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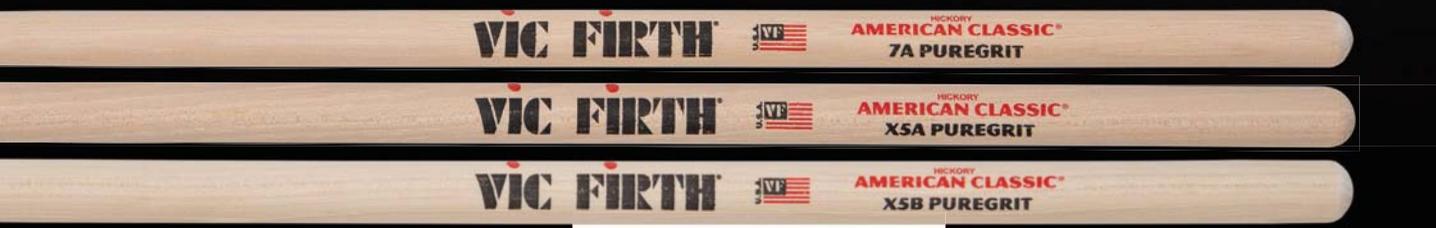
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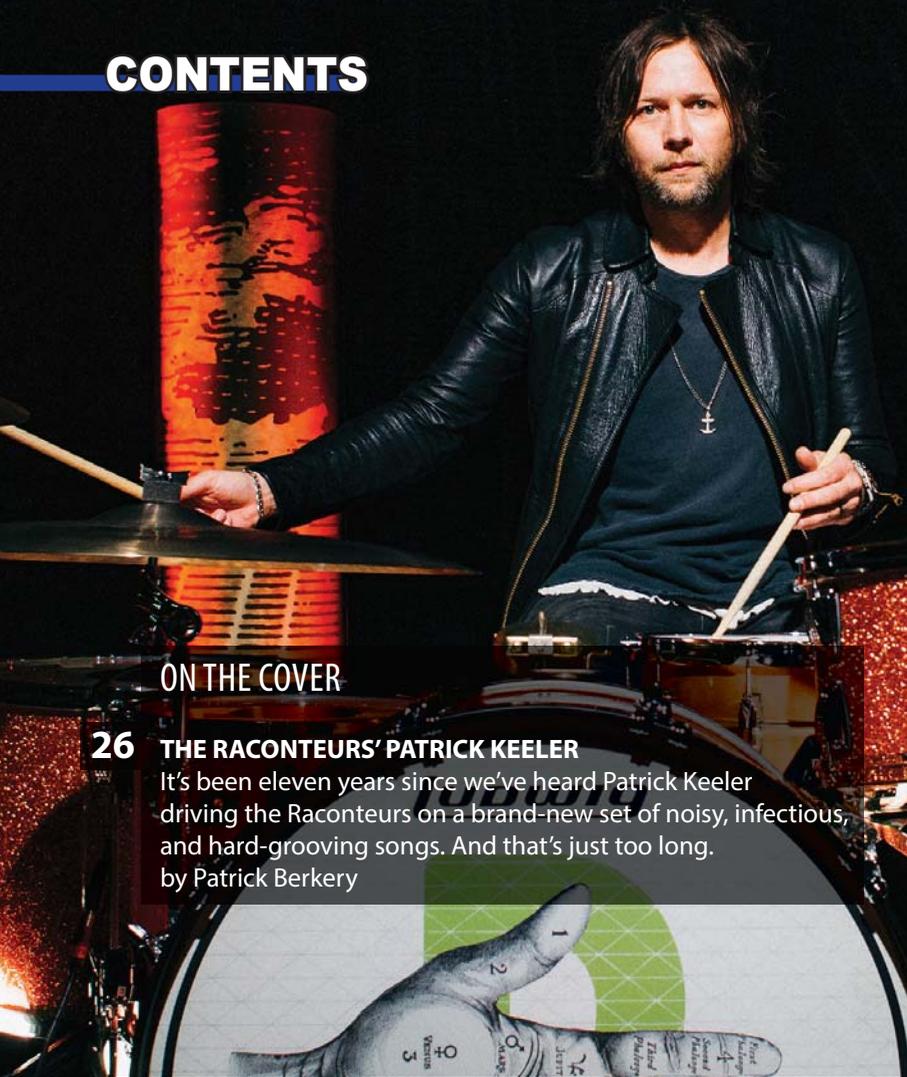
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TAMA artist **Adam Deitch**'s music career is as far-reaching as it is impressive. His musical background is full of notable names and credits, playing with *John Scofield*, *Break Science* and his funk group, *Lettuce*. Adam is always developing and growing as a musician and trying out new ways to make great sounds. Now, Adam's exploring the focused, well balanced tone of his new **Starclassic Walnut/Birch** kit and how it flows seamlessly with his unique blend of Hip Hop and Funk-inspired playing.



