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Bruno Mars gave Anderson .Paak some advice. "If you're going to do this drummer stuff," the superstar multi-instrumentalist told him, "you've got to really take it over, so that when they think of 'drummer/singer,' you're the first person they see."  
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*The Pocket Queen*

## PREMIUM POCKET PRESENCE

The Pocket Queen herself, **Taylor Gordon**, has become a major force in music with her pocket-centric, groove-focused drumming style. She's performed with names like, *Adam Lambert*, *Beyoncé* and most recently bass legend *Richard Bona*. With an increasingly busy gigging, teaching and studio schedule, Taylor has chosen **Starclassic Walnut/Birch** as the kit to bring it all together. Like Taylor and her career, Walnut/Birch is quickly establishing a reputation as a great new option that continues to provide the same high-quality tone and innovative features drummers have come to expect from **TAMA**.



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# Star Power

History tells us that the first drum star was Gene Krupa. Handsome, likable, energetic, with a near magical ability to bring dancers to the heights of ecstasy with barely more than a pounding floor tom, Krupa undeniably established the iconic image of the drummer as leader—not only of the band, but, in a sense, of all of us. He made us dance, he made us want to look at him, he made us want to play like him. He made us want to be him.



Jim Esposito

Of course, times change, and what we want from our entertainers does, too. The need for escape and celebration that the big bands of the 1940s provided eventually gave way to the public's desire for more exploratory and reflective music, and in the '50s and '60s drummers like Max Roach and Tony Williams presented musical possibilities that we're still grappling with today. In the rock era, players like John Bonham, Bill Bruford, and Neil Peart continued to prove that drumming was as profound as any other art form—though it could be argued that in terms of the wider public, it wasn't until Phil Collins' remarkably artful, prolific, and successful run in the '70s and '80s that the world at large was reminded of our awesome power. For us drummers, the sky really was the limit in terms of the influence that we could wield with a fertile imagination, a tireless work ethic, and a pair of drumsticks.

This month we're featuring drummer Anderson .Paak on our cover. The Grammy-winning performer has seemingly come out of nowhere to capture the imaginations of music fans around the world—though, as is usually the case, his road to stardom has been longer and steeper than many are aware. Read his story; we found it fascinating, and we believe you will as well. Like Gene and Phil before him, Anderson's performances on record, onstage, and on TV have sparked the imaginations of thousands of aspiring rhythmists who can that much more easily see themselves playing that very same role of musical and cultural leader some day.

But as with all aspects of the musical life, it's important that we regularly examine our feelings and beliefs about stardom. It has its purposes. It drives us as artists. It establishes a blueprint for what we can achieve. But it can also cloud our vision of what being truly influential means. Right now, across America, across Europe, across Asia and Africa and Australia, there are scores of "unknown" drum instructors who actually have a greater impact on aspiring players than the stars who appear on the cover of *MD* every month. After parents, teachers have the greatest influence on young minds. Full stop. They might never appear on television or at Coachella or even onstage with any artist that we've heard of. But, one-to-one, they show us how to use the best educational tools available, they provide an example of how to conduct ourselves in a professional manner, they steer us in the right direction in terms of what music we listen to and what gear we use...they show us what drumming means.

Stardom is important. If nothing else, it reminds us that people really do value our contributions as artists, and that the world really is our oyster. But let's never forget how we got into this in the first place, and who put us on the right track. Because in each of our own little worlds, our teachers are bigger stars than anyone who comes before or after them in our lives.

*Adam Budofsky*

**Adam Budofsky**  
Editorial Director

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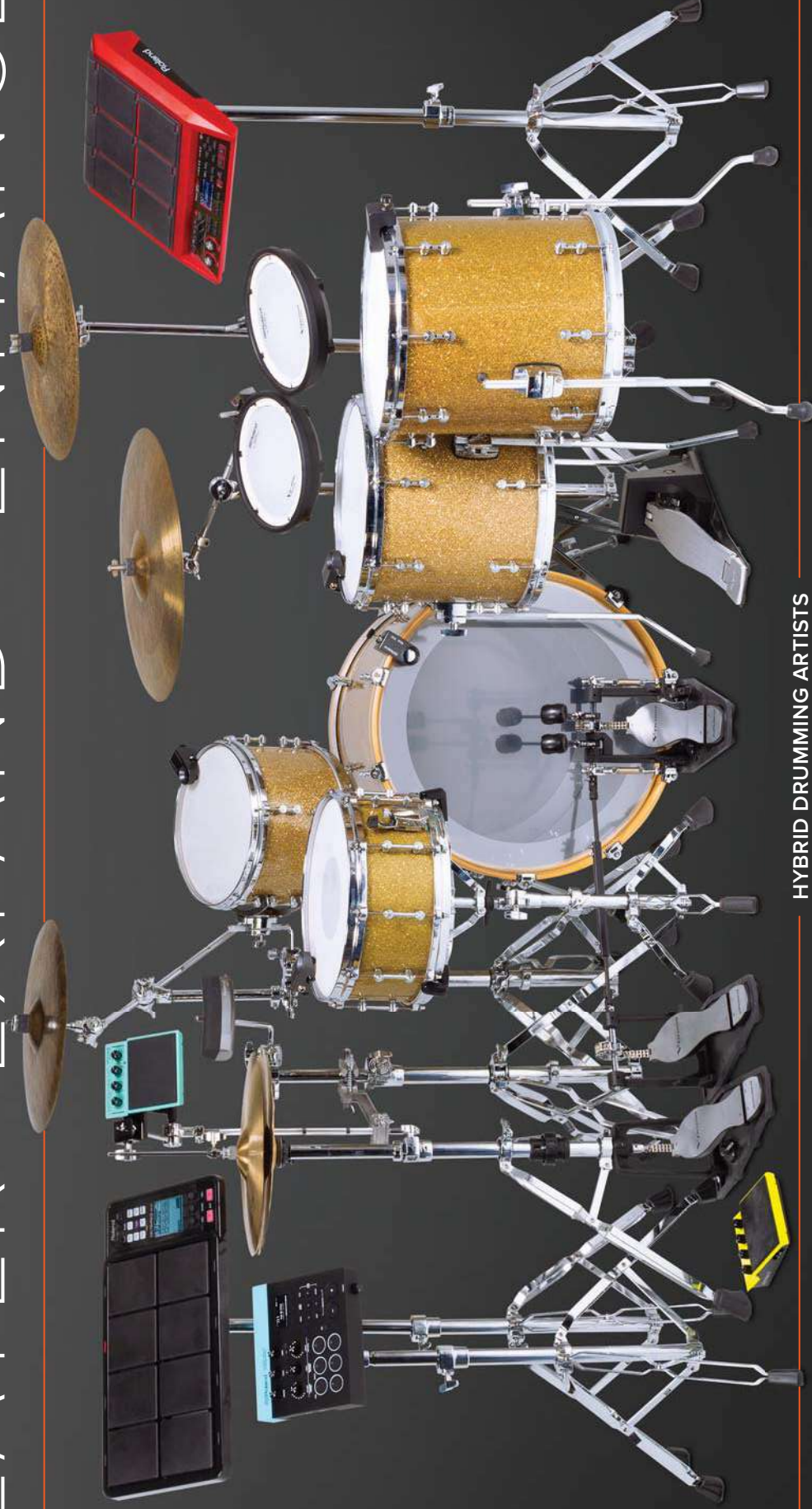
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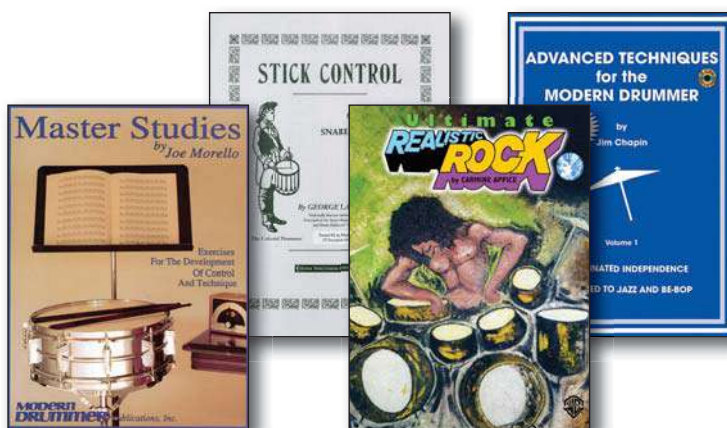
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# What's Your Most Worn-Out Drum Book?



I've got quite a few that are falling apart from overuse. *Joe Porcaro's Drumset Method* is the most disintegrated of them; it's where I developed my hand technique back in the day.

**Aaron Edgar**

*Modern Jazz Drumming* by William F. Ludwig. The book enforces sticking and posture while providing an understanding of the musical implication of each technique. This structure has benefitted my playing by exercising my ability to immediately utilize newly learned techniques in compositional and improvisational settings. The exercises within can be applied in genres far beyond jazz.

**Nat Park**

*Realistic Rock* by Carmine Appice. It was the first drumset book that taught me the importance of keeping a solid groove and foundation that would work in real-world applications with other musicians.

**Dylan Lloyd**

Charley Wilcoxon's *The All-American Drummer: 150 Rudimental Solos*. I didn't do marching band or drum corps, so this book helped me to develop a working command of all the rudiments.

**Tyler Walton**

*Stick Control* has been my most valuable and consistently used practice book, especially in my early years. I mainly used it as a framework for disciplined practice, and my teachers showed me how to move the exercises around the kit. I still have the original book after about forty years.

**Joey Carson**

Ted Reed's *Syncopation*. It's limitless in how it could be applied, and each page could be as hard or as easy as you decide it to be.

**Israel Reyes**

*Exploring Your Creativity on the Drumset* by Mark Guiliana. I bought a second copy so I can still practice with it, because his concepts are simple to understand but take so much time to master. It's helped me get more space into my playing and made me try to feel the music rather than thinking about it.

**Charl lie Fusillier**

*Stick Control* by George Lawrence Stone and *Master Studies* by Joe Morello. I have a two-foot-tall stack of instructional drumming books, yet those two are the ones I keep coming back to for warming up and working on my hands. There's a reason those books are must-haves in any drummer's library.

**Ross Christensen**

*Future Sounds* by David Garibaldi opened my world to the possibilities of rudiments, and I'm amazed by how he applied so many hand and foot patterns with just the kick, snare, and hi-hats.

**Nhoj Asperin**

My most worn book is Wilcoxon's *The All-American Drummer*. The cover fell off years ago, and I've lost the outer few pages too. It was a requirement in college, and I continue to use it with my students today because of the sheer volume of practice material and the way it puts rudiments into a flowing musical context. Before Wilcoxon, the rudiments were difficult for me to contextualize. Those solos really allowed me to see their potential.

**Ryan Alexander Bloom**

I'm on my third copy of *Syncopation*, and I still have my original. I own about fifty books, but I still come back to this one with yet another way to play the patterns. It's timeless.

**Ralph Gray**

I've worn out multiple copies of *Stick Control*, *Master Studies*, David Garibaldi's *Future Sounds*, and Ari Hoenig's *Systems: Drumming Technique and Melodic Jazz Independence*.

*Stick Control* taught me how to be disciplined and diligent about working

on my hand technique in a concentrated manner. *Future Sounds* taught me permutation, how to create interstellar linear grooves, and to think of each limb as an individual voice while being part of a melodic whole. *Master Studies* taught me how to further the concept of technique while adding new melodic concepts into the mix. And *Systems* taught me how to take my four-limb swing coordination to another level, as well as how to practice the rudiments in a melodic fashion.

**Brandon Goodwin**

*Syncopation*. There are many ways to interpret the exercises on the drumset, such as in jazz and Latin rhythms, drum fills, and more. It's an all-purpose must-have.

**Bob Stanton**

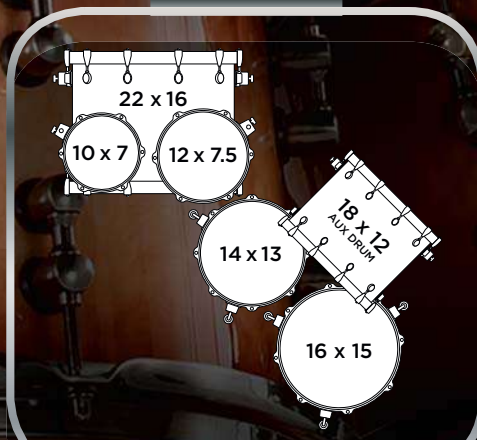
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## Jim Black on *Nature Work*

A jazz vet improvises a wild ride through the blazing new effort by a pair of prolific jazz songwriters.



After the fiery, dueling horn intro that opens *Nature Work*—the newest project from musicians and composers Jason Stein (bass clarinet) and Greg Ward (saxophone)—veteran jazz improviser Jim Black explodes with a barrage of dirty crashes, cracking snare accents, rolling yet jagged tom fills, and rapid cymbal chokes. That's all before the drummer emerges from the satisfying rubble unscathed with gorgeous time, pushing the quartet (which also includes bassist Eric Revis) tastefully through "The Shiver"'s head and brilliant solos.

Throughout the rest of *Nature Work*, the quartet straddles a broad line between freer jazz and the more straight-ahead melodies of Stein and Ward, with plenty of dark yet beautiful dynamic sways. Following suit, Black's drumming shifts on a whim between Philly Joe bop, Bonham swing, and Paul Motian space—all while singing freely with his own electric voice behind the kit. It's a voice the drummer tirelessly developed throughout his career with artists such as the saxophonist Tim Berne and trumpeter Dave Douglas, and in his own projects AlasNoAxis and Pachora, among others.

We recently caught up with Black to dig into *Nature Work*, which was released this past June 21. Don't miss out on this one.

**MD:** How did this project come together?

**Jim:** I subbed for Jason's trio, and it was a lot of fun. He asked me to do this album with Greg and Eric, so I flew out to Chicago, and we made it happen.

**MD:** What was the writing process like?

**Jim:** Jason wrote the songs with Greg. We got together, and they had loose sketches. We could immediately have at them and find our sound.

**MD:** Did you have a previous musical relationship with the group?

**Jim:** No. It was out of the blue for me. But it was great to meet and play. And that's what you do as an improviser. You listen to each other and play with them. I mean, I've known Eric through Branford Marsalis's or Orrin Evans' albums. I'd heard Jason and Greg on various recordings. But when you play together, you interpret each other quickly and make it happen.

**MD:** How do you maintain confidence in a new situation?

**Jim:** You have to instantly trust that they hear what you're doing and you hear what they're doing. And you have to understand what music is—different types of time, melody, harmony, how forms work, how sounds work together. And you share and go for it.

**MD:** How do you approach modulations? In "The Shiver" it sounds like you shift into a different time signature around the 2:55 mark.

**Jim:** Being that it was a new band, you can really try anything and see if it works. It was probably something suggested by the composition. The songs have ideas and motifs inside of them. You can choose to play over it, ignore it, embrace it, or develop it further. It's an improvisational choice.

Plus these guys understand time and groove in such a way that you can play in different shapes or speeds on top of each other, and you know it's going to resolve, or you know that everyone's feeling the groove or feeling how the tension and resolution work rhythmically.

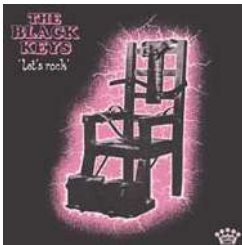


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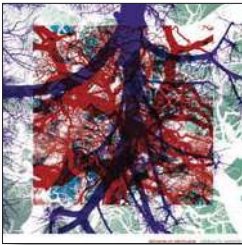
**Lettuce**  
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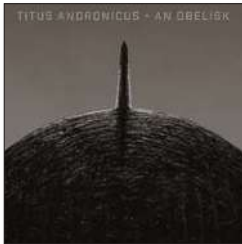
**The Black Keys**  
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**The Chris Robinson Brotherhood**  
Servants of the Sun (Tony Leone)



**Silversun Pickups**  
Widow's Weeds  
(Christopher Guanlao)



**Titus Andronicus**  
An Obelisk (Chris Wilson)

**MD:** Do you have a specific warm-up routine?

**Jim:** None. [laughs] It's a matter of connecting my ideas and my center with the end of the stick. I don't really think about technique too much. I just try to stay out of the way of the stick.

And I don't sit and try to play a five-stroke roll. If I hear that shape or allow my hands to make that shape, that's another story. But you play what you hear—the rhythms and melodies. I think if you have that in your head, it's amazing how the notes just appear in the right spots. Because I really can't stand drumming. It's terrible. [laughs]

**MD:** What?

**Jim:** I mean in that way where you play like a drummer. You have to hire musicians. You don't hire drummers. Of course the sport of drumming is awesome. Come on, we know what that is.

But I think some of these technical cats can get to a certain musical level, and that's what you see with a drummer like Mike Mitchell. He has zero technical limit. He's just having a blast when he plays, and you feel his music first, even though technically it's insane. I think a lot of drummers work on the technical [aspect].

They'll be trying to calculate and think. But they're not really hearing a musical idea.

And I think that's the one thing about drummers. We're a little dangerous by nature, where we have such a regard for the "church of technicality" where we forget that it's actually music that we're playing. If you approach any of the stuff as a melody or *musical idea*, technical issues don't become a problem.

**MD:** Why do you refer to it as a "church of technicality"?

**Jim:** Drummers can tend to be wowed by a technical grace of facility, speed, or velocity. Very few people notice the slow drummers. Someone like Paul Motian, he was defined by what he didn't play, not what he did play—the space he left between the notes and how heavy his beat was, even though he was barely playing sometimes. But you could feel the weight and shape of that. And all of the masters have that. They're all musicians first, drummers second.

**Willie Rose**

**Jim Black endorses Vic Firth, Remo, Hammerax, and UFIP products.**

## Slim Jim Phantom with the Stray Cats

Rockabilly's most passionate purveyors hit the road in celebration of their fortieth anniversary.



As late teenagers in 1979 on Long Island, New York, guitarist Brian Setzer, bassist Lee Rocker, and drummer Slim Jim Phantom formed the Stray Cats while discovering a mutual affinity for early rock 'n' roll. Now, forty years later, after previously establishing success with globally recognizable hits such as "Rock This Town" and "Stray Cat Strut," the band has released *40*, their eleventh full-length album and first in twenty-six years. To celebrate their four-decade-long career, the band hit the road on June 21 for an international trek that lasts through late August.

The band's incredible onstage energy is infectious, undeniably spurred in part by Phantom. The drummer's unique and minimal kit setup—which he plays standing up at the front of the stage with Setzer and Rocker—provides a literal trampoline for Phantom and Setzer. Live the two can regularly be seen performing acrobatics off of Phantom's bass drum. But don't let the drummer's theatrics distract from his real-deal, well-researched shuffling swing that provides the foundation for the Stray Cats' signature rockabilly feel.

*MD* recently checked in with Phantom from his L.A.-based home.

**MD:** What spurred the new record and tour?

**Jim:** About a year ago we had a show in Las Vegas that was kind of like a celebration of all things rockabilly. There were 20,000 kids there, and every one of them was rockabilly. We thought of this band forty years ago. All these years later, to see this celebration of the whole culture and original American rock 'n' rollers had so much

of an impact on us, and it was certainly something to be celebrated.

We had a beautiful gig. After that, Brian got in touch with demos. We all were totally up for the idea and quickly came up with parts. Everybody was very prepared, and we were so pleased with how it came out that we just wanted to do more.

**MD:** What type of input does the band have on your parts?

**Jim:** I don't think anyone ever really told anyone else what to play. Part of it is a certain trust. Someone might have a little suggestion, but I can't remember the Stray Cats ever really having someone tell anyone what to play. I don't think any of us have that kind of nerve. [laughs]

**MD:** What drew you to rockabilly?

**Jim:** I was drawn to it through what I'd guess you'd now call classic rock. The Beatles, the Stones, Clapton, Jeff Beck, Aerosmith.... This would've been in the '70s, when I was borrowing records from my older cousins. I was a drum student, and I just kept researching music. The Allman Brothers were big and had a bluesy influence. I'd read their liner notes, and it'd say, "Written by W. Dixon." I'd ask, "Who's that?" So I'd find out who Willie Dixon was. That was my process.

And if you go back far enough, when I got to the original Elvis Presley recordings and their earliest pictures of Elvis, for me it was game over—this is what I'm doing for the rest of my life.

**MD:** How did you get the idea to play standing up?

**Jim:** Early with the Stray Cats, the band was kind of an opportunity



Suzie Kaplan

to try new things. We were into these old records and trying to find anything we could about Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, or Buddy Holly. And there were a few blurry photos of Gene Vincent where his drummer looked like he might've been standing up. And that drummer became my friend—Dickie Harrell is his name. He's on "Be-Bop-A-Lula." So we said, wouldn't it be cool to have a drummer standing up? We tried to emulate these original rock 'n' rollers as much as we could. We also wanted to take it one step further. No one ever really pushed the drums to front, which is something I think we really did first.

**MD:** Live you have an incredible energy.

**Jim:** Well, at this point, I maintain that by trying to stay fit. I think when you get a little bit older, it's kind of important to do what you do without killing yourself to maintain a certain level of fitness. And I don't practice standing up. You can't really jump off your drums in your house. [laughs] You have to save that for the gig.

Onstage, I'm just trying to keep up with the other two. They're my oldest friends, and everyone's got this kind of competition, where we think, "I'm not the one that's going to get old first." [laughs] And I just want to be as good as the others at all times. That's my inspiration and makes me stay sharp.

**MD:** Do you warm up?

**Jim:** Normally I have a practice pad and metal sticks. I play that for maybe half an hour. What's important to me is also just walking around with a pair of sticks for another half hour, so it feels like

they're attached to you for a little bit before the show.

**MD:** Do you think there's one quality that you three share that's kept you together for this amount of time?

**Jim:** I think the main thing for any of these groups is there has to ultimately be some of what we used to call "AM hits" or songs that everybody knows, even if you're not into that specific band or that genre. Everybody knows "Rock This Town," even if they don't know who we are. The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, U2, Duran Duran, they have tons of those. And you could be a wicked shredder on the drums or have a certain look and style, but it kind of boils down to the tunes. We've had a few of those songs, and they've become very precious for us. So I think that's something we've united in. These are our songs. It's part of our fabric.

**Willie Rose**

**Slim Jim Phantom plays Gretsch drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Vic Firth sticks.**

## Also on the Road

**Bob D'Amico** with Sebadoh /// **Brad Hargreaves** with Third Eye Blind /// **Zach Lind** with Jimmy Eat World /// **Jason McGerr** with Death Cab for Cutie /// **Cindy Blackman Santana** with Santana



# Yamaha

## Live Custom Hybrid Oak Drumset

A unique high-end offering featuring a blended wood/synthetic shell designed for maximum attack, projection, and punch.

**Borrowing from the blended-shell concept** utilized in its flagship PHX and top-shelf Absolute Hybrid Maple lines, Yamaha recently reworked its Live Custom Oak shell to include an inner ply made from a sheet of synthetic phenolic polymer. This new 7-ply hybrid shell is said to have increased dynamic range, attack, and projection. We were sent a five-piece Live Custom Hybrid Oak configuration, in Earth Sunburst finish, featuring 7x10, 8x12, and 15x16 toms, an 18x22 bass drum, and a matching 5.5x14 snare.

### The Specs

The original Live Custom series featured thicker 1.2 mm oak plies in the shells (8-ply bass drums and toms and 6-ply snares). Those drums were specifically designed for situations requiring clear, defined tone and powerful low end. Live Custom Hybrid Oak shells feature six plies of the same premium oak and a center ply of phenolic. The phenolic is there to give the drums even greater attack and projection while enhancing the dynamic range. The bearing edges are cut to 45 degrees, with the peak being on the outermost plies of oak.

