better for recording at home, and the need for engineers at big studios went down. I worked at Morning View in Malibu; I worked for Sylvia Massy at her studio in California; I went to Nashville. I tried that, internship after internship, not getting hired.

I worked part-time for Bosphorus as their East Coast sales rep. That got me in the door at the NAMM show, and in this world of drum retail. I was also working at a machine shop that my family owned. Having to go to drum shops for Bosphorus, I always skipped Philly because there wasn't a shop there. I'd go to Drum Center of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to visit owner Shane Kinney, Chuck Levin's in Washington...but there was a giant gap. That got me percolating: *There's no drum shop in Philly? That's a major market there that can be tapped into.*

I wanted to be the guy who had the things you couldn't find at the big-box stores—which is a risk, because I'm stocking the higher-end gear. But I know there's a market for it. People seem to appreciate being able to come in here and be like, *I know about these, but I never*



get to see them. People are aware of Q drums, aware of C&C, but they were never able to go somewhere and actually play them. There's this whole world of boutique instruments—Noble and Cooley and Brady Drums—and I wanted to highlight that.

I've sold a decent amount of kits at the \$2,000 price range. It's hard for us to sell a kit in here whose price starts with a 3. Maybe if I was in San Francisco, that would happen more. But Philadelphia is a blue-collar town; people work hard for their money. Drumkits are



"Shane Kinney at Portsmouth Drum Center was a big inspiration," Pfundt says of his decision to open a shop. **"And José Medeles at Revival, he's stocking great brands and has a ton of knowledge. I know of all these places doing it the right way, and I just want to do it that way here. There's a nice little community of owners trying to do it at spots like this."**



“I’m finding more and more that people want to shop small,” says Pfundt. “They want to come in here and talk to me about gear. They want to get something that I’m telling them is legit. I’m building a little bit of trust there.”



the slowest mover. It’s everything else that keeps the machine going. My highest-ticket thing that moves at a good pace is probably cymbals. People seem to have no problem dropping money on cymbals. But when it comes to drums, they’re a little more hesitant.

My biggest surprise has been people’s lack of knowledge of the brands that I carry. I guess I lived in a little bit of a bubble going to NAMM and being aware of all this stuff. I was such a nerd about it. I was always watching Memphis Drum Shop’s videos and looking at Dunnett snares and stuff like that. Not a lot of people are aware of that stuff. That was an eye-opener. So I’ve definitely had to tailor the stock a bit more to what people are buying, while staying true to my original vision. Like Noble and Cooley—the name carries a little bit of weight. There’s a trust there. Most people do know about C&C at this point. But everyday people are still coming in asking, “What’s Q Drums?”



Drums have been such a big part of my life. I want everyone to have that experience I had when I was thirteen—get a new kit or a new snare, and how awesome that feels when it’s the right sound. It never wears off. The finishes, all the things—it’s very personal, and it’s fun. That’s where the core of this is. Obviously we’ve all got to make a living, and I hope that I can.

Interview by Patrick Berkery



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Phil Collins

Serious Hits... Live!
A Hot Night In Paris
Plays Well With Others

A look back at Phil Collins' masterful work onstage, as well as studio collaborations with famous friends.