Skipping Down Memory Lane

Hi, everyone! I hope you enjoyed your summer. Did you get out to any live shows? Play some great gigs? Make a record? Let us know what you've been up to, and you could be selected to be one our Spotlight Subscribers—our way to let you update us on your personal accomplishments, and for you to get to know your fellow *Modern Drummer* family members. If you're interested in being included, email me at billya@moderndrummer.com, and be sure to put Spotlight Subscriber in the subject line.

Speaking of subscribers, this past July 7 *MD* reader and VIP contest winner Bryan Shadden and his guest, Steven Roper, came out to Los Angeles with us to celebrate Ringo Starr's Peace and Love private birthday party at Capitol Studios. Bryan joined us in singing "Happy Birthday" and attending a meet-and-greet with Sir Richard himself. You can read all about his experience at moderndrummer.com.

Turning to this month's issue, on page 58 we feature a piece on one of my biggest drumming influences, Jeff Porcaro. I can vividly remember, back in the day, spending hours at my local record shop scrolling through the credits on the backs of albums looking for Jeff, who contributed to records in *such a wide variety of genres*. I'd buy a handful of records and then rush home and play along to them. When the core band on most of those records with Jeff formed the band Toto, I was ecstatic; *all my favorite studio musicians in one band*, writing, singing, and playing their own music. While Jeff is no longer with us, Toto still performs to this day, and I spoke to the legendary guitarist/songwriter Steve Lukather, who co-founded the band with Jeff, about his five favorite Toto tracks featuring the drummer. Knowing how difficult a task that was, we're super thankful to Luke for playing along. He even obliged when we asked him to pick five more Jeff tracks, this time from recordings he made outside of Toto. You can read about those at moderndrummer.com.

Also in this issue, I spoke with long-time Peter Dinklage drummer Dan Wojciechowski about the gear he's using on the guitarist's much-publicized farewell tour. Much to my surprise, Dan told me he's using the kit owned by the late John Siomos, who played on most of Frampton's early material, including the record-breaking *Frampton Comes Alive!* John's kit was actually the first "professional" drumset I ever saw in a recording studio. I was fifteen, sixteen years old, visiting the Record Plant in New York City for the very first time. Engineer Shelly Yakus graciously let me go in and take a look around. I remember it like it was yesterday, staring at that kit; I'd never seen drums miked up and ready to record before! All these years later, Dan is taking that very same kit out on the road. (A bit of music history: John Siomos played drums on my second-favorite song of all-time, Todd Rundgren's "Hello It's Me"—you'll have to email me to find out my number-one!)

We're also thrilled this month to feature the Raconteurs' Patrick Keeler, in his first *MD* cover story. Congrats to Patrick, Jack White, and the band for debuting at the top of *Billboard's* album chart with their first record in eleven years, *Help Us Stranger*.

As always, it's a jam-packed issue, and there's plenty more to dig into. Enjoy, and I'll see you next time!



Alex Solca

Billy Amendola
Editor at Large



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What's Your Favorite Jeff Porcaro Track?



My favorites are “Lido Shuffle” from Boz Skaggs’ *Silk Degrees* and “These Chains” from Toto’s *The Seventh One*. “Lido” is so fluid and energetic. “These Chains” is silky, smooth, and just feels beautiful. Porcaro always had a million bucks in every groove. It was so moving. He’s missed but never forgotten.

Jim Benner

I love cuts like Michael McDonald’s “I Keep Forgettin’,” Michael Jackson’s “Beat It,” and Toto’s “Rosanna.” But one track that I adore is Leo Sayer’s “When I Need You.” It builds up from gentle hi-hat to a slow, bluesy groove with incredibly spacious, dynamic, and fat fills, and it features Porcaro’s stunning feel.

Mark Youll

I’d say Boz Scaggs’ “Lowdown,” especially in the middle section of the song. The phrasing between the [overdubbed] hi-hat and the ride is amazing. And his hi-hat control was unique and tasty.

Alonso Solano Estrella

On “Jake to the Bone” off Toto’s *Kingdom of Desire*, Porcaro pushes the time ahead but never rushes. He handles the sections in 7/8 smoothly and showed us what fusion sounded like in his more-than-capable hands.

Clint Hopkins

Don Henley’s “Dirty Laundry.” Porcaro always sounded as though his only desire in life was to play those backbeats!