While the Live Custom featured high-gloss fade lacquers, Live Custom Hybrid Oak drums are finished with a traditional Japanese technique called *uzukuri*. This highly detailed process begins by sanding out the softer areas in the wood to create lower-laying channels that follow the natural grain pattern. The shell is then coated with a thin layer of black paint before being sanded again to remove the paint from the top surface while leaving the textured black-painted grains beneath. A final clear-coat finish is added to seal the shell and give the drums a rich yet subtle luster. The interior of the shells is also painted black, and the drums are outfitted with black-chrome hoops and hardware to further emphasize the series' darker aesthetic.

The bass drum claw hooks are die-cast and are precisely manufactured to provide smooth and silent tuning. Each hook is also insulated from the hoop with a plastic insertion plate. Another innovation debuted with the Live Custom Hybrid Oak is a bass enhancement weight system that employs small zinc die-cast weights studded into the interior shell at each lug. This is said to attenuate low-mid frequencies to make for a tighter and more focused sound. (This concept is borrowing from an old studio recording technique where sandbags, mic stand bases, paint cans, or other heavy items were often placed inside the bass drum to achieve a similar result.)

The floor tom leg brackets are designed to clamp onto the legs tightly without damaging them. The snare and toms come with 2.3 mm triple-flange steel DynaHoops. The rack toms come with the updated Y.E.S.S. III suspension mount, which is a low-profile bracket that bolts to the shell at strategic points to minimize dampening for optimal sustain and volume. Consistent with all Yamaha hardware, the hex-rod tom mounting system is one of the simplest and most effective designs on the market. With the Live Custom Hybrid Oak series, the tom mount connects directly to the bass drum shell. This helps to make the kit easy to set up and transport while not infringing on the sound of the bass drum in any discernible way.

The toms came with Remo Emperor Clear batters and Ambassador Clear bottoms. The bass drum had a P3 Clear batter and a P3 Ebony on front with the Yamaha logo and a small offset port. The snare came with a Remo Ambassador Coated batter and Ambassador Snare Hazy bottom, and it has ten single-post Absolute lugs, 2.3 mm DynaHoop steel rims, and a heavy-duty side-action Q-Type strainer that's super smooth, silent, solid, and stable.



## The Sound

I've played on original Live Custom oak drumsets many times over the past few years; they seem to be a staple backline setup for many venues and production companies. So I'm very familiar with how those kits sound, which can best be described as direct and upfront. They're not the most satisfying-sounding drums from the player's perspective, but they sound incredibly crisp and present out front, even when the band gets really cranking. This new Live Custom Hybrid Oak has a similar no-fuss, direct-to-the-point persona, but I found myself savoring its slightly darker flavor. Each of the drums had a strong, authoritative bite at the onset

of each stroke, but there was more depth and punch in the attack, and the tone was slightly darker. The sustain is quite focused and controlled (no muffling was needed at any tuning), which can be attributed to the phenolic core.

Tuning-wise, the snare was most at home at higher tunings, where it had amazing articulation, a crisp and snappy attack, and a dense and full-bodied tone. The overtones were perfectly balanced and controlled, adding just a touch of airiness to each rimshot and accent. You'll have no trouble getting your backbeats to be heard on this drum, but it's equally expressive across the entire dynamic range.

The three toms sounded best with a

wide pitch spread among them. The 10" drum excelled at medium and higher tuning, the 12" sounded most comfortable in the middle register, and the 16" floor was beastly with barely any tension on the heads. Meanwhile, the bass drum had a strikingly consistent sound regardless of how it was tuned. The attack was super crisp and meaty, the tone was big and full without being boomy, and the decay was quick. Even without any internal muffling, this bass drum was mix-ready. Just put a mic on it, and you're all set. List prices range from \$5,050 to \$7,640, depending on the configuration.

**Michael Dawson**





# Paiste

## Signature and Dark Energy Series Additions

The renowned Swiss cymbal maker celebrates thirty years of its Signature alloy with a smattering of add-ons.

### This year marks the thirtieth

anniversary of Paiste's Signature series, which features the company's proprietary B12 alloy (88-percent copper and 12-percent tin). This new line quickly became a favorite amongst drummers of all styles due to its rich, full, and expressive tones. While the Signature series is still immensely popular, Paiste decided to give the line a boost by adding 19" and 20" Fast crashes, 16", 17", and 18" Mellow crashes, a 20" Mellow ride, and a 22" Full ride. A pair of 15" Signature Dark Energy hi-hats was also introduced. Let's check them out.

### Larger Fast Crashes

Signature Fast crashes were previously available in 14"–18" sizes. To serve drummers desiring larger options, 19" and 20" models have been added. Like all Fast crashes in the series, these new Signatures are medium-thin and are designed for soft to moderately loud situations. The stick sound on both is sparkling and washy, and the sustain is silky smooth and relatively short. They have a slightly bright and

immediate attack that bursts with an array of warm, colorful, and shimmery overtones, regardless of whether the cymbals are struck with a light, glancing blow or an aggressive punch. Like all Paiste products, these new Fast crashes are incredibly consistent, and they have a fantastic, musical sound that's ideal for applications requiring warm, broad tones with controlled—but not choked—wash.

### Midsized Mellow Crashes

To complement the larger Signature Fast additions, Paiste created 16", 17", and 18" Mellow crashes. These are medium-thin and are designed for soft to moderate dynamics. They have a looser feel and a breathier and more complex tone than the Fast, but they aren't exceedingly dark or dry. The decay is smooth and somewhat short. There's not much of a bell sound in these crashes; they have a highly integrated character with minimal pitch variance. These Mellow models would likely best serve drummers looking for everyday recording and gigging crashes that aren't too loud and have a hint of vintage vibe without losing the sparkle and smoothness that are hallmarks of the Signature series.

### Mellow and Full Rides

The 20" Signature Mellow ride is a medium-weight cymbal that complements the Mellow and Fast crashes nicely, providing a warm and balanced sound with an even mix of clarity and wash. The bell has a clear but slightly integrated tone, and edge strikes elicit a smooth, gentle crash with focused, midrange overtones. Ideal for lighter playing, the 20" Mellow ride is a versatile cymbal that would serve well in a variety of situations requiring a more nuanced, expressive sound.

For applications requiring a musical ride with a bigger sound and more pronounced "ping," Paiste developed the 22" Signature Full. This medium-heavy cymbal maintains the balanced, rich tones of the Signature alloy while introducing a clear, crisp attack and a brighter and more separated bell. The sustain of the 22" Full ride is full and washy but also controlled enough so that it never overwhelms the click of the stick. I envision this robust ride being called upon often by rock, pop, blues, funk, and modern session drummers alike. (The 22" Signature Full reminded me of the ultra-defined but deep ride tone heard on countless modern-rock







hits played by session great Josh Freese.) I'm not often drawn to heavier cymbals, but this one really caught my attention. There's a lot of musicality within it.

### Larger Dark Energy Hi-Hats

The Dark Energy subseries, which was originally launched in 2004, utilizes the same B12 alloy as the rest of the Signature series, but these unique-looking cymbals are finished differently so as to produce darker, drier, and meatier tones. Dark Energy hi-hats were previously only available in 14". The new 15" version features the same pairing of a medium-thin top over an extra-heavy bottom. Both cymbals are loosely

lathed on top and mostly unlathed on bottom, and the entire surface of both sides is pocked with extensive pea-sized hammer marks.

The stick sound of the 15" Dark Energy hi-hats is super crisp and crunchy, and the foot chick is robust and chunky. The open sound has a deep and throaty sizzle that's reminiscent of a detuned breakbeat sample. Even though they're 15", these hi-hats are impressively responsive and articulate. If you like big hi-hats that have a strong and distinctive voice, these are some of the coolest sounding—and looking—around.

**Michael Dawson**



# Solid Drums

## 7x12 Beech and 5x14 Limited-Edition Maple Snares

The custom-shop newcomer from Switzerland pulls no punches with these impeccable stave-shell drums.

**Solid Drums was founded in 2014** by drummer/carpenter Christoph Anlauf in an effort to blend his passion for drums and a love of wood. All of Christoph's instruments are made by hand from only sustainable, locally harvested wood. Barrel-style stave construction is used, which Anlauf believes is the superior style because it maximizes the natural tone and beauty of the timber. Solid offers snares and drumkits in a range of species and sizes. We were sent two unique drums: a 7x12 beech (aka "the Twelve") and a super limited 5x14 maple with gold leaf diamond inlays. Both drums feature proprietary Swiss-made "stair" lugs, a Trick throw-off, Canopus wires, and Remo heads (Ambassador Coated batter and Ambassador Snare bottom).

### 7x12 Beech

This mini-beast has six lugs, 2.3 mm triple-flange steel hoops, and a 12 mm stave beech shell that's finished with natural satin oil. The bearing edges are cut to a precise 50-degree apex, and they have a rounded back cut. The snare beds are deep but have a

gradual slope that spans the distance between the lugs on each side of the wires. Beech is a medium-hard wood that traditionally occupies a sonic space somewhere between birch and maple. Solid sources wood from a local merchant, and the exact GPS coordinates of the tree used for each drum are indicated on an interior shell sticker.

If you're a fan of the dense, powerful, and super-tight "pop" often used by session great Steve Jordan, then this 7x12 is a must-have. It's one of only a few 12" drums I've played that maintains depth and body when cranked all the way up. The overtones are perfectly balanced and controlled, adding some subtle natural ambience after the initial attack without lingering too long. Backing off the tuning by a quarter or half turn at each tension rod brought out a more aggressive bark without detracting from the drum's super-focused, studio-ready smack and crispy snare response. Lower tunings produced a fatter, wider tone that packed a tight, chesty punch. You might not think a 12" snare would be versatile enough for general use, but this Solid Drums 7x12 stave beech is here to convince you otherwise. Retail price is \$1,050, which includes a high-quality, handmade gig bag.



7x12 Beech



**Gold-Leaf Limited-Edition Maple**

**Gold-Leaf Limited-Edition Maple**

I'm not usually one to become awestruck by a drum's appearance, but this limited-edition 5x14 12 mm stave maple snare is one of the most beautiful instruments I've ever seen. It features four meticulously crafted 12-carat moon gold and 23.47-carat rose gold diamond inlays, fabricated by artist Nina Leuenberger, and a rich blue/black stained finish. The stainless-steel hoops are handmade and are held in place with eight mini-claw hooks. As on the 7x12 beech, the bearing edges on this maple drum are precisely shaped to 50 degrees with a rounded back cut. The snare beds slope gradually down to a flat plateau where the wires seat.

So as not to allow this drum's flawless appearance to sway my judgment on its sound, I tested the Solid maple next to a few other similarly sized wood drums that were already in my studio. I recorded each drum in succession at a few different pitches and then shuffled the files so I could evaluate the results without knowing which drum was which. While none of the test drums were losers—they were all high-end, professional instruments—

there were distinct differences between them in terms of fullness, presence, projection, clarity, and articulation. After several rounds of listening, I kept gravitating back to recordings of the Solid maple. It sounded fuller and livelier than the others, and it was more tonally balanced at each tuning. It could be cranked for a strong and funky "pop" without choking, and it articulated subtle jazz comping with perfection. Slightly lower tunings had a richer and more tuneful character, while detuning the batter all the way drew out a quintessential disco fatback. All of these sounds were achieved with minimal fine-tuning and no muffling. This is a rare specimen, and only ten are being made. Put your orders in now, folks. Retail price is \$1,600 with the custom gig bag.

**Michael Dawson**



# Sweet Spot

## Fuzion Castle Clutches, Splash Adapter, and Hi-Hat Tambourine

Precisely machined accessories designed for maximum strength and style.

**Sweet Spot is a Canadian company** owned and operated by machinist and drummer Rob Michl, who began lathing his own stainless-steel hi-hat clutches after growing frustrated with the unreliability and stagnant designs of what was commercially available. Michl started by fabricating two clutches for his personal use, but soon other drummers began asking him to make more. That's when Sweet Spot Clutches and Accessories was born. In addition to the original Fuzion clutches, the company also offers a handful of accessories, including a slick adapter that allows you to mount a splash or small stacker to the top of the clutch, as well as a compact hi-hat tambourine. Let's check them out.

### Fuzion Clutches

Michl's benchmark products, Fuzion Castle and Screw clutches, are machined to precise specifications from solid stainless steel. As a result, they are a bit heftier than your off-the-shelf clutch, but they're also impeccably made. The wing nuts, thumbscrews, and locknuts thread into the main body of the clutch with zero friction. They also have a super-tight grip, so none of the parts will slip or loosen while you play.

The upper portion of the Fuzion clutch is strictly ornamental and is available in the shape of a castle, a conical screw, or a cross, and they come in anodized red, blue, black, or stainless-steel finishes. The top piece is also removable, so you can interchange it with another design or replace it with the Splash Adapter or Hi-Hat Tambourine. Fuzion clutches are available with a traditional thumbscrew or a hexagonally shaped bolt. (A

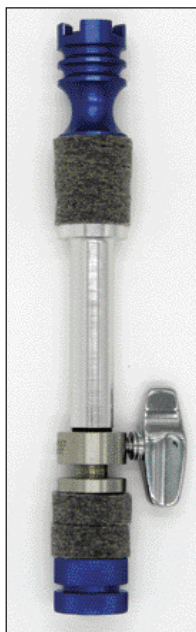


wrench is included with the hex-head option for those who want to be able to apply extra torque.) The aluminum lock nuts are knurled and have an extra-wide locking surface to ensure that they never work themselves loose. List prices for Fuzion clutches range from \$33.75 to \$38.

### Fuzion Clutch Splash Adapter

This lightweight, 4.25" machined-aluminum rod has interior threads on the bottom that marry perfectly with the threads on the top of the Fuzion clutch. Exterior threads on the uppermost point let you attach the topper to hold whatever you're mounting in place. A flat, 1"-wide platform is machined about an inch from the top, and this is where the cymbal—or whatever instrument you're mounting on the adapter—sits.

As with the clutch, the Splash Adapter is precisely machined, so the threading fits smoothly and snugly onto the Fuzion clutch. Once tightened down, the adapter won't become loose,

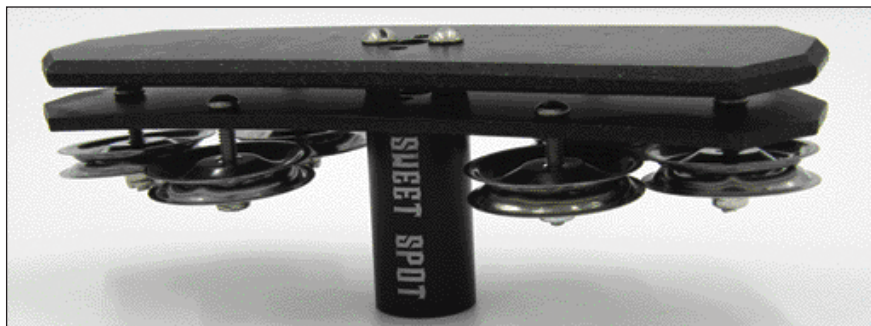


this gives you enough clearance to play either instrument without obstruction and without disrupting the action of the hi-hat stand. I can imagine a lot of creative uses for the Fuzion Clutch Splash Adapter, such as mounting mini hi-hats or stacks of small effects cymbals over standard or oversized hi-hats. List price is \$12.

### Fuzion Hi-Hat Tambourine

A slight departure from the all-machined metal accessories in Sweet Spot Clutches' catalog, the hi-hat tambourine features six pairs of standard steel jingles hanging from a piece of thin, flexible plastic, which is bolted to a black-finished metal tube that has a tension rod threaded into the side so it can affix the tambourine to a hi-hat pull rod. The metal tube is also threaded on the inside, so it can be mounted onto the Fuzion clutch or the Splash Adapter for configuration flexibility.

Although the composite elements help keep the hi-hat tambourine as lightweight as possible, it does add a bit of heft. I didn't need to adjust my hi-hat spring to keep the pedal's action quick, but you might need to tighten it down a bit. Once installed, the hi-hat tambourine added a nice layer of tight and quick jingle to the foot chick that wasn't too bright or overwhelming. The jingles also didn't rattle excessively. To my ears, it sounded closer to the more integrated jingle sounds you get when playing the hi-hats with a small handheld tambourine laying directly on top, rather than the brighter and



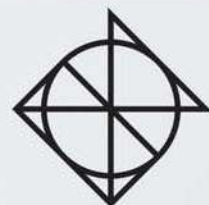
even during rigorous use. You have about 3" of separation between the top hi-hat and whatever you're mounting on the adapter;

more cutting sound of other hi-hat-mounted tambourines. List price is \$32.

**Michael Dawson**



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**GEARING UP** ON STAGE  
AND UP CLOSE

## Walk the Moon's

# Sean Waugaman

**Sean Waugaman says that after playing acrylic drums** for years, he was ready to switch to wood when his band, Walk the Moon, joined Muse for its latest tour. The drummer wanted a darker sound that would work well both in larger and smaller settings. "I've got rosewood, gum, and some mahogany, and each drum is pretty much a different blend except the 16x18 and the kick," Waugaman says. "It ends up sounding incredible together, and there's a really nice balance between the drums. It's also nice to have drums that have a good amount of tuning range. For smaller venues, I like to tune a little higher, and for the arenas I like to go as big and low as possible to power through the mix." The kit's custom purple fade finish complements the desert-sunset cover art from Walk the Moon's 2017 album, *What If Nothing*.

Waugaman plays a Trash Talk aluminum snare with six lugs, and he appreciates its open tone, sensitivity, and wide tuning range. "If it's a dryer venue, I can tune it a little lower," he says. "And if it's a real 'verb-y' venue, I can tune it up for more attack and crack. I've usually played ten- and twelve-lug snares, and it's amazing how much having six lugs opens up the sound."

Sean also uses a second Trash Talk with five lugs, and he employs triggers on both drums for more sound options. "As we've gotten more in depth with production, a lot of the snare sounds on the record will be four or five drums combined together, so it's hard to reproduce that sound live," he says. "We put a trigger on the acoustic kick drum and the two snare drums and use aTrigga, which is tied into Ableton Live. We blend the triggered samples with the live snare so it sounds more like the record."

Waugaman says that Zildjian's 15" K Sweet hi-hats offer a neutral but expressive sound that fits well within his cymbal setup. He uses a 19" K Sweet or 20" K Custom Dark crash (not pictured) depending on the venue, and he's played a 21" Sweet Brilliant ride for the past ten years. "It's a nice ride that works with the crash," he says. "It has a good blend of control and definition." He notes that the 18" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash is different enough from his left crash to create a nice balance, and the 22" Keropé is ideal for lower dynamics. "In smaller venues, I have to be conscious of cymbal bleed," he says. "We have a relatively quiet stage, and the cymbals are by far the loudest thing going. So playing softer is sometimes something I have to consider."

### Interview by Brandy Laurel McKenzie

### Photos by Anna Lee

**Drums:** Masters of Maple Neo-Classic with a custom purple fade over quilted maple finish

- A.** 6.5x14 Trash Talk aluminum snare
- B.** 5x14 Trash Talk aluminum snare
- C.** 9x12 gum/rosewood tom
- D.** 16x18 gum/mahogany floor tom
- E.** 14x14 gum/maple floor tom
- F.** 14x24 gum/mahogany bass drum
- G.** Remo Rototoms

### Cymbals:

- 1.** 15" K Sweet hi-hats
- 2.** 19" K Sweet crash
- 3.** 21" A Sweet Brilliant ride
- 4.** 18" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash
- 5.** 22" Keropé ride with rivets

**Microphones:** Heil and Sennheiser

**Heads:** Remo Emperor Coated tom batters, Controlled Sound Coated on snare batters and Ambassador Hazy snare side, Powerstroke P3 Clear bass drum batter and Ambassador Clear front

**Hardware:** Pearl, including an Icon rack and Demon and Redline pedals

**Sticks:** Vater 55AA

**Electronics:** Roland SPD-SX multipad and PD-8, RT-30H, and KT-10 triggers

**Accessories/Percussion:** Meinl hi-hat tambourine











# Anderson .Paak

Story by Robin Tolleson  
Photos by Alex Solca

While performing as opening act on the European leg of Bruno Mars' *24K Magic* tour in 2016, neo-soul sensation Anderson .Paak got some advice. "Bruno told me, 'Look, if you're going to do this drummer stuff, you've got to really take it over, so that when they think of 'drummer/singer,' you're the first person they see,'" .Paak recalls. "When you're on the kit, really be showing them that you can play. If you're up front, really show that you're a front man as well. Otherwise just get someone to cover.' That's when I was like, *Alright, I'm about to really take this over.* A huge part of the show is me on the kit, and it's not just like I can pretend to play. They really see, Oh, you play *drums drums.*"

Anderson .Paak, thirty-three, needs little coaxing to jump behind the kit. Drums have been his musical constant ever since sixth grade, but as one of his generation's most creative singers, songwriters, and producers, he's always seen the big musical picture. His first release was 2012's *O.B.E. Vol. 1*, under the name Breezy LoveJoy, and his duo with producer Knxwledge, NxWorries, birthed the critically acclaimed hip-hop record *Yes Lawd!*

Anderson .Paak grew up in Southern California, his parents of African American and South Korean ancestry. Four albums since 2014 with his longtime band Free Nationals and guests—*Venice, Malibu, Oxnard*, and *Ventura*—acknowledge his stomping grounds. His drumming skills became apparent to many on the Grammy-nominated *Malibu* (2016 Urban Contemporary Album), and he impressed even more on tour with strong live interpretations of programmed jams like "Am I Wrong." On the Dr. Dre-produced *Oxnard* (2019 Grammy winner for Rap Performance), .Paak colors the dancehall groove of "The Chase" with ghost notes and flourishes, his beats pop under Kendrick Lamar on "Tints," and he rocks large on "Brother's Keeper." His spring 2019 release, *Ventura*, is an organic blend of old- and new-school soul, with guests Andre 3000, Lalah Hathaway, and Smokey Robinson, and lots of live drums by .Paak peppering the tracks.

We spoke with Anderson .Paak right before *Ventura* hit the shelves, a mere six months after *Oxnard's* release. These are remarkably heady times for the drummer, and the future looks no less bright. We begin our conversation, however, in the not-too-distant past, when the fire in his belly and in his hands was first lit.

**MD:** Have you always been inspired by drums?

**Anderson:** My earliest musical memories are watching Snoop and Dr. Dre crisscross on videos, and listening to Earth Wind & Fire and Frankie Beverly with my mom. I was drawn to the cool old funk and old soul. It was always the rhythm, the drums, always the grooves that attracted me. I wanted to dance like Michael Jackson and learn all the dances, so yeah, the drums were a super important part.

**MD:** Was drumset the first instrument you picked up?

**Anderson:** We used to dance back in the day at school, at recess, break-dancing, doing the robot and stuff. We used to battle, and I would sing along. A new rap song would come out, and I'd lock myself in a room, listen to it over and over, memorize the words, and then perform it at school the next day. They'd be like, "This song just came out. How does he know all the words?" That was my first love.

When I got into sixth grade, I was tapping around the house all over the place, and my mom was saying I should play an instrument. I thought saxophone would be the shit, because I could pull up and be playing outside of a girl's window, get the girls with it, but they didn't have any more saxophones in the class. I saw a big bass drum, and I was like, *Well, that looks kind of cool, so I'll do that.*

I wanted to quit almost immediately, because I didn't want to read music, and my teacher was kind of mean. I was about to quit, but after a couple weeks my stepdad had a drumkit in the house, and I heard him playing it right when I walked in. He was tapping around, and I was like, *Oh man, this looks pretty sexy; this is dope.* He let me get on the kit, and that was one of the most natural things to me. In a day I could play a groove. My mom came out of the other room and started dancing. I had never seen my mom dance like that, so I was like, *I want to play drums.* I was sold on it. She was giving me songs like Archie Bell and the Drells' "Tighten Up," like, "If you can play this, you really might be doing something." That was one of the first grooves I learned how to play.