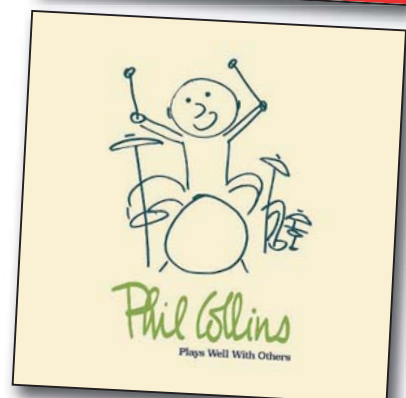
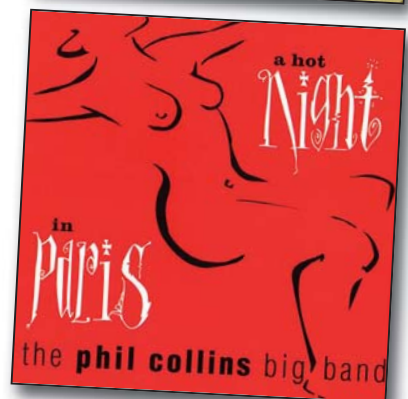
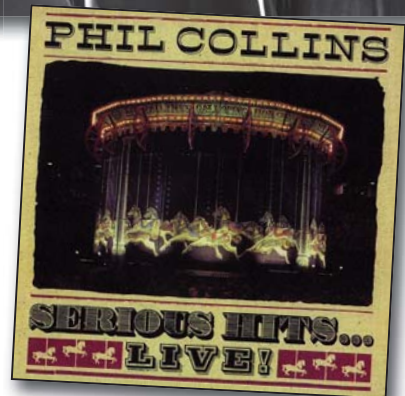
Phil Collins continues his reissue campaign with a pair of live albums now freshly remastered. *Serious Hits... Live!* (Atlantic) documents Collins' 1990 tour supporting his ...*But Seriously* album and is a tight greatest-hits compilation with a crackshot band executing nearly note-perfect renditions of the superstar's best-loved songs. Since Genesis's mid-'70s musical chairs shuffle, **Chester Thompson** was Collins' choice for live drummer for virtually everything he did, and here he lays down some serious four-on-the-floor pocket on "Who Said I Would" and spacious, syncopated smoothness on "Don't Lose My Number." But it's on ballads like "Against All Odds (Take a Look at Me Now)" where you can hear Thompson's metronomic yet nuanced timekeeping. Collins briefly gets behind the kit for "In the Air Tonight," but check out the under-heralded written parts he wrote on tunes like "Take Me Home," where Thompson drives those huge toms like a freight train.

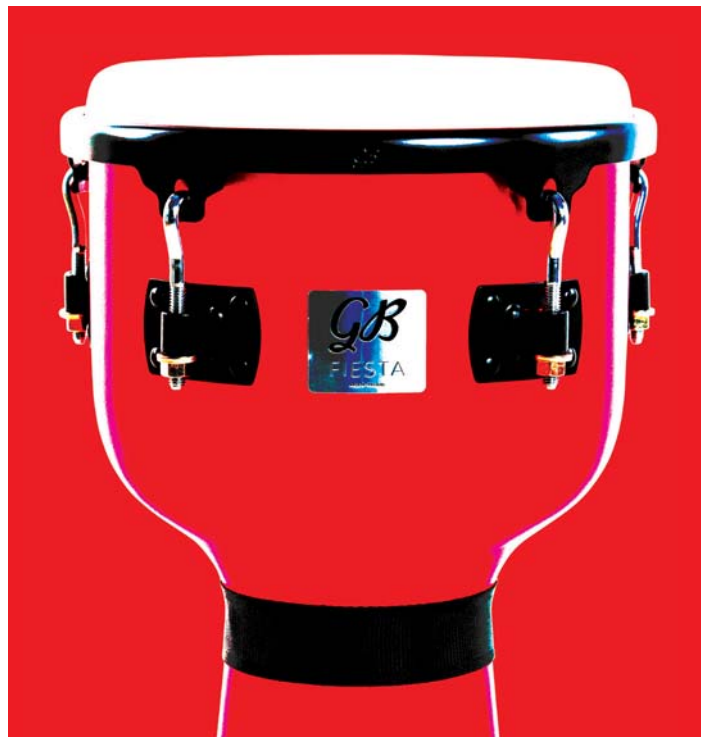
A Hot Night In Paris (Atlantic) is a whole different affair, this time with only Collins behind the kit, supporting a big band doing hip rearrangements of his solo material, some Genesis tunes, and select covers. Recorded in 1998, with nary a vocal to be heard, the album is a nice showcase for all the things that have interested Collins from a drumming perspective throughout the decades. There's an R&B groove workout of "Sussudio" and a convincing swing reading of "That's All" containing some driving ride cymbal and all the requisite Buddy Rich-style hits and bombs that make big band music exciting. Percussionist **Luis Conte** solos with dexterity over a Latin vamp in "Chips & Salsa," and Collins sets off fireworks on the multipart "The Los Endos Suite." But it's on the greasy "Pick Up the Pieces," featuring solos by jazz and R&B greats Gerald Albright, George Duke, and James Carter, where things get majorly funky, the drummer grooving with the tough, unwavering downbeat that is all his own. All-instrumental fare like this and his recordings with fusion band Brand X have been all-too-rare in Collins' history.

As appealing as both of these releases are, they do feel like a bit of a missed opportunity, as neither features a single bonus track or any extra cuts from the sourced concerts. As opposed to the recent deluxe-edition studio records, which contain additional CDs of live material, B sides, and demos, these new offerings are exactly the same as the originals, albeit with slightly beefier sound. That aside, each album has something for the generally curious or newer Collins converts, showing the eclectic nature of the material and the killer drumming featured at his shows.