Ted Warren

“Jake to the Bone” from Toto’s *Kingdom of Desire*. You can hear Porcaro’s epic groove, tasteful fills, fantastic 7/8 mid-section, and just brilliant pocket. He was a master.

Jöe Diduca

“Take This Love” off Sérgio Mendes’ *Brasil ’86*. Porcaro’s playing here might sound easy, but it’s so difficult to execute and imitate his feel and fills.

Fernando Mendoza Jr.

Toto’s “Rosanna” blew my tiny drumming mind when I was fourteen.

Ash Soan

Curtis Stigers’ “Sleeping with the Lights On” has a simple, solid groove with Porcaro’s thumbprint all over it, and it could’ve been one of the last sessions he did.

Steve Bolton

I’d say Boz Scaggs’ “Look What You’ve Done to Me.” It’s a masterpiece in so many ways. Porcaro’s little press roll coming out of the first chorus is perfect. The powerful fill leading into the final chorus really stirs your emotions. The song is probably not among a lot of peoples’ favorites, but it’s one of mine.

Carmen Mami

Check out Porcaro’s playing on Michael Bolton’s “When a Man Loves a Woman.” The fill that brings the song back in after the vocal breakdown is the most beautiful thing. And don’t get me started on his rimclick sound and pocket!

Brad King

“Mother” by Pink Floyd. There are some tricky time changes that Porcaro handles with grace. Better yet, his playing doesn’t stick out like a sore thumb compared to Nick Mason’s work on the rest of the album. It’s, in a word, seamless.

Benedict Dawn-Cross

Steely Dan’s “Your Gold Teeth II” is a jazzy rework that showcases the finesse of Porcaro’s drumming prowess. It starts off with a driving intro and explosive hits before morphing into a jazz waltz, where Jeff’s drumming is subtle yet vital to drive the tune forward. His licks during the bridge are insane, as is his brief break right before the second half of the guitar solo. This song took me months to figure out, and I’m still trying to perfect it.

I play in a Steely Dan tribute band, and I always strive to capture the essence of each drummer. Porcaro is one of my all-time favorites—grooves galore and such finesse. He’s one of the greatest.

Keith Droz

I’d say Boz Scaggs’ “Lido Shuffle.” It has a solid groove with a heavy shuffle that leads with the bass drum. Porcaro plays minimally but adds hugely complementary fills throughout.

Ian Piggott

Porcaro was always on point and playing exactly what the song needed. On top of that you can tell that he really locked in with other musicians. My personal favorites of his would be the Brothers Johnson’s “I Want You” and Elton John’s “Princess.”

Kjetil Henrikson

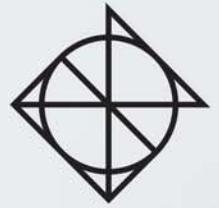
Don Henley’s “New York Minute” is the example I use when explaining what playing “behind the beat” means. Try drumming along to that Don Henley classic during the chorus. Porcaro makes you wait *forever* for each backbeat.