**MD:** You saw the power of the instrument to move people.

**Anderson:** Yeah, that was it. I could make people groove, change peoples' moods. Once I'd seen that I could do that, I was practicing all the time. My godsister came to the house one day, and she was like, "Oh, you play the drums now? You've got to come to the church." She took me to church, and my mind was blown. I saw the church choir; I was just like, "Aww." The drummer was killing me.

So I started going to church any time I could. I would sit right next to the drums. One service they were having offering, and the other drummer wasn't there, and the bass player was looking around





like, “Yo, any of y’all know how to play?” I hopped on the drums and started playing, and they immediately kicked me off. I sat my ass down, but they said, “You should come back; maybe we’ll let you play for the offerings. But you’ll have to practice.” The drummer that was there, Danny, he kind of took me under his wing, just let me watch him. Eventually they started letting me rehearse with the choir, then I started playing for offerings, and then they started letting me play a couple songs, and then eventually I was the lead drummer. But there were some embarrassing moments, playing in church.

**MD:** A lot of great drummers have come from playing in church.

**Anderson:** Yeah, that’s it, man. You’re talking about a lot of stuff that’s hard to teach. I don’t know how you can teach someone to have instincts or good reflexes, or how to pick up on the holy spirit. It’s a very spiritual thing, regardless of religion

“When I’m writing music—raps or vocals or anything—I’m always thinking about cadence, delivery, and where my pocket is on the track.”

or anything. When you’re dealing with people that are being consumed by the power of the lord, and you’ve got to play music to accompany that, you’re not going to play like someone who was trained to read music. It’s all feel, and in church they teach you, this isn’t even you—this is God going through you. And you’ve got to really be humble. Every time you try to play a drum fill or get crazy, the keyboard player might get up and kick you off the drums or look at you like, “What are you doing?”

So it’s about following the leader, knowing when to go and start chopping off, knowing when to speed up, slow down. You’ve got all these ensemble hits, and sometimes you might have four or five genres in one song. They might tell you to break it down; you’ve always got to be watching the choir director. It’s crazy, man. You might have to play with one broken stick, and you learn how to

# Anderson .Paak's Setup



**Drums:** DW Collector's series acrylic, hand-finished with glass mirror tiles  
**A.** 5.5x14 snare  
**B.** 8x14 snare  
**C.** 7x10 tom  
**D.** 13x16 floor tom  
**E.** 18x22 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Sabian Custom Shop  
**1.** 15" hi-hats  
**2.** 10" O-Zone splash  
**3.** 11" O-Zone splash over 8" Mini Holy China  
**4.** 22" ride  
**5.** 19" O-Zone crash  
**6.** 20" crash  
**7.** 20" crash

**Hardware:** DW 9000 series rack, MFG series MDD hi-hat and MCD single bass drum pedal; Porter & Davies BC2 round throne top on a DW 9000 swivel throne base.

**Heads:** Evans Hybrid-S batter and Hazy 300 snare side on 5.5" snare; Genera HD dry batter and Hazy 500 snare side on 8" snare; Hydraulic red tom batters and

UV1 coated tom resonants; EMAD heavyweight bass drum batter and custom EQ3 ported bass resonant.

**Sticks:** Promark Anderson .Paak signature sticks

**Accessories:** PureSound twisted wires on 5.5" snare, Super 30 wires on 8" snare

make the drumkit sound good with what you have. You're always being exposed to some of the best musicians, singers, bass players. I'm proud that I was able to come up out of there, because that was some of the best schooling that I had.

**MD:** Where else did you study?

**Anderson:** At Musicians Institute. I was twenty-one, and I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. I was struggling with how to do this music thing. I got an apartment in L.A., applied to Musicians Institute, and got in. I didn't know how to read, so I was at the first-level entry, and I started really making a splash over there. I realized, okay, I've got kind of a gift on the drums. And they were exposing me to a lot. Before, I only knew a couple of drummers really, outside of Questlove, other gospel drummers, Chris Dave.... But going to school there, I started getting exposed to Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, Mike Clark, Vinnie Colaiuta. These were dudes I'd never really heard before.

The teachers there were showing me simple rudiments, and they were also breaking down my drum fills and transcribing them. There were times when we'd be jamming, and the drum teachers would be like, "Yo, how did you do that?" And I'd be, "I don't know." They were like, "Do it again. You should know how you did that." They would transcribe the drum fill and the next day say, "This is what you're playing." It was real cool that people could hear it, and put it to paper as well.

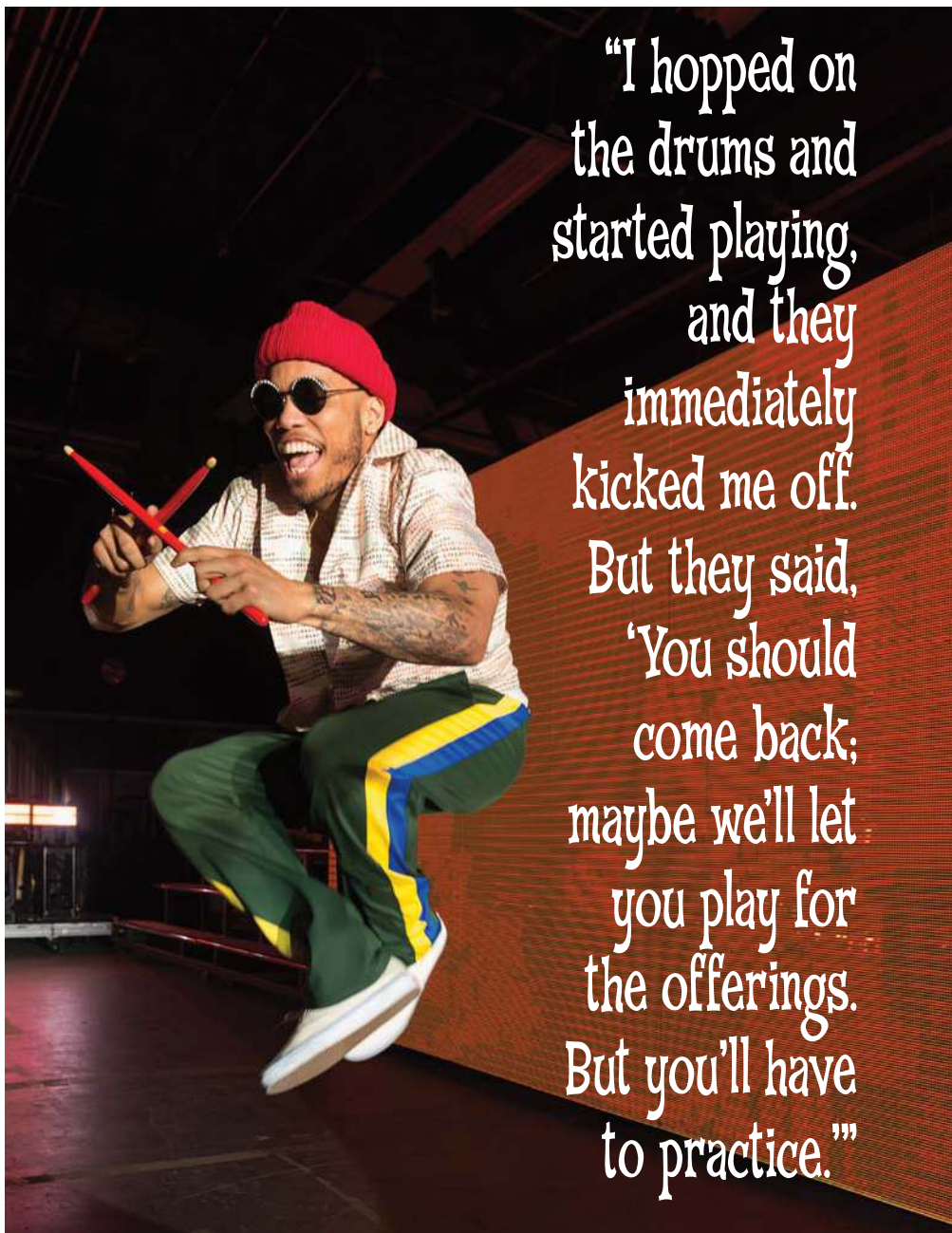
That was where I got to really practice in a room by myself, too. It's like, all that time that you have when you're coming up, working on stuff, thinking, "Man, I should put practice in," you've got to cherish those times. Because as you get into your career, with more gigs, you get less time to really practice.

**MD:** I heard an interview where you talked about the importance of listening to music and absorbing it.

**Anderson:** Yeah, that's just me, naturally, like listening to trap records, all the nuances and the lyrics and the cadences. I wanted to learn exactly how that was, so I listened. I was always infatuated with that. And coming up in church, you had to listen to the music, or else they were going to know. I would go over stuff hundreds and hundreds of times, and I'd listen to it until I went to sleep. And then when I found new artists that I liked, I would just become obsessed, and I would have to hear it before I'd go to sleep. It was just going into my system.

That was something that I learned you have to do: stop and really listen to every little thing. Free Nationals is the band that I play with to this day, and we got our start playing in a lot of dive bars, cover bars, so we listened down to a lot of old records. Not just to learn the songs, but to get the feel. That's what I became obsessed with.

You go through stages, especially as a drummer. You want to emulate, you want to be like Tony Royster or whoever, you know, you want to learn all the fills and play like them. Carter Beauford was a big one for me. I love how Carter plays, his hi-hat style and how it jumps. And for a long time I was just sounding like that. Then I wanted to learn his drum fills, and it just became about chops. Then I wanted to learn groove, so I started listening to Steve Jordan. I wanted to learn how to play studio grooves. That really is the battle of the drummer now, for me, to learn how to keep that pocket, and



"I hopped on the drums and started playing, and they immediately kicked me off. But they said, 'You should come back; maybe we'll let you play for the offerings. But you'll have to practice.'"

to not want to go on to the kit and just chop off, or want to practice while performing or recording a song. Keeping that balance where it's not too much and not too little. It's like an endless struggle to not go too crazy, just keep it together.

**MD:** Do drummers make good producers?

**Anderson:** Absolutely. You're already someone that can make use of all of your limbs. You're capable of doing a lot of things at one

time. A lot of drummers are the ones that are running the Pro Tools tracks, making beats, doing a lot. As soon as you can play drums, your approach to production kind of has the one-up, because for modern music like pop, hip-hop, and soul, drums is a huge part of it. If you have rhythm and timing, then as a producer you already have that one-up. A lot of producers and artists just have no sense of timing—it's crazy. And so

from a producer, that's the first thing I'm looking for. Are the drums hittin'? Are the drums cutting through? Should we take the drums out on this part, wait so we can give them the emphasis on the chorus? I'm obsessed with how we're going to make the drums cut through. People get fooled that the drums are banging, but it's not really banging if it's all sub and noise and your body doesn't feel it—it's just loud. Is

**MD:** I've read that you had an unstable home situation at times growing up. Was music something that you could depend on?

**Anderson:** Absolutely, man. When I was eight years old my pops went to prison for assault and battery on my mom. He went away, and I sought refuge in my hip-hop music. Tupac and Snoop, I just buried myself in it. When I learned how to play drums, my moms was always working, and the drums were the most consistent thing in my life. I was getting better, and so I was obsessed with just spending time with it. If I didn't have that, I feel like I would have put that energy toward something else.

In my town, Ventura and Oxnard, if you weren't playing sports, doing track and field, playing basketball, there wasn't anything else to do. I remember a lot of my friends and my cousins joining gangs, and all I wanted to do was play drums, so that was like my escape. I was listening to gospel and wanted to learn all the songs, learn all the drum fills, and play just like the people I was hearing. And then my senior year my step-pops and my mom got put into prison, and I started putting even more into what I was doing. I was making beats on the PC and writing off them, so I just went all in to it, and that was my therapy.

When people saw that I was a musician or that I could actually play, you could see the respect. Like, "Aw, you're different, man." My cousins were like straight gang-bangers, and when they saw me on the kit they were like, "Yeah, you need to keep doing that." Like, "Follow that, you're different, you're special. You've got a gift." I was just this kid that was all into his music. That was all I cared about—that, and food. I wasn't going to parties in high school, drinking and smoking. I was just the class clown and doing music, playing my drums. Everybody was going crazy, putting their time into other things. People think they're going to be young forever, so they don't invest in their passion. Some people find what they're meant to do very young, but then they get distracted. They feel like, "Oh, I could never do this; I couldn't make a career out of that."

We were moving all over the place, from apartment to apartment. My mom had her own produce company, but if we had a bad season, we were doing bad financially. But I always had a drumkit no matter what. If we moved to an apartment, I would keep my kit at my friend's, or my mom's office, and I would be able to practice there or at church. That was the thing that was always around, that I could always go back to. It saved my



drummers that are singers and also play bass or keys have a huge advantage. We have a different approach. When I'm writing music, raps or vocals or anything, I'm always thinking about cadence, delivery, and where I sit, like where my pocket is on the track.

**MD:** Where in the process of writing a track do the drums come in?

**Anderson:** It depends. If it's just me and a guitar player, I can lay the drum track, and we can build from there. But we can't go nowhere until I get the drums slapping into the middle of it. I've got to get the sound I'm looking for, or else it's uninspiring. I've got to feel that first. When I'm given beats

the kick really cutting through? Is the snare really cracking? Or is it just noise in the way? Do we need a better-quality kick to cut through? When it comes to live drums, I'm always trying to get the driest kick and snare; the kick sounds like it's filled with pillows, and raw, so you can get that punch. I love that sound.

**MD:** You pay attention to the details of every sound.

**Anderson:** Yeah, sometimes we'll go forever on mixes trying to get the drums right. Songs will come out, and I'll still be hearing it like, "Yeah, I wish we could have gotten the mud out of the kick."

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## Anderson .Paak

life, and I owe a lot to the drums, to music. It put me in a position to help my family, get my mom a house, get my own studio, help my friends be able to tour and do arena shows now, with the same band that we were playing bars with. I was blessed, and I just have so much respect for the power that the drums put in my life.

**MD:** There is so much programmed drums in hip-hop. Does that affect the way you play live drums, too?

**Anderson:** Modern music now is programmed. Country, rock, Top-40 pop music...you can have a whole record that was programmed on a sequencer, that sounds real, drum breaks and all. When you do get in the studio, people want you to play like a program. The sound of the acoustic drumset, as far as kick and snare, that's a dying sound now. Modern pop music and hip-hop are run by 808s, big basses, snares. Drummers that are coming up have to either know how to program that stuff or play to accompany that. So in hip-hop we're pushing it. There's never been a drummer/front man, out front and going off on the drums, and then you've got a full band, and they're taking solos, the same band interacting onstage. So live I'm always trying to merge those worlds, and I want to learn how we can build something different without completely abandoning the live aspect. It's like, ain't nobody really letting the drummer go off, like, "Ooh, that was nasty; did you hear that?" We want to bring that back.

**MD:** When did the Free Nationals come together?

**Anderson:** We met in college, at Musicians Institute in Hollywood. Jose Rios, the guitar player, Callum Connor, the DJ and percussionist, and I all went to the school. I met Jose first. He was dating a girl, and I was dating a girl in the same apartment complex. Eventually I broke up with that girl, and he got kicked out of his spot. I was like, "Don't you play guitar? Come over here and stay where I'm at." I didn't even have a place. I was couch surfing with the other homies. We started writing immediately and started building from there. Then we got put on the same gig for another artist in San Francisco with Tnava [Ron Tnava Avant]. We had so much fun, and sounded so good, just as a three-piece. Ron was playing key bass and keys—no one could play the key bass like him. We were the funkiest trio.

And then I started doing vocals. I had original music, and I was like, "Do you guys want to hear my stuff?" They thought it was dope, so we were making money playing cover gigs and then on the side, when we could, we would play my music. We played

at bars, random gigs, birthday parties, bar mitzvahs—I mean, anything we could do, bro. We would play for food. We would get gigs where we would have to learn like fifty tunes for a showcase or something. [laughs] We're playing for every artist, and we're splitting three hundred bucks, you know. Whatever we could do in those early times, all we cared about was the jamming—playing and getting better. We wanted to be the *cats*.

Eventually we met our bass player, Kelsey Gonzalez. He was touring all the time, but he came to see us playing at Temple Bar, and he loved it. We didn't have a bass player, and he was like, "Dude, I would love to play with you guys." I was like, *Damn, this dude plays for Miguel, and he runs tracks, he's a real touring musician, he's on the hit—and he wants to play with us!* So, he started practicing with us and joined.

Callum joined when I started making my first album, *Venice*. He was doing all the beats for that, and he was that other side, the 808s and getting back to the heavier aspect. I saw that he was really good at that, and I was like, "You should come and DJ; you can run the tracks, and we can play over that." That was it, dude. For the longest time, we didn't have no click, didn't have in-ears, nothing. We were playing with just basic stage monitors, playing over show mixes that we stripped. We would keep the 808s in, keep certain elements in the track, and then we would play over them. Depending on how bad the sound guy was, sometimes we would be on top of the track, or completely rushing, or behind. It was always a dice roll, but we got so good at that that there was no gig that we couldn't do.

Then when we finally were able to get some good in-ears, playing to a click and stuff, it was like butter. Now our whole show is run on a click—the lighting, everything is connected. When I think of all of those years that we were just doing it raw, that gave us so much character. When people hear us, they can hear that we're tight, and that we've been playing for a while. You can't buy that, bro. So I think that's part of the chemistry.

**MD:** You had different approaches to the drums on *Venice* and *Malibu*.

**Anderson:** I don't think I actually played drums on any of the tracks on *Venice*. What I was trying to go for on *Venice* was a modern R&B, trap kind of sound. I wanted something that would bang in the clubs, like the song "Drugs," or "Might Be." With *Malibu*, I had a lot of songs where I was playing drums. On a lot of the album, I would play the groove with hi-hat and snare for like thirty-two bars, play the whole song through. Then I would take that loop and add the synthetic kick underneath,



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## Anderson .Paak

and it gave it a unique sound. That's how "The Bird" and that stuff was done. You get that thump, but you then you have those live snares and hats.

**MD:** I love the fills on "Heart Don't Stand a Chance," and the stops you wrote in.

**Anderson:** Yeah. That was one of the first times that I'd used the V-Drums and written a song. DJ Khalil invited me to his studio, and he had some V-Drums. We just put up a kit, and I got on there and started writing at the same time.

**MD:** "Put Me Thru" has a live, rocking groove.

**Anderson:** Yeah, that's another one where I played the hi-hat and snare, recorded dry, and then I went back and put the kick drum underneath it. I played the two grooves, and then changed the kick pattern up on the verse, different from the chorus. I wanted a sound like how Prince had his drums sounding on his first two albums, like records in the '70s that have that fat snare and everything's dry.

**MD:** Your new album, *Ventura*, seems to have even more live playing on it.

**Anderson:** Oh, yeah. I wanted to hear the contrast from *Oxnard*. I finished both records at the same time—one was supposed to be gritty, and one was supposed to be pretty. With *Oxnard* I wanted to make like the quintessential hip-hop Dr. Dre and Anderson .Paak album. Hard-hitting toms, bass, snares that crack, sensitive skits, risky song topics, still with the elements of funk and soul, but more based around hip-hop, and a lot of stuff to dance to.

Then with *Ventura* I wanted to go a little more organic, more soulful, and to challenge myself in making more straight-ahead love

songs and working with other writers to help for better hooks. Also taking it even more creatively with the song structures, and really getting off on my drum ability, too. You know, there's records where you can tell, "Oh, this is a drummer's album."

**MD:** "Reachin' 2 Much" has some really hot drums, especially those flams you're adding.

**Anderson:** Yeah, all that tension going on with the drums, but then there's straight-ahead vocals and groove going over the top of it. The drummer is like on a different gig—I love that. That's a tune I can just go off on, but it's still got the groove.

**MD:** I'm enjoying those nice, crisp snare fills on "Come Home."

**Anderson:** I was thinking about Motown drummers or session drummers back in the '60s and '70s that had to have parts, you know, showing that you were playing for the song. On the chorus, I'm doing the drum roll on the floor tom, and I'm thinking about these drum fills and stuff that complemented the songs and the basic grooves. Yeah, I really like how that came out. Soulful drums, like, what's my dude's name, Gadson.

**MD:** The "Linus and Lucy" Spotify single you released in December is a great drum feature.

**Anderson:** Yeah, we had a lot of fun on that one. Man, I met this brother Maurice Brown through Tnava, and he has really changed the whole dynamic of our sound. We added him to the Free Nationals. He's an incredible trumpet player. I love doing trio stuff, so again, Tnava, Maurice, and I had the opportunity to do that Spotify session—eight hours just to have fun. They wanted us to do a Christmas song, and we were jamming, but I couldn't find one that I liked. And Maurice

was like, "Let's do this one, and do it our way." So we ran through it a couple times... I feel like that was the third take, and we jammed it out. I just wanted something that was an exciting delivery on the drums. Something that they could play during Christmas time that was different, and had some fire on the kit.

**MD:** I love your story about Bruno Mars. After he gave you that advice, did you take any specific action?

**Anderson:** We had to really take that in. I went into reformatting the stage set. I used to be over to the side, stage right, not on a riser or anything. And now I'm in the middle, dead center, I've got a big riser with LED under us, and more people realize, "I didn't even know you played drums. You play drums and sing!"

The biggest thing we have on the web is us playing the Tiny Desk Concert on NPR. It's just us playing, and I'm on the kit the whole time. There were people that were just like, "Yo, you should get off the kit," or, "You should stay on the kit and not do the front man thing." But it was like not letting those people get in my head, and just doing what was true to me.

What Bruno was saying was, "You've got to really take this over, bro. Your next album—it has to be a thing." And when I was touring with him, I saw that. He's one I have a lot of respect for. He's one of the only other dudes that can play an instrument, dance, and is really an entertainer. I've seen how he puts his show together to suit what he does, how J. Cole put his show together to suit what he does, Kendrick, Beyoncé, everybody, to suit what they do, so there's no reason we couldn't do the same. It's like, the drummer's got something to say, too, you know.



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# Fredy Studer

## Evolving Processes

by Ken Micallef

Following in the lineage of European drumming masters Pierre Favre and Han Bennink, Swiss-born Fredy Studer has deftly employed touch, tone, texture, noise, and rhythm in service of highly drum-centric music that, regardless of its avant-garde nature, communicates a rare sense of sincerity and humanity.

Active on the European avant-jazz and classical scenes since the late 1960s, Studer was a founding member of the influential, freewheeling fusion group OM, and has toured and tracked albums with such iconic musicians as Dave Holland, Miroslav Vitous, Joe Henderson, Rainer Brüninghaus, Markus Stockhausen, Charlie Mariano, George Gruntz, Franco Ambrosetti, and Christy Doran. Along the way, he's ceaselessly explored out-rock, jazz, folk, psychedelia, blues, fusion, rhythm 'n' blues, bebop, funk, contemporary classical, and open-improvisation terrain.

Among the dozens of albums Studer has recorded are the landmark 1977 ECM release *Percussion Profiles* with Jack DeJohnette, Dom Um Romão, Pierre Favre, Dave Friedman, and George Gruntz, and Favre's 1984 release *Singing Drums*, featuring Paul Motian and Naná Vasconcelos, both of which expanded the then-current rhythmic consciousness. Other projects featuring Studer and Favre are the Four in Time drum quartet, with Daniel Humair and Fritz Hauser, and the long-running Drum Orchestra duo. Along the way Studer has also interpreted the percussive masterworks of 20th-century classical composers Steve Reich, John Cage, and Edgard Varèse.