Perhaps the most intriguing release of the trio, *Plays Well with Others* (Rhino) is a four-disc, career-spanning collection of Collins' appearances with other artists that will appeal most to hardcore Phil fans and general listeners with varied musical tastes, as these tunes are all over the map. Three of the discs are dedicated to Collins' brilliant sideman stylings, from the kinetic drums on Robert Plant's "Pledge Pin" to the big beats on Adam Ant's "Puss 'n Boots." There's the familiar (Collins' hooky fills on Howard Jones' "No One Is to Blame") and the slightly overlooked (that feel-good shuffle on Stephen Bishop's "Walking on Air"), but the drummer's fingerprints unify the music conceptually. The fourth disc is all live, with Collins bringing the lumber to everyone from Eric Clapton to Annie Lennox. Did this man ever sleep?

Ilya Stemkovsky





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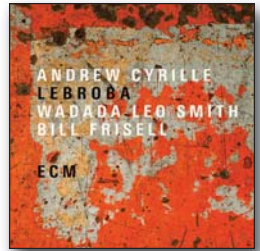
Ernesto Cervini's Turboprop *Abundance*

This Canadian drummer/leader's latest manages to swing convincingly between both the manic and somber poles of jazz, leaving listeners with a fresh, energetic expression of a classic form.

Ernesto Cervini's drumming impresses throughout *Abundance*, with tight, precise ride patterns augmented by a unique, spastic approach to hi-hat accents. On album opener "The Queen," Cervini manages a tasty middle ground between traditional swing, cross-stick intensive bossa nova, and other hints at Afro-Cuban rhythms. Likewise, the rim-clicks that initially anchor "Abundance Overture" exemplify the kind of atypical approaches that make this set of tunes such an enjoyable listen. While the execution of these pieces may in fact require quite a bit of technical prowess—there are moments when the drumming scans as an acrobatic take on Art Blakey—*Abundance* never feels the least bit labored, and the sense of joy expressed throughout the album is contagious. (Anzic) **Keaton Lamle**



Rarely have drums been played more melodically, tastefully, or expressively than on free jazz legend Andrew Cyrille's *Lebroba*, featuring trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith and guitarist Bill Frisell. Smith carries the melody on Frisell's "Worried Woman," but the guitarist is echoing him so closely, and the drummer is shaping the landscape so colorfully, it's often hard to tell who is leading and who's following. Cyrille is constantly building on his bandmates' musical ideas, lifting the action, and his frisky solo highlights the trumpeter's complex "Turiya." "Lebroba" is a gorgeous Cyrille composition that comes closest to a steady pulse, though much of it is implied, not played. Think free jazz has to sound the way a Jackson Pollock canvas looks? Nope. Cyrille plays everything with purpose and commitment. Flam cross-sticks, tom rolls, tumbling triplets—this is sublime music making, with a premium on each note. Obvious chops aside, the ears on these fellows are huge. (ECM) **Robin Tolleson**



Andrew Cyrille *Lebroba*

As he approaches his eightieth birthday, the leader and long-time McCoy Tyner and Oliver Lake collaborator proves he's still remarkably vital on all fronts.

Carlos Ezequiel, *Circular*

The Brazilian drummer leads a capable five-piece band through eight percussive jazz originals.

Carlos Ezequiel, in his third decade as a working drummer, plays with a nimble touch, adding contagious energy to the tunes here. Album opener "Quando Não Houver Saudade" displays his unique

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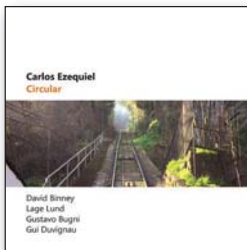
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ability to pepper his often chaotic solos with enough strategic accents that even inexperienced listeners can detect a predictable pulse beneath the spasticity. Likewise, "Você Me Colcheia" finds the drummer elaborating on traditional jazz ride patterns, spreading the timekeeping around the kit to bring unique, polytonal voicing to age-old grooves. On the title track, the band melds jazz with bossa nova to create a hypnotic, swirling groove that shows off Ezequiel's penchant for communicating both urgency and relaxation in his playing, sometimes within the space of a single bar. (carlosezequiel.com)



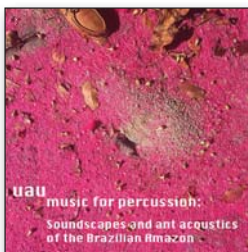
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Lisa Schonberg

UAU: Music for Percussion

The Portland drummer and Revival Drum Shop instructor has a background in environmental studies with fieldwork in entomology. All her interests come together on her latest work.