Keith Cronin

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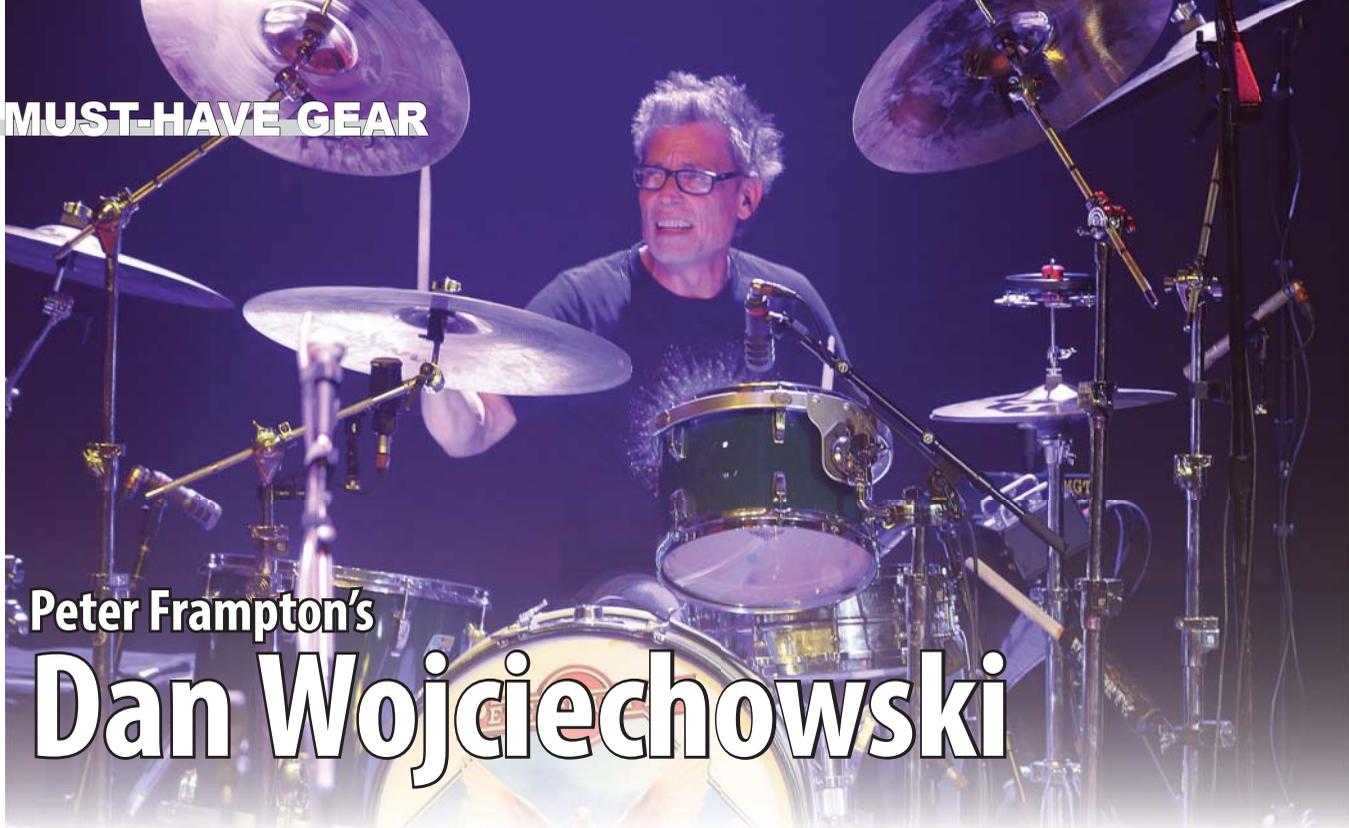
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Peter Frampton's Dan Wojciechowski

Peter Frampton's name is practically synonymous with the concept of live rock 'n' roll. The singer and guitarist's 1976 double album, *Frampton Comes Alive!*, is one of the most famous and successful concert recordings of all time, selling more than 17 million units and producing a number of songs that remain in high rotation to this very day.

Frampton's drummer since 2008 is Dan Wojciechowski, a Warren, Michigan, native and graduate of the famed University of North Texas music department. Over the years, Dan's played on countless commercials for radio and TV and recorded or toured with a number of top artists, including Olivia Newton-John, Andy Timmons Band, LeAnn Rimes, and the Backstreet Boys.

Recently Frampton released the album *All Blues*, a collection of his favorite blues classics featuring his touring band (including Wojciechowski), and they're currently on the road in support of it. Unfortunately this will be Peter's final major tour, due to his being diagnosed with the autoimmune disease inclusion body myositis.

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"Dan is the best drummer I've ever played with," Frampton recently told *Modern Drummer*. "He has an immeasurable amount of technique at the ready, but his *feel* is the thing. He plays with the most comfortable laid-back groove. Dynamics are important with the music we play, and the musical conversations I have with Dan every night are wonderful and never planned; they always just happen. Dan's also one of the most genuine, caring people I've ever met. We're very lucky to have Dan in the band." Anyone familiar with Frampton's career knows that his comments about Wojciechowski are high praise indeed, given the deep skills of John Siomos, the late, great drummer who appears on *Comes Alive!* and Frampton's early solo albums.

"I'm actually using the 12" tom, 16" floor tom, and 16x24 kick drum from John's classic green early '70s Ludwig kit on this tour," Wojciechowski informs us. "I'm also using a 5x14 late-'20s standard Black Beauty snare with wider snares and die-cast rims. It's what we used for lots of the recent studio sessions."

Dan adds that he's using an Evans G1 batter head on the rack tom and a G2 on the floor tom, with clear Ambassador resonants. "The thinner head on the rack adds a nice top-end presence," he explains, "and the slightly thicker head on the floor is *large* to say the least. I use a DW coated Ambassador head on the snare. It's a great combination that really covers the full range of Peter's diverse library. I'm also very lucky to have a great drum tech, Cody Bailey, to keep the heads fresh and tune the kit perfectly to every venue."