Coinciding with his long-term consultancy with Paiste cymbals, Studer followed his own artistic muse, exploring unusual situations and challenging concepts in music, life, and drumming. Studer's life works are detailed in a 224-page book included in the recent box-set *Now's the Time*. On the package's double-LP audio component, Studer incorporates random percussion within his freely performed rhythms, creating a



Marcel Meier

complete rhythmic world that challenges Western notions of the drumset's capabilities. Applying extended techniques and novel approaches to percussion, Studer speaks a musical language unique in its use of texture, sound, rhythm, and noise, and in the feelings it evokes. Remarkably, given the depth of his catalog, it's his first true solo drumset work.

Opener "InPuls" introduces a 4/4 pulse, to which Studer orchestrates flowing cymbal and tom timbres. Performing with a vigilant yet subtle touch, Studer makes his set sing. "Katharina San" explores freakish detuned cymbals with mallets. "Another Day" is a liquid palette of shimmering bells, reverberating cymbals, brushed drums, and resounding bass drum. "Joysticks" follows the life of a double-stroke roll played on a snare drum, as Studer roams over the middle of the head, its edge, and

the drum's shell with comical strikes leading to long, hymnal bell tones.

Studer's processes evolve as quickly as his brain and body can fly between projects. Today he continues to work with a trio featuring pianist Katharina Weber and guitarist Fred Frith; the Jimi Hendrix Project with guitarist Christy Doran, vocalist Erika Stucky, and bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma; a trio with fellow percussionists Robyn Schulkowsky and Joey Baron; pianist Jasper van't Hof's quartet; and age-defying fusion tricksters OM. The DVDs *Sedel: Rock 'n' Roll Kingdom*, *Hardcore Chambermusic: A Club for 30 Days*, and *Namibia Crossings: Spirits & Limits* find Studer traversing the world stage in the kind of unusual collaborations for which he is heralded.

Studer's energy is contagious, ferocious, and endearing, his drumming equally so. We've captured merely a slice of it here.

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**MD:** You've been an active, successful musician since the late 1960s; what's the key to that sort of longevity?

**Fredy:** A love for music beyond borders. I love improvisation in a deep way. I saw Jimi Hendrix in London, and Mitch Mitchell became a big influence. John Coltrane also. And then I discovered the great black musicians like Pharoah Sanders and Albert Ayler, and European improvised music and ethnic music from all over the world.

**MD:** How do you maintain your technique on a day-to-day basis?

**Fredy:** I use the books *Stick Control* [by George Lawrence Stone] and *4-Way Coordination* [Marvin Dahlgren and Elliot Fine]. I like drum books that are open, like Gary Chester's books—neutral material where you can transform your own ideas. When I played bebop and hard bop I didn't have that experience, but I was listening to records and practicing to execute that kind of music and feel. I always did what I had to do right in the moment. I went through so many different styles...that was learning for me instead of attending music university or a jazz school.

**MD:** Do you have a warm-up routine or hand-to-hand exercise you do on a regular basis for maintenance?

**Fredy:** When I go to my practice room, I start with basic practicing ideas using the double bass drum pedal: doubles, singles, very slow then faster, with accents and variations. And with my hands I play on a pillow on my snare drum with very heavy sticks. I play left-left-right, left-left-right or paradiddles and concentrate on the left

hand, which is weaker than my right. After twenty minutes I change to lighter sticks, and then it feels much easier.

I also work on balance between the limbs: simple stuff like two 8th notes on the right bass drum, followed by two 8ths on the right hand, two 8ths on the left-foot hi-hat, and two 8ths on the left hand. Then I shift the beat by one 8th note. It sounds very simple, but it's hard to do. Last year I really concentrated on that stuff to get ready for the solo recording.

### Why Is Now the Time?

**MD:** Why record a solo drumming record at this point in your career?

**Fredy:** I was never really interested in playing solo drums, except a drum solo in a band [setting] or on the spot. Then visual artists asked me to play as accompaniment to their gallery shows or exhibitions, and I was never prepared. Five years ago, I was asked to play solo at a jazz festival. I was searching for stuff and preparing, and the concert went very well. So a lot of people encouraged me to continue with it.

It became a new challenge. I knew I wanted to play *music* on the drumset; it has to be musical. And I knew that it should be a mix of groove and noise or sounds—those two poles have been interesting to me since the beginning. That's why I play groove music or really free improvised music.

**MD:** Did you create arrangements for each track/improvisation?

**Fredy:** I developed concepts, I worked on sounds, I worked on grooves, and sometimes it all came together. To give you

an example, at the very end of "Now's the Time," it's a polyrhythm between the legs and the hands. I had that written groove, a three-over-four pulse, but then I played a samba pattern on top of it. I didn't use the right hand, just the left hand on the rim of the snare drum. The bass drum played a punctuation accent on the last beat, because I want to play dynamically with the hands and the feet. Then it was much more difficult to keep the right hand out. I made a crescendo on the bass drum and a decrescendo with the left hand, which sounded like what you hear on recordings with delays. I still had my right hand free, so I did free scratching on a small China-type cymbal that I put on my floor tom.

**MD:** For "Now's the Time," did you map out the ideas in advance, or was that just one long improvisation?

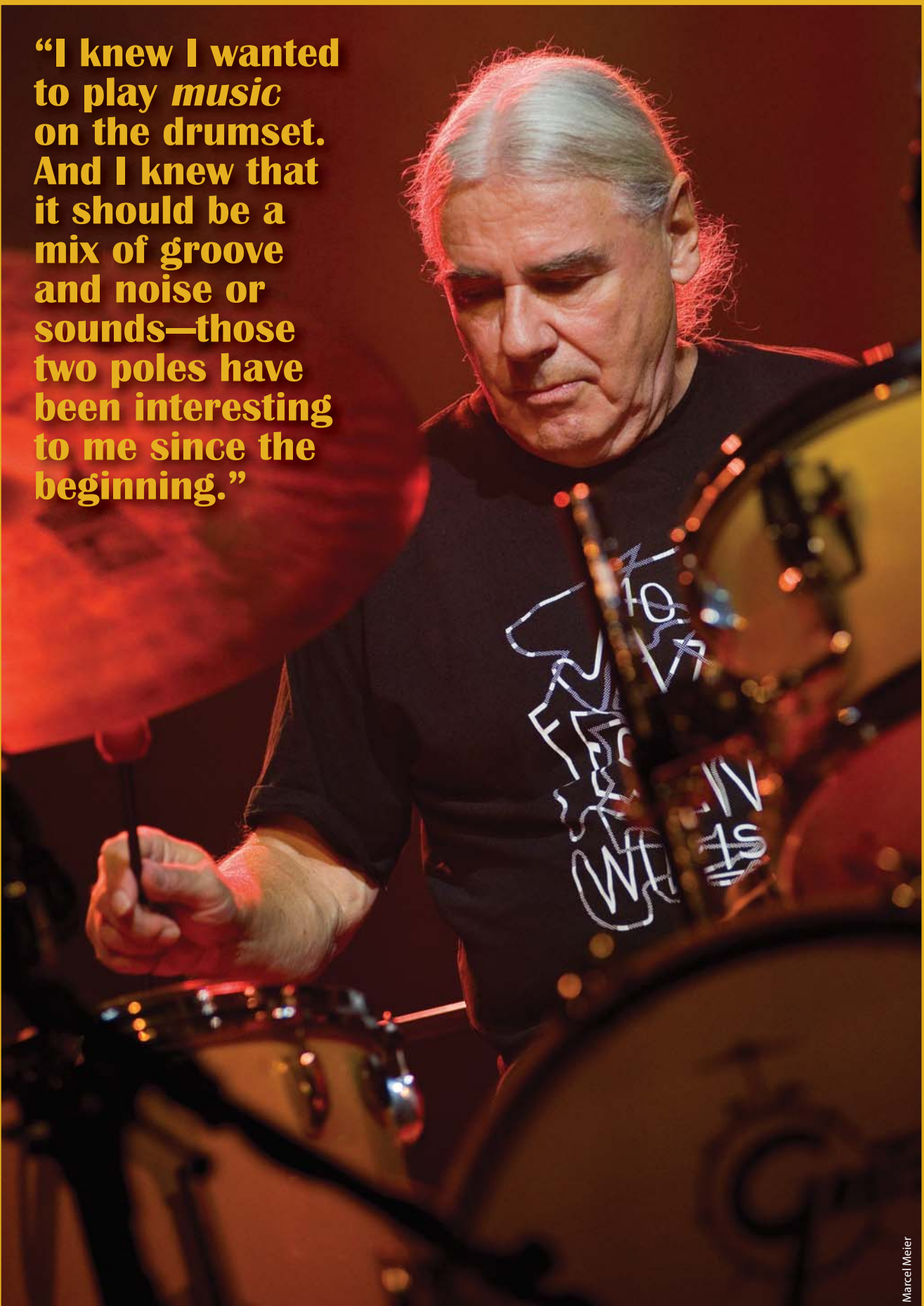
**Fredy:** It was mapped out in advance. In the studio it was very important to execute something that I was practicing, but also to take the risk in the moment of recording. I wanted to keep the momentum of improvisation very open.

**MD:** Were the other compositions arranged in advance?

**Fredy:** Two tunes on the record, "An Open Window for Frasi" and "Rostiger Himmel," weren't planned at all.

**MD:** There's a YouTube video of you and Jojo Mayer playing kits together, and while he's playing you sort of erupt. So much energy comes off your drumset. And on a video of Phall Fatale, we can see that you're playing high off the drumset. Is it very hard to maintain that energy at seventy years old?

**“I knew I wanted to play *music* on the drumset. And I knew that it should be a mix of groove and noise or sounds—those two poles have been interesting to me since the beginning.”**



**Fredy:** I started karate in 1981 and did it for thirty-five years. I made the third Dan, which is the third black belt of nine. Karate has kept me in shape. Since the late 1960s I've been on the road. I like to hang out, to drink, so karate became my corrective. When I overdid the partying, karate helped me maintain some kind of balance.

**MD:** Would you say that *Now's the Time* is more about sound in general than drums per se?

**Fredy:** I didn't want to do something that was already done by other drummers who did solo recordings. So I concentrated on just metal and skin, to make a mix between sound and groove. That's why some tunes are groove dominated and the sound or the noise is the smaller part, or vice versa.

**MD:** Are you using mallets and gongs as well as sticks and cymbals?

**Fredy:** I started working at Paiste in sound development in 1970. I followed Pierre Favre. I got a lot of prototypes including a heavy, thick 20" cymbal, and I played it with a stick with a small mallet at its tip. It produces great overtones. I also have a little upside-down splash cymbal, and I

## Studer's *Now's the Time* Setup

**Drums:** mid-'80s Gretsch

- 5x14 wood snare
- 8x12 tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 18x18 bass drum (custom made)

*Note: Snare and floor tom are often prepared with small metal objects placed on top.*

**Heads:** Gretsch white coated Permatone snare batter and Remo Ambassador Clear snare side; Gretsch white coated Permatone tom batters and clear Permatone resonants; Gretsch white coated bass drum batter and Aquarian Force I on front

**Cymbals:** Paiste

- 14" Masters dark hi-hat prototype
- 18" Masters Swiss thin crash prototype with inverted 8" bell on top
- 22" Masters dark ride prototype
- 10" Masters light prototype cable-hat
- 22" tuned gong on cymbal stand with inverted 12" Signature bell on top
- 20" Signature bell ride prototype
- 26" Sound Creation gong No. 3
- 32" tuned gong

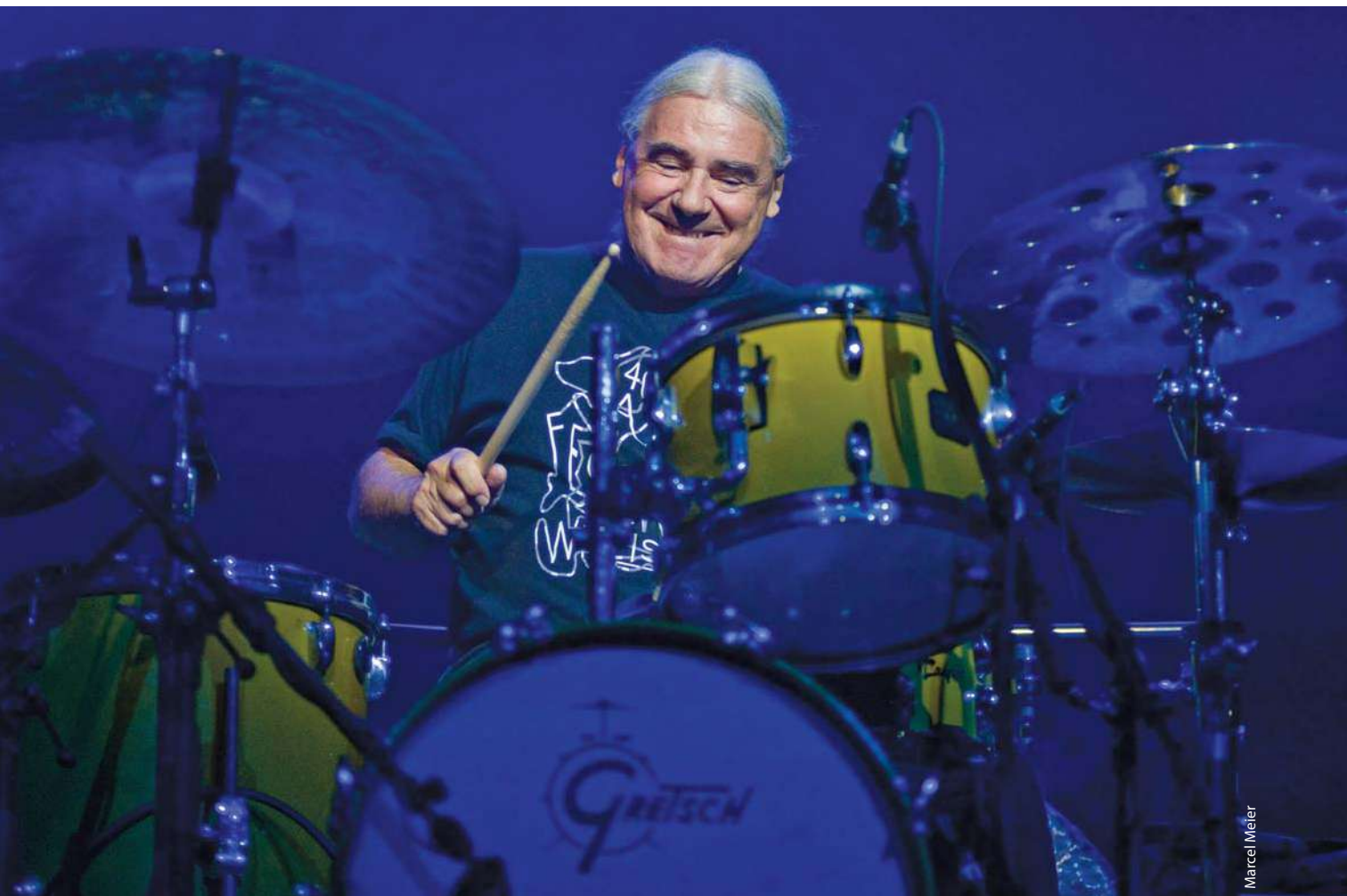
**Sticks:** Vic Firth SD9, brushes, mallets, and Dreadlocks

**Hardware:** DW

got very close to that cymbal; it produces these unbelievable overtones that are like electronic sounds.

**MD:** In "Lies Mehr Nadeln" and "Circle Stomp" there are metallic, cutting sounds.

**Fredy:** In "Lies Mehr Nadeln" I'm using a hi-hat stand without cymbals mounted on it. I set up two China-type cymbals on cymbal stands, touching the rod of the hi-hat from two sides. So when I played the hi-hat stand,



Marcel Meier



the rod went up and down and produced these sounds.

In "Circle Stomp" I used 14" hi-hats, but I [also] set up a 22" China-type cymbal on a cymbal stand over the rod of the hi-hat. In that song the bass drum plays on the first beat of the triplet, the hi-hat [chick] plays the second beat of the triplet, and the rod of the hi-hat stand touches the 22" China on the third beat of the triplet. I played everything—no overdubs or electronic effects on the record.

**MD:** "Joysticks" begins with what sounds like a drum exercise on a snare drum with the snares off. Then it goes all these different places.

**Fredy:** I put a piece of felt on the skin; that's why it sounds the way it does. I loved it. It's a very simple double-stroke roll, but it operates between the felt on the skin and the rim. I'm playing the same roll but moving the stick closer or farther from the center, with different accents. It's very simple, and I didn't do a lot of takes. I always

think the first take is the freshest. It's not always true, but with me it mostly is. It came out great so that's why we kept it.

### Paiste Sound Development

**MD:** How did working at Paiste affect your approach to drumming?

**Fredy:** I worked in Paiste sound development from 1970 until 2016. I learned a lot about sound and the music world. One night I was hanging with John Bonham, and we discussed great drums and cymbals and music in general. I spoke with many drummers about similar things over the years. I worked many years with Robert Paiste, so my ears got really sharp. We had to create our own language because it is difficult to describe sound in a way another person can understand.

**MD:** What Paiste lines did you help create?

**Fredy:** Every line that came out. The last thing I did was get Vinnie Colaiuta interested in Paiste cymbals. We had to prepare in advance, and then he was ready

to change. We developed a cymbal line with him, the Paiste Formula 602 Modern Essentials line. He was there in the middle and the end, fine-tuning everything, and he was freaking out.

**MD:** How was *Percussion Profiles* with Jack DeJohnette and Pierre Favre recorded?

**Fredy:** George Gruntz wrote the piece. We had a score. Then we also improvised. That was the first time I played together with Jack, which was unbelievable. A great experience, and I learned a lot. Before the recording, we played at the Monterey Jazz Festival. Then we recorded the album at Wally Heider's studio in L.A.

**MD:** What's the essence of your drumming approach?

**Fredy:** To tell a story and to play honest music. All the greats have that core of honest, true music. Even if I listen to drummers of Senegal or great tabla players, it's always the same fantastic experience for me.

## Fredy Studer on *Now's the Time* Analyzing the Drummer's Fascinating Solo Work

Transcriptions by Marc Halbheer  
Text by Willie Rose

Swiss-based artist, educator, and Studer confidant Marc Halbheer transcribed four cuts from Fredy Studer's 2018 solo drumming effort, *Now's the Time*. Let's dig in.

### "Can I?"

After establishing a double bass ostinato in which Studer's left foot plays an open hi-hat splash and bass drum pedal at the same time, the drummer improvises on a Thai gong that's placed on his snare. Here's an excerpt from around the 3:20 mark.

Gong melody:

The musical notation is presented in two systems. The first system contains two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 3/4. It features a melodic line primarily composed of eighth and quarter notes, with several notes marked with an accent (>). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and quarter notes, some marked with an 'x' below the notehead. The second system also consists of two staves, continuing the melodic and bass lines from the first system.





Marcel Meier

### “Circle Stomp”

Check out this wild triplet-based pattern Studer cycles through around the 1:20 mark of this tune. Halbheer tells *MD* that Studer’s China cymbal was mounted close to the hi-hat in such a way that any time he opened the hi-hat stand, its pull rod “played” the cymbal.

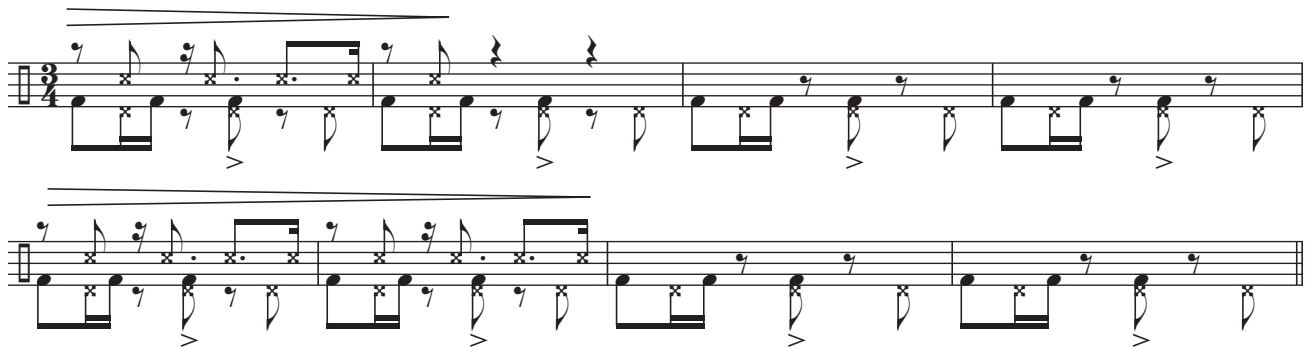


### “Now’s the Time”

After establishing a firm ostinato between the ride, bass drum, and hi-hat foot, Studer carefully plays snare strokes and buzzes to create a melody over the pattern around the 5:30 mark of this song.



And at 11:14, the drummer plays this dynamically rich pattern between the bass drum, rim click, and hi-hat foot, while later incorporating improvised cymbal scratches. Notice how the cross stick fades in volume throughout the figure, while Studer maintains the bass drum accent on the “&” of beat 2.



### “Joysticks”

Around the 8:10 mark, Studer phrases wide open Swiss Army Triplets as straight 16th notes around the kit smoothly, almost creating a modulation over the 6/8 hi-hat foundation.



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# Benzel Baltimore

It's no accident that the son of legendary trumpet player Bennie Cowan looked to his hometown for his stage name. The city of Baltimore, rich in musical culture, drumming icons, and competitive spirit, has provided sustenance to his career for twenty-five years. At the same time, he's always been destined to bring his beats to folks across the globe, with the funkiest, freakiest road show known to man, George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic.

Story by Adam Budofsky

Photos by Alex Solca

The life of the professional musician is rarely what it seems. People on the outside imagine stars lazing around with family, friends, and adoring fans. While that image has certainly been furthered by a million music videos, there's a ton of isolation to contend with, and ton of work too. It takes effort to make something look easy.

Benzel Baltimore, a.k.a. Benjamin Cowan, the son of Parliament-Funkadelic trumpet player Bennie Cowan and a long-time veteran of the funk institution himself, thinks a lot about the work involved in being a professional musician. Well, maybe "thinks" isn't a strong enough word. Cowan just seems to *exist* for the job, for the opportunity to improve

as a player. "Coming from Baltimore city," says Benzel, "I've been around some of the greatest drummers in the world: Lee Pearson [Spyro Gyra, Chris Boti], Dana Hawkins [Esperanza Spalding, Evan Marien], Dennis Chambers [P-Funk, John Scofield].... Then there's people who are coming up—they come to the shed, and, *whoa*, you're like, *As soon as I break my drums down, I'm going into the basement to practice THAT!*"

This kind of enthusiasm can't be faked, and given the fact that it comes from a drummer who's played some of the most iconic and mind-expanding music in history, in front of millions, it's exemplary.

Somehow, after half a century at the forefront of R&B music, and despite

his plans for retirement, George Clinton is as popular in 2019 as ever. With the parallel bands Parliament and Funkadelic, Clinton largely defined the multifaceted world of 1970s and '80s funk music. Since then he's remained musically vital and universally hip, providing an authentic blueprint for the groovier wing of the alternative nation and a never-dimming beacon of inspiration for hip-hop acolytes. Like a cross between Frank Zappa and Art Blakey, Clinton has acted as mentor/bandleader/cultivator to dozens of musicians over the years, and he kept his eye on his trumpet player's precocious son from early on. He even gave junior the opportunity to—at

fifteen—play drums in front of the gargantuan crowd at Woodstock '99.

Benzel did have to go back to high school the next day, but he never strayed too far from the P-Funk orbit, and after a long initiation of sorts, he took over the drum seat.

When we spoke to Benzel, he was packing for an Australian P-Funk tour opening for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, a package made in heaven, and no doubt the party of a lifetime for hundreds of thousands of Aussie fans. Predictably, Benzel was focusing on the job ahead. When asked what he's most looking forward to on the trip, he replied, "Well, the first thing to focus on is playing well. That's why I'm doing what I'm doing every day..."