Portland, Oregon, musician Lisa Schonberg's percussion ensemble, Secret Drum Band, creates soundscapes in an effort to draw attention



to environmental issues. The EP *UAU: Music for Percussion* is not only inspired by ant populations in the Brazilian Amazon, the works are based around Schonberg's own field recordings of actual ants. Opener "Surface of Abyss at Ducke" runs through a gamut of textures, beginning with a low synth note over a bed of ant samples, leading into a pulsing buzz roll, a Taiko-like figure on a high tom, and on. "Multispecies (Ants) with Percussion" hums with layered ant samples, interrupted by a conga ostinato and a gritty drum machine improvisation; different samples of ants and feverish drumset improvisation are layered, and the vibe becomes frantic. "Terra Firme" is a live percussion trio piece reminiscent of a Jonny Greenwood film score, with its use of wooden percus-

sion, congas, and overlapping ostinatos on toms and vibraphone. Overall, the release is as curious a listen as the concept itself, and would be of interest to fans of film music and ambient genres. (liskaschonberg.com)

Stephen Bidwell

Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

Kendrick Scott Oracle A Wall Becomes a Bridge /// **Carmine Appice** Guitar Zeus ///

Dominic Egli's Pluralism Azania in Mind /// **Adonis Rose and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra** Songs: The Music of Allen Toussaint /// **Kevin Lawlor** Last Days of Summer /// **Sean Noonan's Pavees Dance** Tan Man's Hat /// **Marilyn Mazur** Shamania /// **Herlin Riley** Perpetual Optimism /// **Rich Mangicaro** Travels /// **Bob Holz** Silverthorne /// **Peter Kogan** The Green Album /// **Jonathan Blake** Trion /// **Dali Mraz** Level 25



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INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

IN MEMORIAM

Anne "Honey" Lantree, 1943–2018

This past December 23, Honey Lantree, the drummer for the English beat/pop group the Honeycombs, passed away in Great Bardfield, Essex, England, from breast cancer. The musician, who is perhaps best known for playing on the Honeycombs' 1964 hit, "Have I the Right?" was one of the very few female drummers to emerge from the British Invasion movement of the 1960s.

After forming the Honeycombs (originally known as the Sheratons) in 1963 with Martin Murray, her brother John Lantree, Denis D'Eil, and Alan Ward, Honey and the group would eventually land an audition with the legendary experimental pop producer Joe Meek. This relationship led to the band's first single and biggest hit, "Have I the Right?" which reached number 1 in the U.K., Australia, Canada, and Sweden and peaked at number 5 on the U.S. charts. Within a year the single had sold around two million copies worldwide. Despite their initial success, the group would break up just three years later.

With the Honeycombs, Lantree became the first female drummer in a pop group to top British and international charts. In a video found on YouTube by searching "Interview with Honey Lantree 2014," the drummer speaks about that impact. "Honestly, when I used to sit there in rehearsal, I didn't think, *Gosh, I'm doing this and I'm a girl*. It was only when I went to play in a pub with the band that it



The Honeycombs in 1964, from left: John Lantree, Martin Murray, Honey Lantree, Denis D'Eil, and Alan Ward

sort of dawned on me, because everyone was looking at me. And that's when I thought, *This hasn't been done before*. There'd been girl bands...but they were big bands, not pop bands."

Although Lantree retired from music after the Honeycombs originally broke up in 1967, she reunited with the four other original band members throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, touring until the passing of vocalist Denis D'Eil.

Willie Rose

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KoSA Cuba 2019

A week of culture, performances, and intensive drum and percussion instruction.

The eighteenth edition of KoSA Cuba—an annual weeklong drum and percussion camp in Havana—was held this past March 3–10. The camp's cofounders, the drummer and educator Aldo Mazza and his wife, Dr. Jolán Kovács, say their goal with the camp was to spotlight the talent of Cuban musicians and dancers while providing insight into the country's rich history and culture. The event was held in collaboration with the Fiesta del Tambor, a local rhythm and dance festival to which KoSA attendees enjoyed VIP access.