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**MD:** So, what are you working on lately, in advance of this tour with the Chili Peppers?

**Benzel:** I started doing something that I really didn't want to do. But it was a challenge. And once you do something and see a result, you have to do it again, and then again the next day. It's basically playing double-stroke rolls at 120 bpm for twenty minutes. The only change is that you go lower or higher.

**MD:** Where does a challenge like that come from—just messing around on the drums?

**Benzel:** I'm on YouTube every day. Part of your practice is listening. Another part is watching. Another is applying. You should have your own sound. Sometimes people don't

like to hear that. Sometimes people tell me, "Horacio Hernandez does all this stuff, but when you do it it's not the same." And I'm thinking, *Are you just mad because I can do it but you can't? Or are you saying that I should bring it down because I'm not him?* I hate that. Apply things that you know, but in a way that you would do it.

It all adds to the mad balance of being a drummer. The difference between playing how you feel and playing what's on the record, for instance. If it's a praise and worship group, the worship leader says, "Don't play any pocket." What does that mean? That means play churchy, play everything, like gospel drummers do. But when I'm with George, it's "Give me

pocket." Then with George, there are songs that are boom-bap, then there are songs that are more Chili Pepper-ish. And there's a difference between the Parliament songs and the Funkadelic songs. Funkadelic is like live jams, taking it to a Jerry Garcia level. Parliament is more Motown, straight pocket, like "Flashlight" as opposed to "Super Stupid."

**MD:** What's it like playing in P-Funk?

**Benzel:** First off, I want to say that it's such a blessing to be with George my whole life. It's an honor that he's seen something in me since I was very young. Regarding the music, George wants it to cover a whole range of sounds, from 1969 to 2019. And now we're doing brand-

new music, and it's hip-hop and trap. And to go further, now his grandson is in the band, and he's a rocker, so we're doing a punk-metal joint in the middle of the set.

**MD:** What about the sheer number of records that George has been involved in for all these years?

**Benzel:** It's not necessarily about the old records, it's about the newer things he's doing that you have to be on top of. We've got a twenty-minute segment of straight hip-hop and it's a nonstop medley. There's the song with Kendrick, "Be Like George" ["Ain't That Funkin' Kinda Hard on You"]. Then you have "My Mama Told Me," that's like George's new favorite song.

**MD:** When does he decide on the songs that are going to be in a set, and when does he add new ones, at soundcheck?

**Benzel:** There's no set list. Most of the time we soundcheck on the new stuff. Then we might do "Flashlight" or something. George doesn't always come to soundcheck. If you're at soundcheck with George, you're going to be there a while. That's where he's teaching you music.

**MD:** If you had to think of the skill sets that are the most important to this gig, what would they be?

**Benzel:** That's a really good question. The first thing you need is stamina. You need to run some miles on the treadmill with some weights and punch for thirty minutes. Technique to a certain degree—but your technique will wear out after three hours of this. You're going to find a brand-new technique, because you're going to play 16th notes with your right hand for sixteen minutes—live. See how that goes. Other skills: dexterity, strength, impeccable groove, time.

**MD:** You teach. How do these things relate—are they priorities all the time when you teach?

**Benzel:** I always work with students on their level. But having the skill sets that I have... you can study all you want, but if you haven't played long gigs,



## RECORDINGS

**George Clinton** Chocolate City London: P-Funk Live at Metropolis ("Friday Night, August 14th," featuring Joss Stone) /// **Parliament** Medicaid Fraud Dog ("My Mama Told Me") /// **Bonnie Cowan** It's a Horn Thing /// **Coop DeVille** Bat Funk Crazy /// **Danny Bedrosian** Endangered, Eightfinity /// **Funkadelic** Tales From the Tour Bus, Season 2 soundtrack

**“This drum thing is such a high responsibility. You’re trying to play the greatest show of your life on your worst day.”**



and had to do sporadic stuff like take a solo when your mind is blank and you don't even have a solo in you, and you're in front of 20,000 people, that just comes from your soul, you just block out everything you're thinking.

You learn that you have to groove more, you have to breathe, and you've got to be able to explode when it's time to explode. The adrenaline is pumping and you're playing hard and playing one groove over and over again, being able to have the discipline to play a loop—that goes back to the twenty-minute double-stroke thing.

It's like a *Stick Control* vibe; you have to play what you just played in the last measure again, and then do it again twenty times straight. That's exactly what it's like with George. Sometimes there'll be all kinds of hits in the music, and he'll look at me like, "Don't do it!" and I'm like, "But it's a hit!" Then the band members

will look at me like I didn't do it. But George is laughing, like, "That's what I wanted." So to complement everybody, you learn to hit other ways. Listen to the music. You can also just open the hi-hat on the hit instead of hitting the snare at the same time. Or play the accents on the hi-hat but not while playing a fill.

It's like a war between me and George every night. That's the fun that we have. Sometimes I'm mad at George after the tune and sometimes he's mad at me. [laughs] This drum thing is such a high responsibility. You're trying to play the greatest show of your life on your worst day. If you're looking at him, you don't want to get an eye cut at you. So if George looks at you and he does that thing with his fingers where he makes them really little, and you're supposed to play small... or he'll say, "Pocket!" and you're like, I thought I was playing pocket. So then I just turn into,

okay, 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and... boom bap, boom bap, and I'm going to hold that joint and not even hit a cymbal.

**MD:** What was it like growing up with your dad being in George's band?

**Benzel:** He instilled a lot of groove in me. In 1983, when I was born, he was doing George's Atomic Dog tour and also playing with [go-go pioneer] Chuck Brown. He also played with the Gap Band, Rafael Saadiq, the Mel Lewis big band... But he was playing a lot of go-go. That whole [Benzel sings a quintessential go-go beat, a la Trouble Funk's "Drop the Bomb" or Rare Essence's "Overnight Scenario"], I heard that so much, it had to become part of my playing. George liked that, because George liked go-go too. It's funk! So now whenever we do "Up for the Downstroke," he looks at me and says, "Go-go." That means

## BENZEL'S SETUP

**Drums:** 1710 Percussion custom beech/birch drums

- 7x14 walnut signature snare
- 5.5x14 acrylic snare
- 8x10 tom
- 9x12 tom
- 15x15 floor tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 20x22 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Paiste

- 14" Signature Heavy hi-hats
- 16" Signature Precision thin crash
- 17" Masters Dark crash
- 18" Signature Thin China
- 22" Signature Blue Bell ride
- 10" Signature Precision splash

**Hardware:** DW 5000 double pedal

**Heads:** Evans Hydraulic Blue snare batters, Evans EC2 tom batters, EMAD 2 bass drum batter

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Extreme 5B and 2B; Vater Chad Smith Funk Blaster

## Benzel Baltimore

sticking to that bass drum with that big foot. You're playing with your thigh muscle at this point—and it's going to be a while. [laughs]

**MD:** Did you have lessons at school or outside of it?

**Benzel:** At eleven I was getting drum lessons from a guy named Frank Young from Baltimore. He plays with Carl Filipiak, a jazz guitarist from Baltimore who's played with Dennis Chambers. He was my motivation.

Dennis Chambers was *another* kind of motivation. It was inspiring just being around him, making me want to have some sort of excellence to what I do. He also had me listen

to music, records you might not have heard of with him on them, some Billy Cobham records. He was touring a lot back then, so I didn't get to spend as much time with him as I wanted, but I remember a time when I was playing and he was like, "You're pretty good, but you need more stamina. You have to be able to play fluid, clear, and for a long period of time." He wanted to take me to a place. Coming from Dennis, I loved it and started working on it.

But Frank had me play to all these P-Funk records that my dad had. My favorite to play along to was *America Eats Its Young*, which

had Tiki Fulwood playing all this single-pedal stuff and ghost notes. And Tyrone Lampkin too. Those guys were playing some crazy stuff on drums. Frankie "Kash" Waddy [and Zachary Frazier are] also on that record. And there were a couple drum solo breaks, and I'd learn them note for note.

Then they came out with this record *Dope Dogs* that had this song "Fly On" ["Dog Star (Fly On)"] I always wanted to play that song live, and I practiced it every day. So this is now 1998 and I'm fourteen, and we do it at soundcheck at a show. People heard about it, like, "Who's that playing 'Fly On'?" "That's little Ben." "What?" Word got to George, and he was like, "I don't know about playing *tonight*..." But that soundcheck was enough for me.

But back to your original question about school...in every school, from fourth grade up, I played in the band, trying to turn it out. [laughs] Then I went to a high school called Archbishop Curley, which had a very deep jazz program. The teacher changed my life, like, "You gotta swing." I didn't want to swing at all. Then I started going to this summer program that was like a jazz job, which is amazing. You'd practice for like five hours and then go do a gig.

**MD:** What led to your performing at Woodstock '99?

**Benzel:** So I'm in high school and starting to go to gigs with my dad. And I talked to George about sitting in—like for real sitting in, not just doing soundcheck. He's like, "It's going to be the hardest thing you ever did." "Fly On" was the first song I got to sit in on. It was at the Warner Theater in D.C. in April of '99.

**MD:** Then Woodstock was in July.

**Benzel:** I was on punishment that day. I was standing in the corner all day before we played. [laughs]

**MD:** What did you do?!

**Benzel:** I took a joy ride.

**MD:** Oh, no!

**Benzel:** [laughs] It didn't go well. My dad was infuriated. He was on tour. That was the life. The good thing was I got to practice a lot. I also got to get in trouble a lot. But drums is what kept me balanced.

**MD:** What song did you play at Woodstock?

**Benzel:** I played "Booty," which started with a song called "Something Stank and I Want Some" and eventually went into this long jam.

**MD:** In the YouTube video we can see that you were playing open-handed.

**Benzel:** It's kind of how I started and was a bad habit I was trying to break. When you get tired, you want to take some other routes. You've never played in front of 100,000 people before, especially at fifteen. I was thinking, *Please, arms, don't fall off*. But at this



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point I'm like, this is what I want to do in life. I made it through, though I wasn't officially in the band until I was about twenty-four, in 2010, 2011.

**MD:** What circumstance allowed you to finally join full-time?

**Benzel:** At the time I had a band that would open for George all the time. Then I had another band that opened for George. Every band I had opened for George. And I'd sit in with him too. I also had a full-time job, but then it started getting crazy so I quit, and I called George and told him I wanted to come out with them. So I said, "Who's setting the drums up?" "Nobody." "I can set them up." So I'm in the crew now. But George knows that he has me there to play if he wants. I'd play the first song and maybe the last one; he already had three drummers there.

**MD:** So there would always be multiple drummers on tour?

**Benzel:** George has always had multiple drummers, a minimum of two and sometimes four or five.

**MD:** Why?

**Benzel:** He wants to play forever, and he has different preferences for certain songs.

**MD:** But only one drumkit set up?

**Benzel:** Yup. And this went on for years, Benzel being like Cinderella [laughs], the lowly servant, fixing your drums for you. But this is the boot camp that George wants you to go through, for five years. This is gonna make or break you.

In time I became the only drummer. I realized this the first time I went to Australia with the band. We flew about twenty-two hours and when we landed, soundcheck was seven hours later. You're bent up for all that time and then you have to play for three hours. But I learned from that. My arms were like stuck straight. I had to try to play with fingers only. I'm using one arm at a time, playing the hi-hat and the snare, and I can't even lift my arm up to play a cymbal. But what's actually going on here? It's not only being bent up in the chair for all that time, but also hydration—you have to drink a *whole* lot of water and Gatorade.

Another thing I learned in the course of doing this Parliament thing is playing loud accents with less arm movement. So now I need to work on just fingers by themselves. Or just the wrist. All these techniques.

**MD:** Tell us about your drums.

**Benzel:** I'm with 1710 Percussion, one of the top custom companies in America. They're owned by Mike Caimona, who's from Pittsburgh. He's in Maryland now. At first he made me a 7x14 walnut snare with a Baltimore skyline finish. It had a crack that you would not believe. But then I needed a

whole set. The shells are beech and birch.

**MD:** How about on the road?

**Benzel:** I have a 1710 kit out there as well.

**MD:** Even when you go to Australia?

**Benzel:** No, there I'll just have my snare—my brand-new snare; it's acrylic. [whistles] It looks good, it's got that clean splat that I need.

I'm also glad to be with Paiste cymbals. My 22" Signature Blue Bell Stewart Copeland signature ride is my favorite thing in the world. The bell is amazing, the ride cuts.

**MD:** On this tour with the Chili Peppers, are you going to get to play alongside Chad Smith?

**Benzel:** Yes, and I'm looking forward to seeing how to hit drums *really* hard. [laughs] Because he can definitely hit drums hard. And maybe by the fourth or fifth show I'll be at that type of level.

I'm also looking forward to super high-capacity crowds every day. I mean, it's always sold out, but this is like playing at a small festival every show. I think that's an accomplishment. I'm very humbled to be in the mindset of preparing for something at that level. I feel that it's only going to go up from here.

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# P-Funk: Benzel Baltimore's Essential Picks

While speaking with the P-funk powerhouse for this month's feature, we asked him to pick four must-know Parliament/Funkadelic tracks to check out.

## "Friday Night, August 14th" *Free Your Mind...* (Tiki Fulwood)

This groove, played by Tiki Fulwood, drills a barrage of organ and guitar swells and swoons through a deep tunnel of fat bass pocket underneath wild vocals. Fulwood's heavy feel enters around the 0:24 mark at the start of the verse.

Musical notation for the groove of "Friday Night, August 14th" by Tiki Fulwood. The notation is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It features a series of eighth notes with various accents and dynamics. The first measure has a quarter rest followed by eighth notes. The second measure has eighth notes with accents. The third measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The fourth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The fifth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The sixth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The seventh measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The eighth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The ninth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The tenth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The eleventh measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The twelfth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The thirteenth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The fourteenth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The fifteenth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The sixteenth measure has eighth notes with accents and a plus sign above. The notation includes various symbols such as accents (>), plus signs (+), and asterisks (\*) to indicate specific rhythmic details.

## "(Not Just) Knee Deep" *Uncle Jam Wants You* (Bootsy Collins)

Don't ignore this one's feel, despite its seemingly simple pattern. Listen beyond the concrete accented four-on-the-floor foundation of this 1979 Funkadelic track to the space the famous bass player—who overdubbed the drums on top of a drum machine—places after the snappy snare on beat 4, devoid of the previous 8th-note hi-hat pattern that might normally trail the 2 and 4 backbeats. Collins' jabbing groove results in a knockout.

Musical notation for the groove of "(Not Just) Knee Deep" by Bootsy Collins. The notation is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It features a series of eighth notes with various accents and dynamics. The first measure has eighth notes with accents. The second measure has eighth notes with accents. The third measure has eighth notes with accents. The fourth measure has eighth notes with accents. The fifth measure has eighth notes with accents. The sixth measure has eighth notes with accents. The seventh measure has eighth notes with accents. The eighth measure has eighth notes with accents. The ninth measure has eighth notes with accents. The tenth measure has eighth notes with accents. The notation includes various symbols such as accents (>) and asterisks (\*) to indicate specific rhythmic details.

## "Super Stupid" *Maggot Brain* (Tiki Fulwood)

By harnessing both a power reminiscent of John Bonham and the solid yet slippery funk feel of Clyde Stubblefield, Fulwood places a resounding stamp on this track.

Musical notation for the groove of "Super Stupid" by Tiki Fulwood. The notation is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It features a series of eighth notes with various accents and dynamics. The first measure has eighth notes with accents. The second measure has eighth notes with accents. The third measure has eighth notes with accents. The fourth measure has eighth notes with accents. The fifth measure has eighth notes with accents. The sixth measure has eighth notes with accents. The seventh measure has eighth notes with accents. The eighth measure has eighth notes with accents. The ninth measure has eighth notes with accents. The tenth measure has eighth notes with accents. The notation includes various symbols such as accents (>) and asterisks (\*) to indicate specific rhythmic details.

## "Alice in My Fantasies" *Standing on the Verge of Getting It On* (Gary Bronson)

After a raucous and psychedelic intro, Bronson breaks into this killer, stuttering groove packed full with ghost notes around the 0:10 mark. Check out the snare accents on beats 2 and the "&" of 4 mixed with explosive crash ensemble hits.

Musical notation for the groove of "Alice in My Fantasies" by Gary Bronson. The notation is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It features a series of eighth notes with various accents and dynamics. The first measure has eighth notes with accents. The second measure has eighth notes with accents. The third measure has eighth notes with accents. The fourth measure has eighth notes with accents. The fifth measure has eighth notes with accents. The sixth measure has eighth notes with accents. The seventh measure has eighth notes with accents. The eighth measure has eighth notes with accents. The ninth measure has eighth notes with accents. The tenth measure has eighth notes with accents. The notation includes various symbols such as accents (>) and asterisks (\*) to indicate specific rhythmic details.

Transcriptions by Willie Rose



# Deerhunter's Moses

Looked at a certain way, a drummer's job is about organizing sound into interesting beats—a role Moses Archuleta does with great musicality, idiosyncrasy, and glee. But his affinity for organization goes well beyond the bandstand—in fact, his big-picture approach is a prime reason Deerhunter has become one of the most highly regarded and recognizable indie-rock bands of our time.

Story by  
John Colpitts

Photos by  
Rahav Segev

Moses Archuleta cuts a contradictory figure. He's tall and thin, with an almost gentle bearing. But onstage and in the studio, Moses exudes power and strength. At a recent performance at Brooklyn Steel in support of Deerhunter's latest album, *Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared?*, Archuleta performed with a supreme confidence, in the spirit of St. Vincent's Matt Johnson. His clarity and finesse were reminiscent of the movements of a master chef preparing a simple and aesthetically pleasing meal. There was no wasted motion.

"The way he approached drumming," says Deerhunter singer, songwriter, and guitarist Bradford Cox, "he just developed his own language. I wanted to rock. Moses didn't care about

rocking. He wanted to organize sound. Moses is the real [Brian] Eno of today. He's a nonmusician who organizes sound."

Archuleta's extreme modesty about his drumming skills has started to abate only recently, so this was a perfect time to talk with him about the ways he has curated and shaped the sound and career of Deerhunter. He's an intrinsic part of the band's overall creative enterprise—from their music to their engagement with the wider public. "Moses has a hand in everything," says Cox. "He's as much a leader of the band as I am; he's just more economical with his touch. He's like a Japanese ceramist. If something breaks, they repair it [with] gold. There's a certain wabi-sabi to Moses's drumming, and I

try to emphasize that in the recording process."

I asked my friend Shinji Masuko, the guitarist in DMBQ and Boredoms, to elaborate on this Japanese concept of wabi-sabi as it might apply to music. It's difficult to translate for Westerners, but it illuminates Archuleta's playing. The concept emerged from the ancient tradition of the tea ceremony, wherein a close attention to the mundane preparations of tea would stand in opposition to the chaos and deleterious aspects of normal life. It's thought to be a precursor to Zen Buddhism. Masuko wrote to me, "Originally, *wabi* means sadness, loneliness, a dreary feeling, and *sabi* means to age, fade, or wither. Combined this feels negative, but it's important to catch

the delicacy, nuance, and evanescence of this concept. Natural fluctuations and irregular vibrations are prized along with the unaffected, realistic, and simple qualities. In terms of music, wabi-sabi might suggest giving careful attention to rests; giving silence for the next sound and applying a natural and irregular rhythmic movement—very close to the concept of groove—while removing flashy playing."

Archuleta's style is simple—but deceptively so. He gives Deerhunter's music a rich anchor, grounding the noisiest passages. His vision for the band helped them move beyond the confines of the Atlanta punk scene in the early 2000s, and his steady hand with songcraft has firmly shaped the band from behind the scenes.

"Even now I still feel weird about my drumming. But I know I can play the way I want, and no one else can play this way. I take power from that."

# Archuleta



**MD:** There seems to be a Mick Avory/Kinks-style drumming approach on the new album. Lots of clean playing with clear adornments, and unfussy grooves. It's very satisfying aesthetically. Can you talk a little bit about your approach on *Why Hasn't Everything Disappeared?*

**Moses:** Good catch with the Kinks! That was a distinct reference point in early discussions about the material that ended up on the album. As for the approach, there were several rallying points. Messing with pitch à la [producer] Tony Visconti, but via a more cheap method on a small Yamaha mixer. Getting a big, raw drum sound through use of hot recording on a tiny practice drumkit with light sticks. A lot of the playing on the record is physically dainty despite how it may sound on the recording.



**MD:** What's the Visconti production trick?

**Moses:** He used an Eventide Harmonizer to create a pitched-down effect on drums on David Bowie's *Low*.

**MD:** What kind of sticks were you using during the recording, 7As?

**Moses:** Possibly lighter. I just grabbed the lightest reasonably paired but mismatched sticks I could find in a grab bag at the studio.

**MD:** What sizes were those tiny drums? How many toms, and how were they tuned?

**Moses:** Basically it was a Taye GK518F-DS five-piece GoKit with two toms, and they were not tuned at all.

**MD:** What was your introduction to drums? I know you studied some percussion in military school—did you study rudiments?

**Moses:** I was first introduced to a full-on drumkit via a combo of my friend having a drumkit at his house and Deerhunter in 2001/2002. Prior to that, I had only been exposed to percussion via marching and concert band in military school during my junior and senior years. I did some studying of rudiments.

**MD:** Have you had lessons beyond those early years in marching band?

**Moses:** No, I tend to practice only with bands. It's tricky describing what I work on. I feel that my skills develop with a combination of kit experience and life maturity.

**MD:** I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about your time interning

at the Echo Lounge venue in Atlanta and your transition into playing.

**Moses:** I was at the Echo Lounge in 2001 and 2002. It involved listening to demo CDs and putting flyers up around town and absorbing the business of booking shows through osmosis. At the same time, I naturally transitioned into playing drums. Deerhunter were already playing shows, but I was just playing bass and organ. Drumming started to happen naturally through jamming in the early days. The initial success was largely dictated by my playing stupid, simple, and loud.

**MD:** Your transition to drums actually had a huge effect on the band.

**Moses:** Yes. Originally we had a jazzy drummer, and he played softly. Early on we would make a real racket, and he struggled to nail us down. One day after we'd been a band for about six months, the drummer didn't show up to rehearsal. So I just started playing the drums. I'd never actually sat at a kit, so I had no kit coordination. When I started playing caveman drums, it just worked. We established foundations for five songs that night.

**MD:** Did that jamming approach to writing songs last?

**Moses:** For the first five years we did it that way, through *Halcyon Digest* [2010]. That album was a transition out of that. Personal lives, relationships, and living in different cities made the albums that followed more about demoing.

**MD:** What was happening in the Atlanta punk scene at the time?

**Moses:** The city's music scene was definitely thriving, but in a transitional phase leading into bands such as Black Lips, the Lids, and the Alphabets. It was a ripe musical period for the city's underground at the time, because the general appetite was there for something new and refreshing.

**MD:** Were there cool drummers in Atlanta at the time?

**Moses:** Yeah, and every time I saw a drummer I'd say, "Oh, wow, that's a drummer—unlike me." An observation that ran parallel to that was that some of these drummers couldn't tone it down—everything was crammed in; they could never chill. Sometimes I thought that these bands could write better songs if these guys weren't such great drummers!

**MD:** Simplicity can bear fruit.

**Moses:** It's important to figure out the intent of the music. An overemphasis on technical ability can sometimes hinder the working spirit of material or songwriting. In popular music, technique is often transparent. The average listener might not hear this kind of stuff. If it's sticking out then it might be an issue.

**MD:** What is the Deerhunter writing process like?

**Moses:** Every album is different. For this latest one, the group ended up poring over demos that Bradford had roughly sequenced into a concept for an album. So a lot of effort was put forth to retain certain unique quirks and spooky qualities to the tracks.

A funny detail to mention about the drumming on the album: all the songs on the record follow a click except for "Death in Midsummer." That one naturally went off the grid and sped up as the song went along. We decided that it was appropriate for the feeling of the song.

**MD:** How do you see your musical role in Deerhunter?

**Moses:** A manicured, curatorial backbone; ultimately always trying to serve the material.

**MD:** Can you talk about how this role might have expressed itself over the years?

**Moses:** I don't lend any overt gestures or signatures to anything I play. I don't want to get in the way of the music and only want to highlight what works best for the song. I'm in a band where the drums provide a minimal but strong framework around which the more chromatic instruments can exist.

**MD:** I know you consider yourself an idiosyncratic drummer, but one that fits well within the context of Deerhunter.

**Moses:** I often don't feel like a real drummer per se. I don't know when that feeling will ever come! I know that I love playing drums and that I've been fortunate to be able to develop at my own rate and in my own way. I'm not a highly technical drummer, but one who gets by much more out of intuition and simplicity. That's as much an extension of my skill level as it is what I truly like to hear myself.

**MD:** I've always seen your playing as practical, unfussy, and direct. What are some of your musical touchstones?

**Moses:** Roughly: Krautrock, female drummers, and electronic music.

**MD:** Why do you say "female drummers"—are you saying there's a particular aesthetic to female drumming that you're modeling? Are there some specific drummers you're talking about?

**Moses:** Yeah, I suppose it's an aesthetic that's tricky to completely put my finger on, but it's a style and touch that resonates with me. The priorities tend to be less flamboyant. As for specific drummers, I'm inspired by Ikue Mori, Sara Lund, Palmolive [Paloma McLardy of the Raincoats and the Slits], YoshimiO, and Moe Tucker.

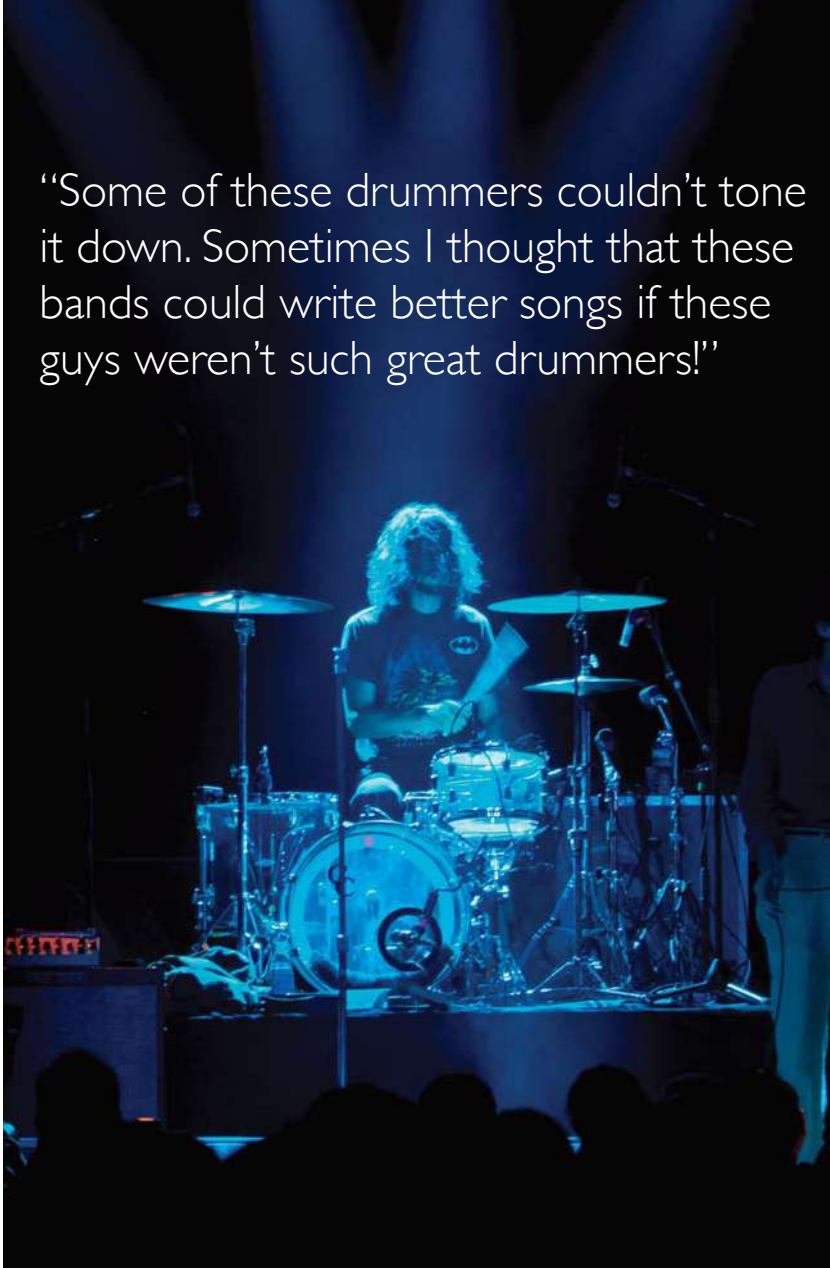
**MD:** When you say less flamboyant, I'm guessing you mean less assertive or grandstanding or extroverted, perhaps less concerned with technique and ego and more subsumed within the song?

**Moses:** Exactly.

**MD:** Can you talk a bit about the beat on "Plains"? There are polyrhythms and counter rhythms going on. How did this come about?

**Moses:** As a matter of fact, a lot of the baseline drumming in the song came about through a pageant of Bradford trying to write something that he thought I would write and naturally play. Then that was reflected back at me and further

"Some of these drummers couldn't tone it down. Sometimes I thought that these bands could write better songs if these guys weren't such great drummers!"



## Archuleta's Tour Setup

**Drums:** C&C Coke Bottle Green acrylic

- A.** 8x14 Ludwig Supraphonic snare
- B.** 9x12 tom
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x20 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Istanbul Agop Mel Lewis line

- 1.** 13" hi-hats
- 2.** 20" "1982" ride
- 3.** 22" ride

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Buddy Rich signature model

**Heads:** Remo Emperor snare batter, Ludwig Weather Master Silver Dot tom batters ("I really love these with acrylics"), Aquarian Super Kick II bass drum batter

**Hardware:** DW stands, Tama hi-hat pedal and Iron Cobra bass drum pedal

**Electronics:** Roland TM-6 Pro module and BT-1 bar trigger, Strymon TimeLine Multidimensional Delay

## Moses Archuleta

interpreted, and then a late-stage fascination with '80s Whitney Houston came about, and...voilà!

**MD:** What is your style? What do you think Bradford was trying to capture?

**Moses:** I'm not sure...not very ornamental, slightly quirky but straight-ahead and steady, I suppose.

**MD:** You've talked a lot about your curatorial role in the band and the way you shepherd ideas into their best form.

**Moses:** It was my role from the very beginning. I was the catalyst. I was the one who was encouraging us to play that first show. Even before we were ready.

**MD:** Why was that coming from you?

**Moses:** I have a thread in my life of trying to organize things, so it happened naturally. I was the worst musician by far in the band, but I was the one putting the most effort into trying to create a roadmap, push us to play shows, record, and to get out of Atlanta. I had a pretty strong grasp what the landscape seemed like and what I wanted us to be. The rest of the guys were in their personal Atlanta and listening bubble. I wanted us to be part of a broader scene. We got signed to Kranky because I sent a bunch of mailers out.

**MD:** It seems like you helped make things happen in a significant way.

**Moses:** I think that's fair. I don't have any doubt that Bradford, Lockett [Pundt, guitar] or Josh [Fauver, bass] would still have played music, but I was the person who pulled all these pieces together.

**MD:** I wonder if there's a way we can talk about this in a broader way—to see it as an alternate path for a drummer.

**Moses:** It's hard to know how to manifest

it and apply it day to day, but I used to study cultural happenings critically. From a really young age I would get video game magazines, car magazines, and music magazines, and watch lots of films. I started to become hawk-eyed about learning how critics would read and think. I spent a lot of time reading when I was younger. I would go through half the magazine rack every month. Through a long exposure I developed a good instinct about how to read the room, so to speak. In Atlanta I felt like the scene was not the ceiling.

I'm comfortable with my playing now, but I have not always felt this way. In Atlanta people used to talk about us initially, "Oh that's that band that can't play their instruments."

**MD:** You told me you were the most hated band in Atlanta for a while.

**Moses:** You gotta go through that to get outside of it. I cared about the local scene, but I quickly realized that we did not need to be the most liked or the best local band. I always felt we would be more appreciated outside of Atlanta.

**MD:** How do those other disciplines you mentioned earlier feed into your drumming?

**Moses:** When I think about drums and drumming and literally how it functions in music physically, to me it makes total sense that a drummer can be more of that subtle or invisible hand that can create the framework to make things happen.

I'm not the front person. For me and my personality, that suits me just fine. I don't want to be in the foreground. I'm very happy to have a different kind of influence that might be less visible. I've always enjoyed bringing

a bunch of threads together but not being the person the whole thing is about. But I love putting it together, winding it up, and seeing where it goes. I'm not really the technical or proficient songwriter, I'm not a graphic artist, and I'm not a great recordist. But I get to influence a lot of things in a subtle way—I'm constantly feeding things [to creative people in the band]. There's not a field or qualification for it.

**MD:** Let's say you were talking to a room full of drummers. What could you share with them that has nothing to do with technical drumming but could be applied to their creative endeavors?

**Moses:** It's not just about drumming. And even when it is about the drumming, it's not about the drumming *entirely*. What is serving the whole thing best? Think about the personalities, the song, the entire project. What do those areas want out of you? Read that and focus on that.

If someone is young and feeling insufficient...I managed to survive those feelings and thrive because I focused on those other elements. I discovered what was needed in my role, as a drummer and organizer. Don't focus on self-doubt. Don't focus on the negatives or comparing yourself to people in a negative way.

Even now I still feel weird about my drumming. But I know I can play the way I want, and no one else can play this way. I take power from that. It's been an interesting journey because I never expected to play drums. When it's all together and it's happening, there's nothing like it. It's the only thing under the sun that I do that shuts everything out.



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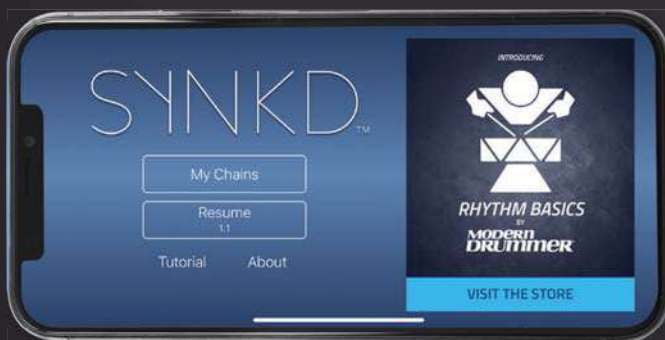
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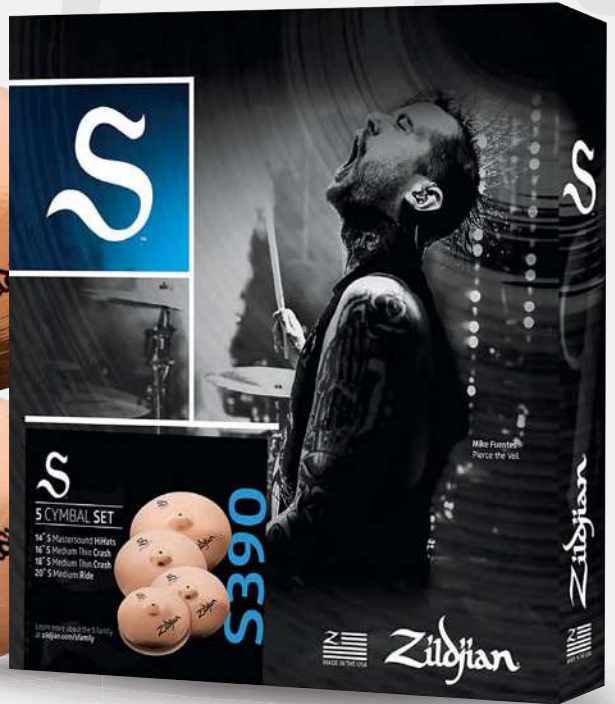
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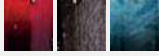
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# Kate Gentile

## Welcoming Complexities

**K**ate Gentile creates a unique sound and style within a demanding musical genre, deftly employing percussion including gongs, almglocken, Indian Noah bells, and Togo bells within highly personal electroacoustic compositions featuring intense improvisation. That she makes such dense music flow is to her credit; that she works her expanded setup to illustrate her ideas so well is a marvel.

Gentile's debut album, *Mannequins*, recalls Frank Zappa's intricate polyrhythms if performed by a programmer, a classical percussionist, and a multilimbed trap set player—peppered with unusual turns and jagged rhythms, yet friendly and inclusive. When she's not subbing for New York monsters like Dan Weiss, Ches Smith, or Tyshawn Sorey, the drummer is working with forward-leaning jazz musicians such as trumpet great Dave Douglas's Enact, guitarist Dustin Carlson's Air Ceremony, pianist Matt Mitchell's Phalanx Ambassadors, and trumpeter Davy Lazar's trio, or her own groups Secret People, Snark Horse, and, with Lazar, the duo Pluto's Lawyer.

The thirty-two-year-old drummer and composer is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music, where she pursued a double degree in jazz performance and music education. Here we discuss her creative approach to the musical complexities of the songs on *Mannequins*, as well as what it takes to live the life of an experimental musician in modern-day NYC.

by Ken Micallef

**MD:** *Mannequins* has what sounds like through-composed compositions that recall progressive chamber music or Varèse.

**Kate:** Nothing is through-composed except one track. Some sounds hint at free jazz. There's a jazz approach because we're improvising with the material from the tunes. Frank Zappa gets mentioned a lot [in the press], which is funny, because I haven't listened to enough Zappa that I would say he's an influence.

**MD:** Did you overdub percussion on *Mannequins*?

**Kate:** "Hammergaze" had a few layers: Noah bells, different types of gongs like tiger gongs, and different metallic sounds that are resonant. Also, cowbells and agogo bells, a tiny toy drumset—the toms sound like a bongo or timbale or a cross between different hand drums. I tried to think of all the different families of sounds and have options from each of them.

**MD:** What are the other sounds in

"Hammergaze"?

**Kate:** There's vibraphone that sounds really weird because all the bars are the same width. It sounds different from a normal vibraphone; it's more bell-like. Also, we took segments from the roughs and sent them to [pianist] Matt Mitchell, who processed them. I mixed those files, and we made certain ones go retrograde, or we put effects on them. I collaged them in a way where I can't even say what's what because we did so many weird things.

**MD:** And there are boxy sounds, like you're playing suitcases or a treated cajon.

**Kate:** There's a minute-long coda at the end of "Alchemy Melt" that's entirely electronic. There's a rhythmic pattern prior to that, then the tune suddenly switches to electronics. Maybe that's what you're hearing.

**MD:** On some tunes you play long phrases in unison with the melodic player; elsewhere you play more contrasting rhythmic support.

**Kate:** It's definitely a mixture of unison and counterpoint.

The record starts with two tunes that both have that unison thing, "Stars Covered in Clouds of Metal" and "Trapezoidal Nirvana." Then there are ones with counterpoint, where unison playing in that environment wouldn't make sense with the nature of the rhythms. The other option would be playing free, almost like taking a drum solo over it. There's a nice clarity there because we're playing free later in the track anyway, so it's nice to hear the melody clearly.

**MD:** You often incorporate percussion into your drumset to where it's hard to know where one ends and the other begins.

**Kate:** I just pick it up. All the tracks have integrated drums and percussion. Everything is one take with no overdubs, except "Hammergaze" and "Sear," where I played an extra layer of gongs. And I overdubbed bowing vibraphone harmonics



Peter Gannushkin

### Tools of the Trade

Gentile's setup includes a 7.5x14 Slingerland Radio King snare drum, 8x12 and 14x14 Slingerland toms, and either a 14x20 Slingerland or 14x18 Mapex bass drum. Her cymbal complement consists of 14" hi-hats made up of a vintage A bottom cymbal and a non-branded top cymbal (which she bought for \$5), a 20" Sabian Hand-Hammered Manhattan ride, a 20" Sabian ride, a 22" Sabian Bosphorus ride ("Its huge bell sounds crazy on blast beats"), and a 16" Adam crash cymbal. Gentile uses Remo Ambassador heads, Promark Elvin Jones Autograph series drumsticks, and Regal Tip brushes. She expands her set with percussion including woodblocks, a cowbell, 5" to 20" gongs, almglocken, Indian Noah bells, shakers, chains, and Togo bells.

in "Micronesia Parakeet."

**MD:** "Xenomorph" has straight-ahead jazz elements and a great drum solo.

**Kate:** There's a drum solo in "Unreasonable Optimism" as well. Other songs I like for specific elements include "Alchemy Melt," because it's comprehensive, and "Cardiac Logic," which is unusual as it's morphing from acoustic to electronic. I haven't heard another similar tune where it gradually morphs from acoustic to electronic within the same material.

**MD:** Who are your drumming heroes?

**Kate:** Tony Williams, Dan Weiss, Ches Smith, Jim Black, Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones, Tyshawn Sorey. When teaching I do a variation of the Alan Dawson ritual, the Marvin "Smitty" Smith version. And I have exercises that help me approach polyrhythms. They're really specific to

the music that I'm asked to do. I played in marching band and jazz band in high school. Marching band is a great way to get your chops together really fast.

**MD:** What are you usually called for?

**Kate:** I get asked to play music that's rhythmically involved and that has a lot of polyrhythms, unusual subdivisions, or irrational meters. Or things that are on the 8th-note/16th-note grid that are heavy on counterpoint and that require the drummer to read three staves and play many rhythms at once. And I do jazz gigs with improvising.

**MD:** What do you tell musicians who want to play this music?

**Kate:** Have your fundamentals together on your instrument and be able to deal with complex rhythms. If five against four challenges you, you're going to be in over

your head after one tune. But being a good improviser is also important. There are people that can play complex stuff, but when it's time to improvise it's just not exciting. So working on improvising and making good music, all that comes from studying.

**MD:** How do you survive in New York playing creative, challenging, off-the-grid music?

**Kate:** You have to be willing to sacrifice a lot. You can't drink a lot—alcohol costs money that you don't have. You can't smoke—you can't afford cigarettes. You can't afford to have a pet. It's a bare minimum kind of existence. You really have to want it.

# Manic Mannequins

## Gentile Lays Out a Wild Polyrhythmic Approach

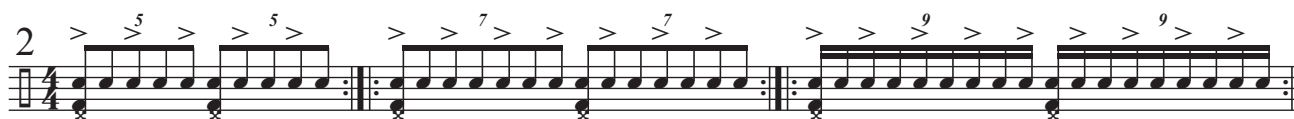


Here's an example of a polyrhythmic groove related to one of my tunes from *Mannequins*, "alchemy melt [with tilt]," that starts around the 9:00 mark. The groove moves an idea—loosely, two 8th notes and a quarter note—on the bass drum through a pattern of changing subdivisions. I keep the snare on beat 3, creating a consistent halftime backbeat.

The ride cymbal plays the shifting subdivisions—varying between five-, six- (notated as quarter-note triplets), seven-, eight-, and nine-note groupings—between each bar. The bass drum plays the main theme while adjusting its placement to match each subdivision. Let's check out the isolated ride and kick patterns.



This notation is useful conceptually, but to play those rhythms while feeling the half-note backbeat, you have to think of the fives, sevens, and nines as subdivisions of the half note rather than of the whole measure. Using a metronome and alternating single strokes, play the following groupings on the snare while playing half notes with your feet. Start with no accents at first, and then add them.



Now play only the accented notes with both hands in unison.



Finally, play the varying subdivisions on a ride cymbal with the bass drum and snare backbeat.



Be sure to try improvising within the subdivisions, and have fun!



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# Playing Melodically

## Real-World Applications of Linear Patterns

by Jeff Ryan

**Rhythm and melody are two distinct fundamental elements of music.** But sometimes a song's rhythm is so inspired by the melody that it becomes its own unique voice within a tune, and almost serves a similar function to the melody itself. When applied to the kit, the following linear patterns, which I've used with the bands Pleasant Grove and Motorcade, can become quite musical in and of themselves.

In this lesson we'll vary each of the basic phrases and dig into how to make them more melodic. I'll also demonstrate how you can orchestrate the phrases around the kit to make the patterns move freely.

Be sure to practice each example separately before implementing the conceptual variations. And remember that when learning a new pattern, start slowly (in this case, around 50–60 bpm) before increasing your tempo as you master each groove.

### "Impossible"

I came up with this linear-melodic example for a Pleasant Grove song called "Impossible." When I first sit down at the kit to practice or work out ideas, I normally use this pattern to warm up. Let's start with only the bass drum and snare and apply a creative sticking.

1

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

Now adjust the orchestration so that your lead hand alternates between the rack and floor toms. Start by maintaining the previous accent pattern and bass drum phrase. Also, notice how the toms create their own melody. You can then move your left hand to the rack tom once you're comfortable with the pattern and are able to move freely around the kit. It's quite fun as well to stretch out and utilize the whole drumset in this manner. And adding extra left-hand accents on the rack tom opens up the pattern and creates more melodies around the kit.

2

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

Try utilizing all the voices on your kit by maintaining the same sticking while orchestrating your right hand on the hi-hat and your left hand on the snare. Play the previous kick pattern throughout, and move between the rack tom, floor tom, and bell of the ride cymbal to create a linear melodic pattern around the kit.

3

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

### Motorik

The next example is another linear pattern I played on a demo for my band Motorcade. It has a "motorik" type of feel to it, which is typical of the music of German progressive rock bands such as Can, NEU!, Faust, and Kraftwerk. Despite the fact that Kraftwerk used drum machines, I've always found their rhythmic patterns to be quite inspiring. These phrases were also very influential on a ton of new wave bands, such as New Order, Depeche Mode, and Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark. I always wanted to master and reinterpret those feels on the kit—blending the organic with the robotic.

Let's start with the basic pattern. Once you understand the sticking, we can move it around the kit to make it more musical. For now, start with the kick, snare, and hi-hat at around 60 bpm, and notice how it resembles a call-and-response rhythm.

4

L R R L R L R R L R

Once you're comfortable with the basic pattern, move your right hand to the rack tom to play the first part of the phrase, and then move it to the floor tom for the last part of the figure. Maintain the previous snare and kick pattern. Feel free to reverse this voicing as well by starting with the floor tom before moving to the rack, or move it to whichever voice you feel would create something musical on the kit. You can also keep a quarter- or 8th-note pulse with your hi-hat foot so that all of your limbs are working independently.

5

L R R L R L R R L R

Next we'll orchestrate this phrase while maintaining a similar sticking. The bass drum plays the "e" of each beat, and pay close attention to the left hand's hi-hat upbeat that finishes the phrase. This is an exercise in drumset ergonomics—now you're utilizing all of your limbs and creating a linear pattern that is not only rhythmically interesting but melodically appealing.

6

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

Finally, try orchestrating Exercise 6 around the kit. Start by playing the previous hi-hat notes with your right hand on the floor tom, and move your left hand to the rack tom on the "a" of beats 2 and 4. Again, maintain the previous kick and snare pattern and sticking. Also try playing the ride bell on beat 1 once you've mastered moving your limbs around the toms.