Participants hailed from the U.S., Canada, France, and Switzerland, and ranged in age from seventeen to seventy-eight years old. The program offered hands-on classes, workshops, concerts, and lectures, as well as nightly performances at the Fiesta del Tambor. Percussion instruments covered included congas, bongos, timbales, batás, drumset, and others as participants immersed themselves in Cuban rhythms. The renowned ethnomusicologist Dr. Olavo Alin also delivered seminars on Cuban music



history. All instruments were provided, and participants studied and played along with top international artists such as Amadito Valdés (Buena Vista Social Club), Oliver Valdés (studio), Juan Carlos Rojas "El Peje" (Chucho Valdés), Tomás "El Panga" Ramos (studio), Adel González (Afro-Cuban All Stars), Jean Roberto San Cristobal Figueroa and Julio López Sánchez (Klimax), and Miquelon Rodriguez (educator).

Guest artists at the camp included Mark Guiliana (David Bowie, Mehliana) with his award-winning jazz trio, who wowed the audience and attendees with their experimental music. The American musician and film composer Joachim Horsley performed many tracks from his latest album, *Via Havana*, while accompanied by the Havana Symphony Orchestra and Mazza. And the Canadian percussion ensemble Répercussion, featuring Luc Langlois, Robert Lépine, Chantal Simard, and Mazza,

performed a commissioned Canadian work with the Havana Symphony, marking the group's first performance in Cuba.

A Sabian night during the Fiesta del Tambor showcased many of Cuba's top Sabian and Gon Bops endorsers. Other memorable concerts featured well-known artists from Spain—which was the featured country of this year's festival—such as Ketama, a flamenco/fusion group. The Fiesta del Tambor also holds a national drum and percussion competition every year that's open to Cubans and international participants alike. The winners of the competition received much-needed professional instruments such as a drumset, timbales, bongos, congas, and various drum accessories.

The eighteenth edition of KoSA Cuba was sponsored by Sabian, Gon Bops, Ludwig, and Evans. For more information, visit kosamusic.com.



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The DrumGarden



"This drumkit was aptly named the 'DrumGarden' by a visitor to my studio," says Nicholas Kopp of Saratoga Springs, New York. The drummer tells *MD* that the premise for this month's featured set was to create three distinct kits arranged in a circular fashion to be played from a single seated position.

"The kit in the foreground could be considered the most traditional of the three sets," Kopp explains. "It features a kick and rack tom from a Japanese 'stencil' Stewart brand kit—with Ludwig WFL calfskin heads on the kick—and it's completed by a WFL 14" floor tom." To the right of the Stewart kit is a hybrid electronic kit, featuring a floor tom, a bass drum, a triggered Sonor Jungle snare, a Hammerax Liquicy ride, and other small pieces including multiple cymbal stacks and other short-decay sounds.

Continuing clockwise, Kopp says, "Underneath the circular Hammerax Glass suspended cymbal is a cocktail kick that I wrapped in vintage postcards, a Remo Mondo snare, bamboo wind chimes, a Hadphoon made by Jamey Haddad, a Gon Bops Pete Engelhart Satellite bell, an African-inspired dundun I made myself from an oil drum, a 14" Gretsch snare outfitted with a wooden drumhead from Index Drums, and a massive-sounding 22" Meinl Byzance Jazz China ride with rivets, which rounds out the 'tribal' area of the DrumGarden."

Kopp tells *MD* that he sometimes replaces the Stewart kit with what he calls a "Little Orphan Luggie Variant," which features three Ludwig

marching snares in 14", 15", and 16" depths; a 26" Ludwig marching bass drum from the 1920s that he restored; and a Speed King bass drum pedal. "The Ludwig kick bears the remnants of the name 'Little Richard,' and I'm very interested in verifying if it could be attributed to one of the artist's early bands."

Kopp's enjoyment of collecting unique pieces of gear over two decades of playing led to his current setup. "Many of the pieces of this kit are one of a kind," he says. "Some cymbals were broken and cut down, rehammered, and relathed by cymbalsmith Brent Berggren of Electric City Bronze in Schenectady, New York. The postcard cocktail drum was cut down to make it easier to play while seated. And my favorite snare, a 7x14 white oak stave-shell with maple hoops, was made by drum builder Michael Carlito of transnaredrum.com."

As an electronic musician, Kopp tries to find sounds that fit in well with the jungle and drum 'n' bass music he creates. "I've always dreamt of cloning myself to perform both electronic music and drums at the same time," he explains. "I've made some videos to this effect, layering three different performances on each kit, which makes me look like an octopus behind the drums."

To check out some of Kopp's performances, visit his Instagram page, [@therealdjnk](https://www.instagram.com/therealdjnk), or search YouTube for "Nicholas Kopp."

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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