7

R LRR RLR LRR LR

Spend some time on these two linear patterns. Once you've mastered them, experiment with your own interpretations, and see what interesting patterns you can create. Always use your imagination to come up with ways to apply rudiments and phrases on the kit so you can create something musical. The possibilities are endless.



**Jeff Ryan** is a Dallas-based drummer and multi-instrumentalist who's recorded and/or toured with St. Vincent, the War on Drugs, Sarah Jaffe, the New Year, Daniel Johnston, Motorcade, and Baptist Generals, as well as his own ambient-electronic project, Myopic. Ryan also teaches privately in his studio, the Shed.



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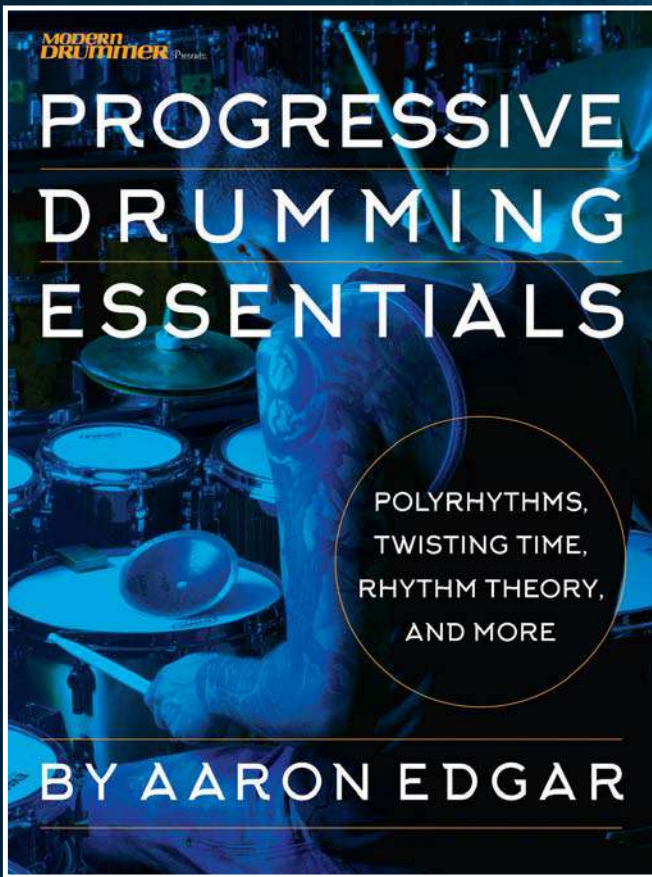


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**8th-NOTE METERS**

**12/8 TIME**

**16th-NOTE METERS**

FIGURE 1: Understanding Odd Time Signatures

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

**PART 1: TWO OVER THREE**

FIGURE 2: A New Perspective on Polyrhythms

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# Strictly Technique

8

9

## 16th-Note Inverted Doubles as a Linear Groove

Now that you have an understanding of inverted doubles, let's use them to create a groove. Start off with your dominant hand on the hi-hat and the other on the snare. Play the same 16th-note inverted double pattern.

10

Next substitute some of the hi-hat notes with the bass drum, and play beat 3 on the snare to create a backbeat. You now have a linear groove based around inverted doubles. Here are a few variations to practice.

11

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

12

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

13

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

14

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

15

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

Continues on page 68

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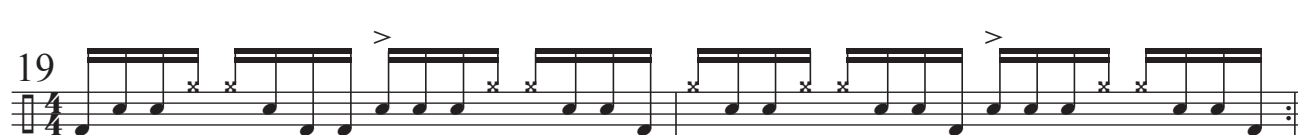
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## Strictly Technique

Now for some fun, mix and match the previous examples to create multimeasure loops. Here are a few to get you started.



Finally, it's time to experiment. Come up with your own grooves that incorporate the inverted double, or alternate between traditional rock grooves and one of the inverted double-stroke grooves.



**Nick Costa** is a senior lecturer at the University of the Arts and a percussion teacher for the School District of Philadelphia. He is an educational artist for Ludwig drums, Vic Firth sticks, and Remo drumheads. For more information, visit [nickcostamusic.com](http://nickcostamusic.com).



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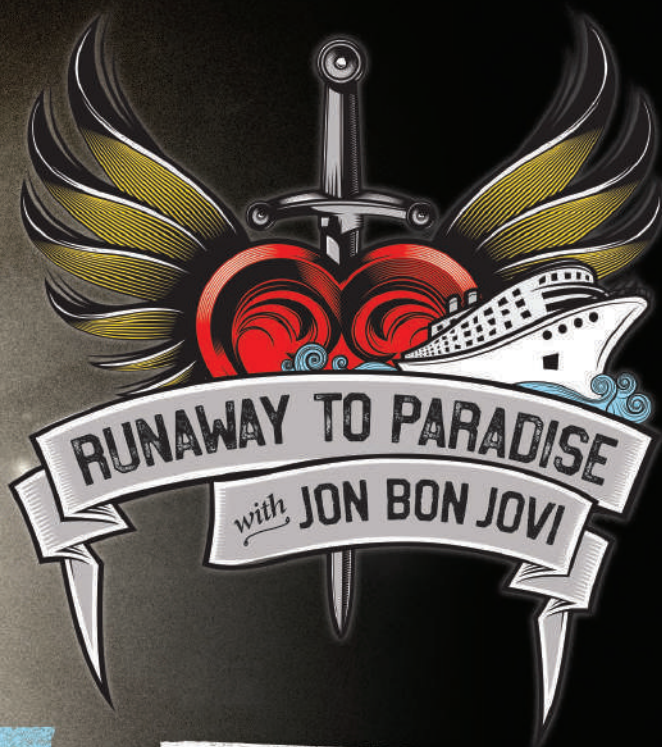
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# The Hi-Hat Foot's Voice

## Exploring Fifteen Funky Groove Embellishments

by Aaron Edgar

**When we consider using our hi-hat foot in grooves,** we often think about it in terms of anchoring straight time, and 8th notes, quarter notes, or upbeats are usually utilized to do this. For a lot of drummers, though, the hi-hat foot can get neglected and might be the most difficult limb to work on. This could be because it's thought of as less applicable than the other three limbs—other than when practicing double bass. In this article we're going to explore some cool ways to apply your hi-hat foot within grooves beyond anchoring simple time.

We'll start by substituting the bass drum with the hi-hat foot in an ordinary groove. **Exercise 1** demonstrates a typical funk groove with a syncopated kick pattern. In **Exercise 2**, the last two bass drum notes are replaced with the hi-hat foot. Try to play the hi-hat notes with the same conviction and pocket that you'd give the bass drum. Since we're using our hi-hat foot, play your ride hand on a stack or cymbal.

Another excellent application for the hi-hat foot is one of Chris "Daddy" Dave's signature concepts: using it as the grace note of a hi-hat flam. You can play **Exercises 3 and 4** on the same pair of hi-hats. Also, try resting a tambourine on top of the hi-hats for a jangly, delayed effect.

In **Exercise 4**, we'll check out a quintuplet shuffle that's based on this flammed hi-hat idea. I'm not sure Dave is thinking about this groove as quintuplets, but check him out playing this idea on the Robert Glasper Experiment's "Dillalude #2" from *Black Radio Recovered (The Remix EP)*.

Next we'll apply a familiar bass drum rhythm to our hi-hat foot. In **Exercise 5**, we'll explore permutations of one of my favorite bass drum rhythms, which is inspired by Erykah Badu's "My Life" from the album *Mama's Gun*. The four-on-the-floor kick rhythm really makes this permuted hi-hat rhythm pop. **Exercise 6** embellishes this bass drum pattern.

Now we'll explore some ideas that are similar to anchoring straight time with your left foot. However, we'll apply that hi-hat anchor into groupings of three and five 16th notes.

In **Exercise 7** we have a bar of 6/4 with every third 16th note played by the hi-hat foot. It's phrased in a bar of 6/4 so the hi-hat pattern can resolve completely back to beat 1. This particular example starts the hi-hat foot on the "e" of beat 2, which is my favorite of the three positions we can start this rhythm from within one beat.

To keep things simple while playing odd hi-hat foot patterns, we'll play a paradiddle groove with the hands. The bass drum

lands on all four different 16th partials throughout this phrase. And to get a feel for how the left foot pattern works, try beginning the hi-hat grouping on the other two 16th-note starting positions: beat 1, and the "&" of beat 1.

In **Exercise 8**, we'll make this concept more musically applicable. Chop off the last two beats so we're left with a 4/4 groove. The hi-hat foot will mostly play every third 16th note, although there is an extra 16th-note rest as the phrase repeats back to beat 1.

**Exercise 9** utilizes the same idea of a four-on-the-floor groove with a funky hand pattern. However, this time we'll play a grouping of five 16th notes with the hi-hat foot starting on beat 1. As mentioned previously in **Exercise 4**, you should explore all the different starting points of this hi-hat rhythm throughout the pattern.

**Exercise 10** cuts the pattern down to 4/4 with an embellished bass drum pattern, this time starting the hi-hat rhythm on the fourth 16th partial of beat 1.

Let's also combine two of our previous ideas and apply them through a variety of permutations, feels, and embellishments. By combining groupings of three and five, we can create a pattern that fits evenly in 4/4. We'll start with consecutive groupings of three, five, five, and three 16th notes, which also create a musical palindrome.

**Exercise 11** sets up a framework to explore our new hi-hat rhythm using a 16th-based train feel with a kick on beat 1 and an accented snare on beats 2 and 4.

Next, in **Exercise 12**, we'll shift the hi-hat pattern forward by an 8th note and replace the train feel for a tight 16th rhythm on the ride or cymbal stack. This one sounds best slightly swung.

In **Exercise 13**, we'll push the previous pattern forward by one quarter note to explore more of a driving stack pattern in 8th notes. Dig in and make this groove drive.

**Exercise 14** embellishes our ride pattern and adds ghost notes on the snare. Note that the final hi-hat note is splashed, and make sure to wait until the "&" of beat 1 before closing it. Let that hi-hat splash hang over the barline. This beat also sounds best while swung.

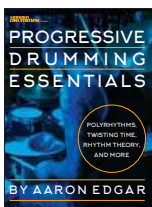
In **Exercise 15**, we'll embellish the previous kick drum pattern to create interplay with the hi-hat foot. Just as in **Exercise 14**, make sure to swing this one pretty hard. Channel your inner Brian Blade or Jack DeJohnette.





1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

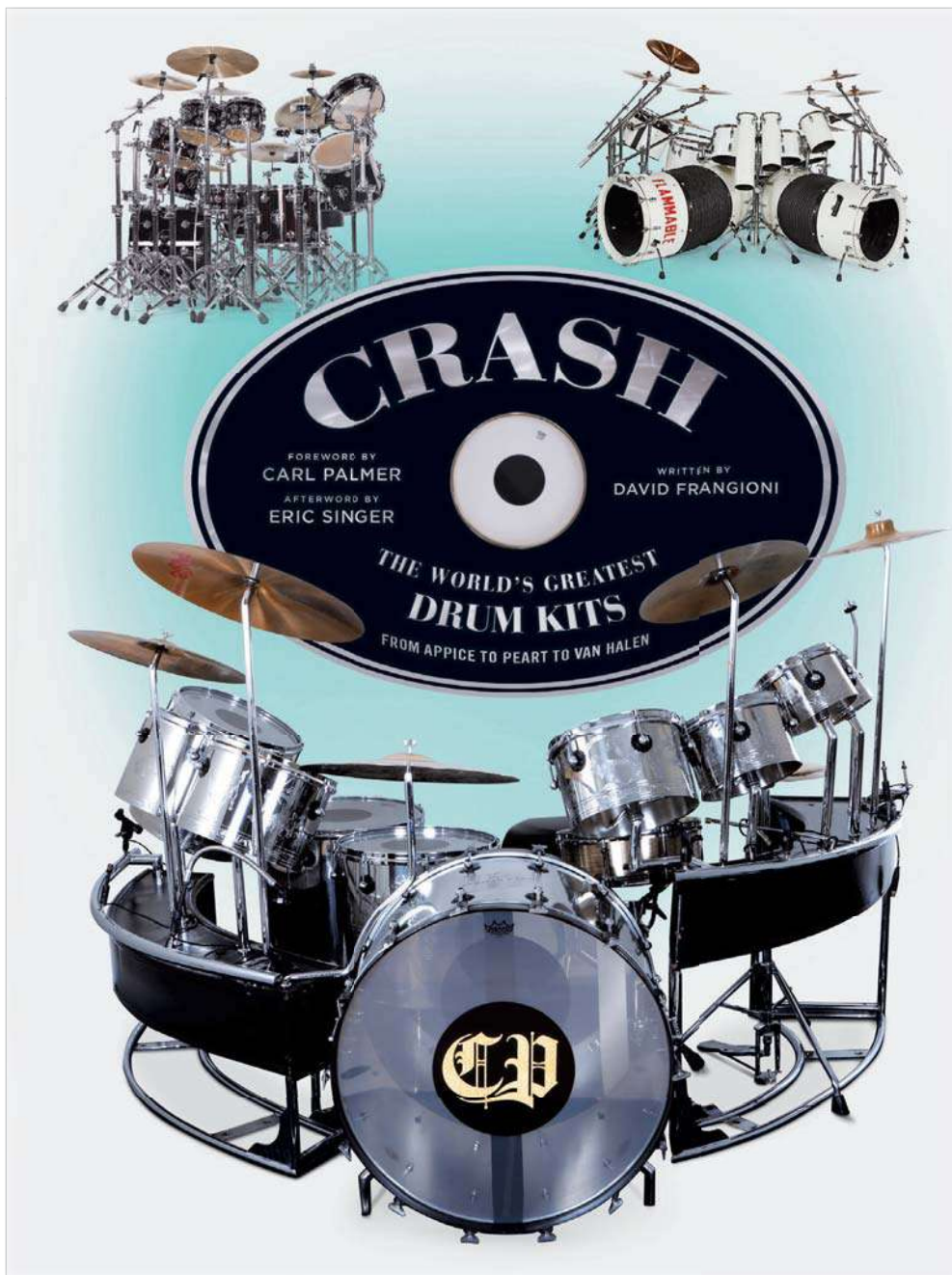
Now that you've explored how to be more expressive with the hi-hat foot, spend some time incorporating these ideas within your favorite beats. As soon as I unlocked this skill in my own playing, it started appearing in all sorts of fun and unexpected ways.



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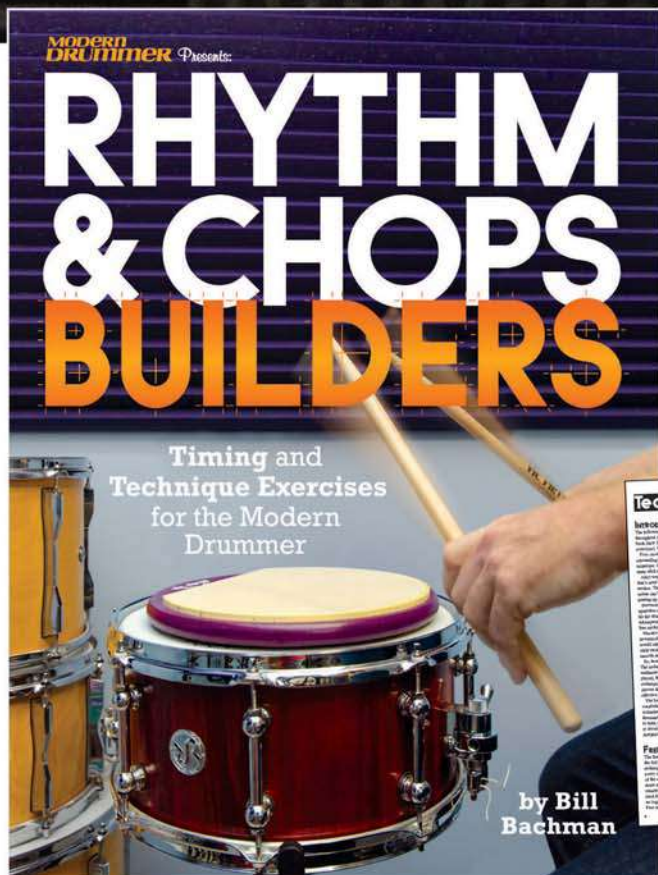
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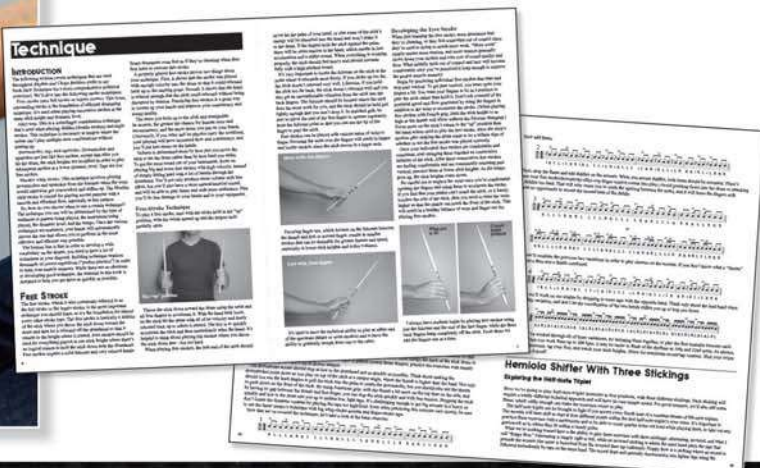
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[tama.com](http://tama.com)



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



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



## Pearl Additional Export Lacquer and Session Studio Select Finishes

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Session Studio Select series drumkits are now offered in a Black Mirror Chrome finish. Various configurations with this scratch-resistant wrap list for \$2,624.99.  
[pearldrums.com](http://pearldrums.com)

## Vater MV8 Drumstick

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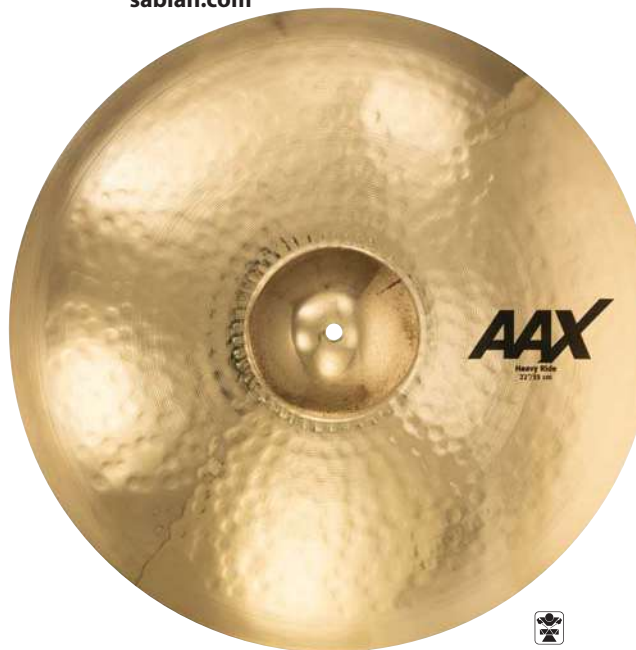
The medium-pitched Timbale bell is ideal for playing articulate rhythmic patterns. The Rock bell is said to offer a dry, low-pitched tone that cuts cleanly, and the Agogo bell has a clear and bright sound.

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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS Taking the Reins

### Calexico and Iron & Wine *Years to Burn*

The follow-up to the revered indie acts' first collaboration, 2005's *In the Reins*, proves that lightning can indeed strike the same place twice. This month we listened to the music—and to drummer JOHN CONVERTINO, who tells how the recording went down.

Some drummers are easy to identify by their feel or favorite chops. For Calexico drummer John Convertino, it's his sound: the smack of his brush on the snare, the sizzling decay of his cymbals, the room-y boom of his kick. The ambient sound of his kit-work is a focal point in Calexico's spacey mix of Latin, jazz, country, and rock. And it provides a soft yet supportive touch in the more singer-songwriter-y setting of Calexico's second collaboration with Iron & Wine founder Sam Beam, *Years to Burn*.

The desert-wide sound Convertino creates with his Calexico partner Joey Burns is present throughout the album, providing an atmospheric backdrop to the laid-back folk-rock songs Beam contributes. On "What Heaven's Left," Convertino uses sticks to keep simple time with just snare, side-stick, and kick. Such spare rhythmic detail allows the song to breathe and eventually soar. He uses sticks again to tap out a slowed-way-down variation of the Bo Diddley groove on the snare in "Midnight Sun," giving Burns' trippy jam a solid foundation. Mostly Convertino employs his trusty brushes for sounds that are familiar and playing that is perfectly suited to everything here, whether he's anchoring the beautiful melody of Beam's "Father Mountain" or driving the ambitious three-part song cycle "The Bitter Suite."

**MD:** There's a folk-rock, singer-songwriter vibe to most of these songs. The drumming certainly doesn't feel secondary in any way, but the songwriting definitely feels like the point of emphasis.

**John:** The connection that drummers have to the songwriter is key; it's really important. Think about Stan Lynch and Tom Petty, Chrissie Hynde and Martin Chambers, Robbie Robertson and Levon Helm. That's what I was feeling when I first met Sam. But when I heard his demos, I thought, *I don't know what to play to these songs*. But when we got in the studio, it was like, *Oh, I get it now*. Sinking into his melody lines, and the way he sings his words—that's the groove. That's what happened on *In the Reins*. So coming in thirteen years later, I knew exactly how to get to where he was. It didn't feel like we were reinventing or trying to do something completely different. It's a good match.

**MD:** You mentioned Stan Lynch, and I couldn't help but think of the parallels between the Heartbreakers finding another gear as a band from working with Bob Dylan, and how Calexico has had a similar evolution because of the work you do with other artists, collectively and separately.

**John:** For sure. It keeps Joey and I from having to always face each other and our musicality. We bring back something [to Calexico] that's unique. As soon as we bring in someone like Gaby Moreno, who's a songwriter with her own take on melody, it inspires us in a different way. It makes us think in a different way. For this session we had Rob Burger on keyboards, and he's an incredible musician



and songwriter as well. And the bass player, Sebastian Steinberg, I'd heard of him but never worked with him before. It was another great influence. All these great influences were coming together. It makes your brain work a different way. And I love it.

**MD:** Sam has a different voice from Joey—softer and airier. I would imagine that prompts a different reaction and different choices from you as a drummer.

**John:** It's true that the vocal timbre is different, but their approach is really similar in that they write on acoustic guitar. As soon as I hear that it's a nylon-string, I want to pick up the brushes, because I want to be able to hear [the guitar] almost acoustically. I don't want it to have to be amplified and cranked in my headphones. I want to relate to it as it is—a natural instrument. Sam was playing that nylon-string a lot on this session. So I was leaning on the brushes a lot again, and really enjoying getting inside that acoustic guitar sound.

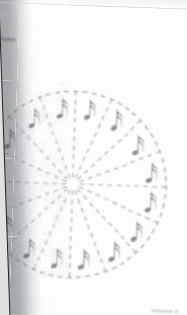
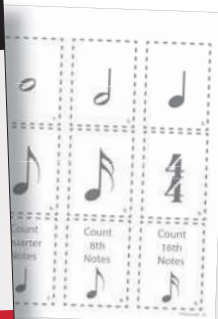
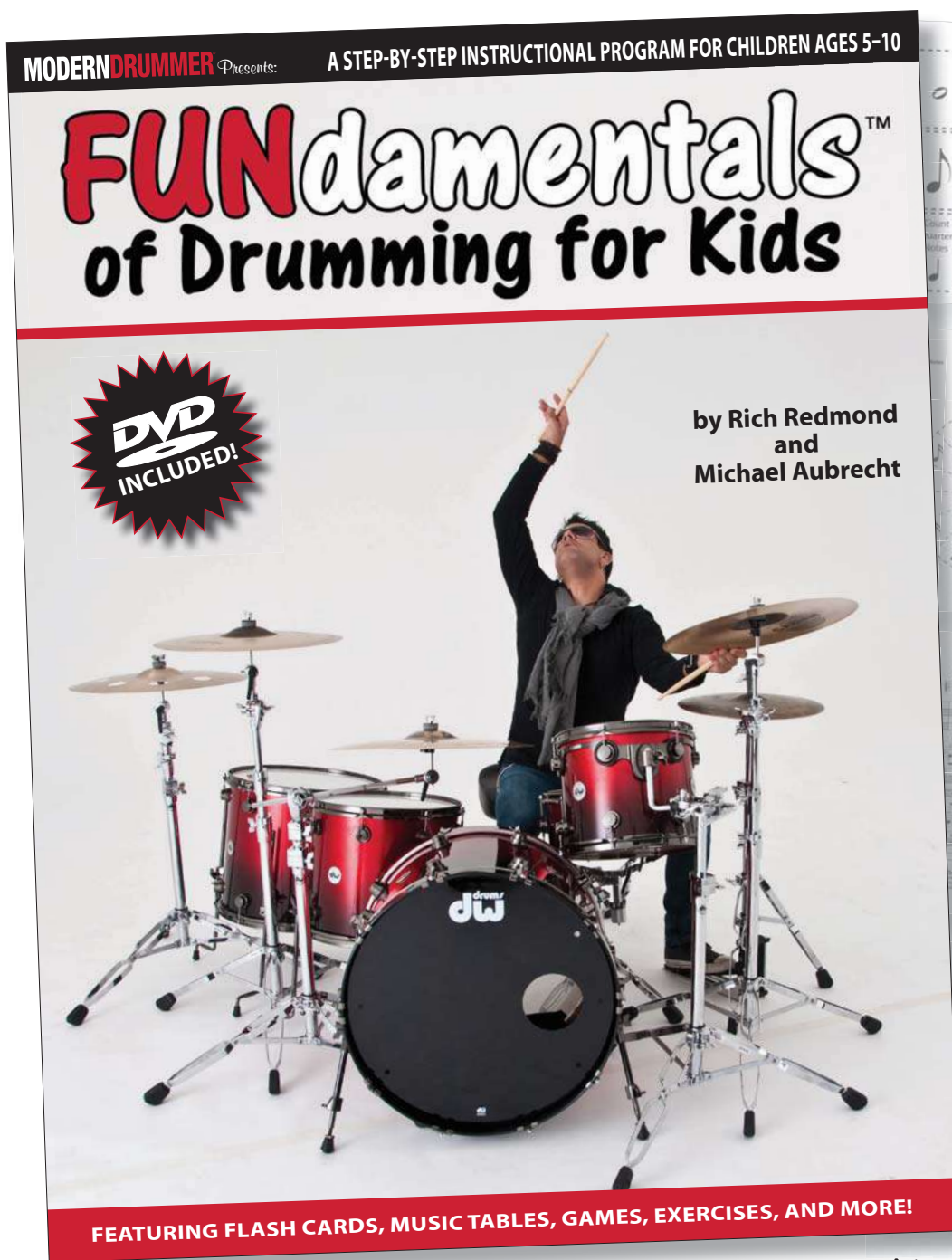
**MD:** Playing with brushes like you do, a little more aggressively than in the traditional sense, do you find that different studios and stages have different sweet spots?

**John:** That's true, [the sweet spot] changes. A lot of times to find it, my go-to is the bass drum. I don't have a hole in the front head, and I leave it open, with just a felt strip on the batter side. If I can just tap the bass drum with the pedal and get a certain response, then I know I'm in the right spot. From there, it's just playing really, really softly, so I can get a response from the room. In the studio, I'll walk around the room a little bit and try to find that spot. The engineer [on *Years to Burn*] suggested a spot for me away from the glass of the control room, so there wouldn't be so much reflection. And that was a great idea. Because usually the control room is set straight forward and the drummer is right there. I always like to go in at a little angle. Even onstage, I like to move the kit so I'm not facing [the audience] straight on. I think that makes a difference. **Patrick Berkery**

Continues on page 80



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## Aaron Goldberg *At the Edge of the World*

**A drumming master returns after a decade and a half away from the spotlight with a lesson in groove.**

Developing a groove and having a deep pocket is something many drummers aspire to, but for a certain few, the pocket is so deep that

it becomes simply staggering. Such is the case with **LEON PARKER**, who returns here to recording after a lengthy hiatus.

A piano-trio recording mixing originals and standards, *At the Edge of the World* is a well-rounded program, with colorful, interactive playing throughout. Parker's sympathetic drumming is supportive yet moves the entire thing with a toe-tapping, dance-like vibe that seems as if it could move mountains. Goldberg's sparkling piano runs cascade over cymbals like sun shining on the water on "Isn't This My Sound Around Me." Fills and solo spots allow Parker to open up more, as on "Effendi," but the emphasis throughout is really on support and the group. A couple of songs allow percussion and rhythmic vocalizing by Parker, who expands his palette seamlessly. At turns bright, sunny, and introspective, Goldberg's album invites repeat listenings, and Parker's inventive pocket plays a major role in this. (Sunnyside) **Martin Patmos**



## Eric Dolphy *Musical Prophet: The Expanded 1963 New York Studio Sessions*

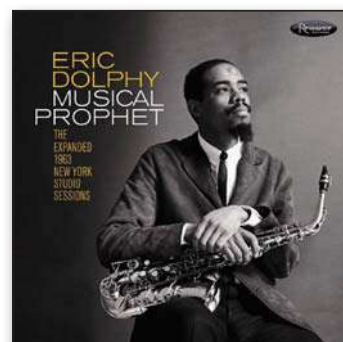
**The influential alto sax, bass clarinet, and flute innovator is honored in a quality deluxe reissue that thankfully revisits the artistry of under-acknowledged drummer J.C. MOSES.**

This finely remastered three-CD package with an expansive hundred-page booklet reissues the Dolphy LPs *Conversations* and *Iron Man*, along with eighty-five additional minutes of previously unreleased alternate takes. The 1963 sessions capture Dolphy in his prime with various-sized ensembles that include the emerging vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, young trumpeter Woody Shaw, bassist Richard Davis, and the inventive and dynamic drummer J.C. Moses. In demand for both mainstream and avant-garde gigs, Moses—much like Dolphy—managed to push the envelope while still retaining hard-bop foundations.

Primarily active in the '60s, Moses also performed frequently with Archie Shepp and worked with Clifford Jordan, Roland Kirk, Kenny Dorham, Sam Rivers, and Charles Lloyd, among others. His discography, however, remains fairly limited, partly due to his early demise at age forty.

Stirring it up with hard-swinging multilayers, Moses is also precise and tasteful here. On "Jitterbug Waltz" he offers a lilting ease that's simultaneously gutsy. But the defining track is the blistering "Iron Man," where Moses catapults the quintet while goading Dolphy's feverish alto solo. Their bonded fearlessness feels bracingly new. (Resonance)

**Jeff Potter**



## MULTIMEDIA

### Foreigner *Live at the Rainbow '78*

**Classic footage of the hit-making hard rockers provides a snapshot of rock's—and drumming's—permanent move into the big big leagues.**

While the seeds of arena rock and its "double live album" artifact were planted by bands like the Doors (1970's *Absolutely Live*) and the Allman Brothers ('71's *At Fillmore East*), in the ensuing decade the genre positively exploded, as documented by a deluge of classic recordings including Deep Purple's *Made in Japan* ('72) and Peter Frampton's record-breaking *Frampton Comes Alive!* ('76). Extended jams and proggy interludes were en vogue, inviting fans to experience a deeper dive into their favorite groups' talents.

Among the emerging wave of arena rock groups were Styx, Journey, Kansas, and the Brit-Yank powerhouse Foreigner. Each of these groups had its own unique and entertaining twist on progressive-minded pop-rock and featured outstanding musicianship and soaring vocals. The restored footage presented in *Live at the Rainbow '78* features a blazing Foreigner just one year



after the release of its self-titled LP.

At the time of this show, Foreigner had already logged significant hours on arena stages, sharing bills with the likes of the Rolling Stones and Bob Seger, but this performance was perhaps extra incendiary because it represented a homecoming of sorts for the band at the famous London theater. Lou Gramm's soulful, driving, and unmistakable vocals grab the audience by the throat, and founder Mick Jones' Frampton-inspired guitar work never fails to hit the mark. Drummer **DENNIS ELLIOTT** plays with excitable energy and a playful

yet precise groove, at times nudging the music with a notably "live" forward motion typical of the day. It's refreshing to see and hear the humanity in this timeless material and witness a youthful exuberance rarely allowed to flourish in today's "production-perfect" live concert settings. (\$15.97 Blu-Ray, \$11.99 DVD, Eagle Vision)

**Mike Haid**





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# Blake Fleming's *The Book of Rhythm*

Though he's a founder of Dazzling Killmen, Laddio Bolocko, and the Mars Volta, bands whose influence extends widely among experimental, progressive, and technical hardcore musicians, the author's playing and teaching go far beyond genre and are rooted in rudiments, Scottish Pipe band drumming, jazz, and beyond.

by John Colpitts

**B**lake Fleming is an omnivorous student of the drums, so his announcement about self-publishing *The Book of Rhythm* was met with keen interest by those familiar with his career. A conversation with a student in November of 2017 prompted Fleming, who's been teaching drums since he was a teenager, to actualize his dream of creating his own method book. After a few false starts, research into the theories of composer, theorist, and advisor Joseph Schillinger inspired him to create a rhythmic "book of spells." The resulting *Book of Rhythm* is an encyclopedia of 5,096 possible rhythmical permutations of 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-, 9-, 10-, 11-, and 12-beat combinations that can be used for rhythm study, reading, compositional inspiration, or creativity—on any instrument.

For Fleming, this kind of open-ended reference book is a perfect model of his teaching style. "I want to unlock students mentally and physically," he says, "so that they can start to get their own ideas out in an articulate and powerful manner. I'm very interested in helping people find their own voice on the instrument. The fact that this book is a vast archive with which you can create should make it appeal to composers and musicians of all backgrounds. It truly is a reference book, workbook, and an overall creative manual."

One of the book's strengths is its simplicity. The rhythms use only quarter notes, 8th notes, and dotted quarter notes. Even students with limited exposure to reading will be able to sit down and play most of the examples, and a little effort can unlock them all. Fleming lists every permutation of possible three- to twelve-beat combinations progressively through the book's 229 pages, but you could also just open a page at random, pick a rhythm, and start playing. The book includes a short introduction and an appendix of "creative usage" ideas that you can apply to the rhythms, but the material is generally unadorned. As Fleming writes in his introduction, this is "not just a collection of exercises and patterns but rather something alchemical and universal." Your instrument or compositional practice could include working from any one of these thousands of rhythms while applying multiple approaches to the source material.

Fleming says he wants *The Book of Rhythm* to become the *Syncopation* for the 21st century and recommends that drummers use the "Alan Dawson method" on the rhythmic material that can be found in his book.

Blake outlines his teaching approach further: "Even within a basic snare solo, all four limbs and all parts of the kit can eventually be utilized. There are so many miniature lessons just within one piece, and sometimes there are many lessons just around one measure. This is where *The Book of Rhythm* comes in, because you can take



## Study Suggestions

Blake Fleming shares some ways to interpret the source material.

1. Have one limb play the written line and one limb play the rests. Do this hand to hand, foot to foot, hand to foot, or foot to hand.
  - on the kit, the same way you might if your guitarist just showed you a new riff to jam on.
2. Play continual 8th notes, 16th notes, triplets, etc. in the hands so there are no rests, and then play the notes of the written line as accents.
3. Play any variety of ride patterns—say, the traditional jazz ride pattern to start—and use the written lines as comping material for snare, bass drum, or hi-hat foot.
  - Play a jazz ride pattern: have the snare play the written line, play the hi-hat foot on 2 and 4, and the bass drum fills in the rests.
4. Play the written line with the hands, and fill in the rests with the feet, either bass drum or hi-hat, or alternate between the two.
  - Do the same thing as above, but switch the bass drum and snare drum so the bass drum plays the written line and the snare fills in the rests.
5. Have your lead hand and foot play the rhythm in unison while the other hand fills in the rests. To expand this, have your other foot keep straight time.
  - Do the same thing as above, but instead of the traditional ride pattern, have the ride play the written line in unison with the bass drum while the snare fills in the rests.
6. Layer two, three, or four rhythms, a different one for each limb.
  - Have the hi-hat foot play the written line, the non-lead hand fill in the rests, and the other hand play various ride patterns.
7. Play every other note on the opposite limb, whether it be between both hands, both feet, or some combination of hand and foot or foot and hand.
  - Snare plays the line while the bass drum and hi-hat alternate playing the rests.
8. Think of the rhythms as riffs, like a guitar riff in band practice. Verbalize the rhythm out loud, either by singing or counting, and play around the riff
  - Assign the kick to play all the long notes and the snare to play the short notes, or vice versa, underneath various ride patterns.

one measure of rhythm and see how many ways you can utilize and manipulate it."

*The Book of Rhythm* stands in opposition to the over-engineered tendencies in drum pedagogy and gives the reader more control to develop a personal path through the essential elements of rhythm. It's a unique addition to the literature and is a recommended book for creative drummers.



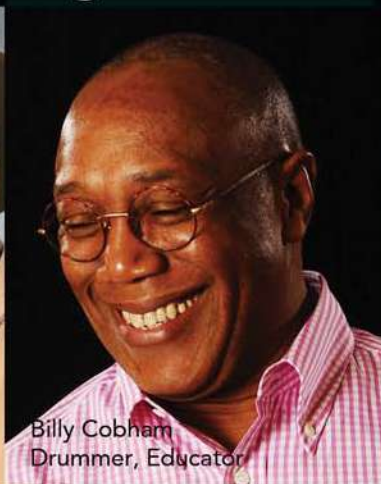
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## LP Celebrates Fifty-Fifth Anniversary in London

Featured percussionists including Giovanni Hidalgo and Sola Akingbola light up a festive night at Ronnie Scott's.

Latin Percussion recently celebrated more than half a century as one of the world's largest percussion brands by hosting a second edition of their Rhythm Jam concerts at the legendary London jazz club Ronnie Scott's. Special guests at the event included Grammy Award-winning percussionist Giovanni Hidalgo and Jamiroquai's Sola Akingbola, who performed with his band Critical Mass. In recognition of Hidalgo's musical contributions, the instrument manufacturer presented him with the newly established Latin Percussion Legacy Award during the event.



Akingbola (front) and Hidalgo (far right) with Critical Mass

"Last year we celebrated LP's longstanding association with New York City by throwing a similar event at the Cutting Room club in Manhattan," says the company's brand manager, Derek Zimmerman. "The positive energy and camaraderie were undeniable. Sola had wanted to include Giovanni at an event in the U.K., so we decided to revisit the idea this year and invite our family to come jam with us at this incredible venue."

Joining Akingbola's band at the event were top British and European percussionists including Pete Lockett (Peter Gabriel, Jeff Beck), Karl Vanden Bossche (Blur, Gorillaz), João Caetano (Incognito), Rob "Skins" Anderson (Alexander O'Neal), Orlando Poleo (independent), and Will Fry (*Motown: The Musical*, *Lion King*). The entire concert was filmed and is planned to be released on LP's YouTube channel later in the year.

## Will Calhoun Among Recipients of 2019 Berklee Alumni Achievement Awards

The Living Colour drummer joins a select few who've received the honor.

This past April 4, Berklee College of Music recognized six of its graduates with Alumni Achievement Awards. Among the recipients were drummer and *MD* cover artist Will Calhoun, who since graduating from the institution in 1986 established an impressive and successful career and ensuing reverence among the drumming community. And although perhaps best known for his work in the rock band Living Colour, Calhoun's accomplishments run the spectrum from independent performance to composition to photography to promoting environmental awareness.

Alumni recipients spent the day sharing their experiences with students before a ceremony at Boston's Lenox Hotel. Calhoun joins a group of 128 Berklee College of Music and Boston Conservatory at Berklee graduates who have received the honor. Other 2019 recipients included engineer Gustavo Celis, composer Ramin Djawadi, songwriter and music executive Nir Seroussi, dancer and choreographer Ebony Williams, and lyricist Amanda Yesnowitz.



From left: Williams, Calhoun, Celis, Seroussi

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# INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

## Rogers Drum Day

Celebrating the resurgence of one of drumming's most revered brands.

After a long hiatus, in 2017 Rogers announced a comeback to the world of drums with the modern reintroduction of their flagship snare, the Dyna-Sonic. The release made quite a splash among the drumming community and was followed a year later by the rumor of new kits. And indeed, the company followed through. A Rogers kit—along with many beautiful Dyna-Sonic snares—was displayed at the Big Bang Distribution booth during the 2019 NAMM show this past January.

To celebrate Rogers' rebirth, Dana Bentley, who owns Bentley's Drum Shop in Fresno, California, held a Rogers Drums Day in late fall of last year [October 14]. Various former Rogers employees, endorsers, company memorabilia, and both vintage and newly released Rogers drums packed the store's floor.

To understand the significance of the day, a brief review of the Rogers drum history is helpful: In 1849 Joseph H. Rogers, an immigrant from Ireland, started a calfskin drum and banjo head company in Brewster's Station, New York. A second tannery was later established by his son, Joseph H. Rogers Jr., in Farmingdale, New York. Around 1930, Joseph's grandson Cleveland S. Rogers began manufacturing drums at the Farmingdale site.

Over the next century, Rogers became a revered name in the drum industry thanks in part to innovations such as their chrome-over-brass and wood Dyna-Sonic snares, MemriLoc hardware, and Swiv-O-Matic bass drum pedal. Wood-shelled Dyna-Sonics in particular have become coveted by collectors for their rarity, sensitivity, and unique sound.

The Rogers company stayed within the original family for more than a hundred years before being sold in 1955. Afterward, the company experienced multiple ownership changes as well as manufacturing eras in Covington, Ohio, and Fullerton, California. In 2013 Rogers was acquired by the president of Dixon Drums, Joseph



Chen, who ushered in their 2017 return.

Bentley described the new incarnation of Rogers at the event. "They sound fantastic and are true to the original drums," he says. "Rogers spent a couple of years engineering parts that resembled the old wood Dyna-Sonics, but they're a little better now in my opinion. The same applies to the new Dyno-Matic pedal. The original Swiv-O-Matic pedal was iconic. When it came out in the late '50s, no one pedal had its features. Rogers brought it back with the original fixtures, along with the addition of more modern features to make it easier for setup. And with the new wood Dyna-Sonic snares, all of the parts are 'retro-fittable'—if you have an original vintage drum, all parts for it are available as replacements. Back in the day, Rogers drums were the most expensive on the market, and many players aspired to own one of their kits."

The event started with a meet-and-greet along with a display of various vintage Rogers drums, including many wood Dyna-Sonics, a mint 1964 Holiday Blue Sparkle kit, and a 1983 Gina Schock Custom SuperTen snare hand-built by John Cermenaro, Rogers' production manager in the early '80s. This was followed by a presentation

by Bob Kasha of Big Bang Distribution about the latest Rogers gear. Jim Ganduglia, a thirty-year Rogers endorser and part of the Rogers research and development team during the late '70s, gave a clinic on playing styles, positioning, and what makes hardware work well.

Later Bentley debuted a drumset that hadn't been seen for over forty years, surprising the audience with the original *Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* Silver Sparkle Rogers kit from New York. Bentley had purchased several of Ed Shaughnessy's drums from his estate a little over four years ago. "Nineteen sixty-three was when Shaughnessy started with the *Tonight Show*," says Bentley, "and I believe it was around 1972 when the show moved out to Burbank, California. Shortly after, Shaughnessy got a new Rogers White Marine

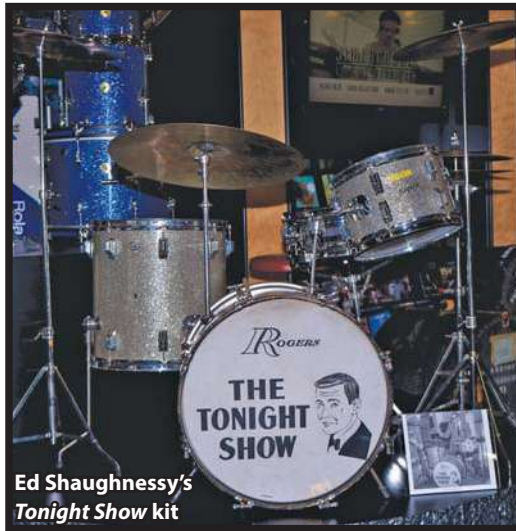




Pearl double bass kit"

Cermenaro shared his knowledge of Rogers' drum production and the inner workings of the company during the last days before its shutdown in 1984. John gave personal insight into the agony he experienced while watching the company close its doors. In 1984, Cermenaro had pleaded to keep Rogers going. During his presentation, he read aloud some of his passionate letters to CBS management, who ran the brand from 1966 to 1983, but it unfortunately failed to convince them to continue.

Both Ganduglia and Cermenaro clearly showed their love for Rogers and their products. They said the camaraderie of the employees was amazing, as was their pride in their work. They were thrilled that Rogers was coming back in the right way. Jack McFeeters, a vintage Rogers expert, said, "I've talked to [Cermenaro] many times over the years concerning things at Rogers during his tenure there. His insights and knowledge of the daily operations, difficulties, successes, and failures have been most helpful toward



Ed Shaughnessy's  
Tonight Show kit



Rogers modern Dyno-Matic bass drum pedal

building an accurate timeline of events at Rogers drums during the early 1980s. Jim is a genius in both his knowledge and engineering skills, and I gained a new appreciation for my old drums."

Bentley said that the event truly lived up to his expectations, and attendees were able to share their

enthusiasm for Rogers and see the promise of a new generation. "It was a fantastic day, so we plan on doing it again," Bentley said. McFeeters also captured the feeling of the attendees. "What I found in the new Rogers Dyna-Sonic was beautiful in so many ways," he said. "Every part, every fit, would have made Joe Thompson, Ben Strauss, and Henry Grossman, the early Rogers innovators, proud. This gives all of us who enjoy Rogers drums hope for a future filled with greatness."

**Story by Bob Campbell**

**Photos by Royce Davis**



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# The Unconventional Hybrid



**"I love playing both acoustic and electronic drums,"** says Vince McGee when asked about the choices he made when designing this month's unique setup. "This hybrid set represents the best of both worlds." Looking at his kit, with its seven Yamaha electronic DTX drum pads, thirteen Zildjian cymbals, Yamaha DTXtreme brain, and Yamaha and DW hardware, it's hard not to appreciate its custom appeal.

McGee's Zildjian cymbals include a mix of As and Ks, with a heavy emphasis on smaller splashes and effects cymbals, along with his favorite 20" K ride. "The cymbals' tonal range is exquisite," he says.

McGee goes on to explain how he mounted his cymbals to

achieve space and tonality. Looking at the kit from left to right, the four cymbal stacks go from small to large, with larger cymbals on the bottom of each stack. "All stacked cymbals have felt between them," he says. "And each can be played separately without being choked by the other cymbal." In addition, A Custom and K Custom splashes are mounted low and near the toms.

Although McGee prefers the default DTXtreme Maple Custom Absolute preset for his electronic drum sounds, he varies the kit as well. "The versatility of the DTXtreme brain is without end," he explains. "I make additional sound adjustments for different toms and diverse attack on each voice. And I do swap the snare pad out for an acoustic Yamaha maple snare when appropriate."

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



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