Wojciechowski's current Zildjian setup includes 14" A Custom hi-hats, a 21" prototype crash-ride, a pair of 20" A Custom crashes, a 20" Rezo crash, and a 19" medium crash. "My 20" A Customs are very dynamic," says Dan, "with just the right amount of sizzle, presence, and sustain when barely tapped, yet they have the body to support the heavy stuff."

Among Dan's must-have accessories are his Vic Firth 5B wood-tip sticks and Etymotic Research ER-4 in-ear monitors. "The ER-4s are flat and accurate with a very consistent seal," he says. "I have an added subwoofer to my back right on the drum riser, and a stellar ear-monitor engineer, Matt Fitzgerald. I would also like to mention that we have a great front-of-house audio engineer, Jim Yakabuski—you can 'feel the room' from the stage, and the dynamics are really well captured."

In terms of preparing for a tour and staying in shape on the road, Dan says, "I do a pretty extensive daily Pilates-based stretching and a core muscle-building routine, whether I'm on the road or at home. I've been doing this routine every day for about the last ten years, and I've really noticed increased flexibility and centered strength."

"I warm up at least an hour before the show with my practice kneepad," he adds, "and a bit before soundcheck. I usually eat a very light dinner around two hours before I have to play. And I must have time for a thirty-minute power nap at some point in the afternoon, and lots of water throughout the day. If [you make it] your choice of lifestyle, then there's not much to change when you hit the road. On tour, walking is a good overall exercise, and it's great for the soul offstage."

Billy Amendola



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John Wicks on Fitz and the Tantrums' *All the Feels*

The session and touring vet sounds off on an alternative powerhouse's newest smash.



On September 20, the soul-influenced indie-pop band Fitz and the Tantrums released *All the Feels*, their fourth full-length since forming in Los Angeles in 2008. The group, which quickly developed a buzz in L.A. early in their career, launched to global success in 2013 thanks to tracks such as “Out of My League” and “The Walker” from their sophomore album, *More Than Just a Dream*. On their latest LP, infectious hooks abound, as evidenced by lead single “123456,” which shortly after its release quickly racked up millions of online streams.

Although he's not playing drums on every track on *All the Feels*, Fitz's drummer, John Wicks, slays when called to do so. Check out “OCD,” where he channels his inner Marky Ramone to drive vocalist Michael Fitzpatrick's contagious melodies. And don't miss “Hands Up,” a lesson in consistent, tight, four-on-the-floor drumming bliss.

Wicks, the son of a Navy commander, shifted hometowns growing up. While he was in third grade and his father was stationed in New Orleans, his mother, an avid jazz enthusiast, sparked a fire in him. “Wherever there was music, she'd take me there,” Wicks tells *MD*. “Whether it was Mardi Gras or standing outside of a gospel church or hearing second-line drummers during funeral marches...that was it, man. I've just never stopped wanting to play since.”

After relocating to Bainbridge Island, Washington, Wicks attended Central Washington University, and then Boston's Berklee College of Music, before moving to Brooklyn. “In New York I saw all of my heroes passing the hat at jazz clubs at the end of the night,” Wicks says. “And I'm like, *Man, if my heroes are passing the hat, what the hell am I doing?*

I sort of went back to Seattle with my tail between my legs.”

Soon after, though, the drummer moved to L.A. and built a studio career. “I'd done some recordings with Bruno Mars and CeLo Green,” he says. “I was the guy you'd call if you couldn't clear a sample and you needed something that sounded like an old Brazilian funk groove, a breakbeat, or whatever. If you didn't have the budget, I'd approximate it. One of the producers I worked with knew that Fitz was looking for a drummer, so he passed my number along.”

We caught up with Wicks via phone from his current home in Montana.

MD: What was it like when you first joined Fitz?

John: Back then I started to notice that a lot of the players that were getting the lion's share of session work in L.A. were starting to take touring gigs. Budgets were going down, the record industry was sort of imploding, and a lot of the guys that I looked up to—and still do—were taking touring gigs because the sessions weren't paying enough.

Just as I was starting to get session work, I realized that I was a little late to the game. So I played a couple gigs with Fitz, and before I knew it there were lines around the block in jaded L.A. I was like, “What's going on here?” It sort of became this undeniable force that people really liked.

Over the last ten years now, it's very much changed into a whole different thing from what I signed up for. It's gradually become more and more poppy, so it's been a big adjustment for me for each



More New Releases



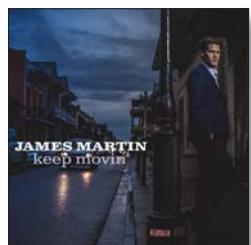
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record, and a new skill set [to learn]. I have to do a mental shift so I'm comfortable and turn it into an exercise so that I'm able to do it.

MD: What was the recording process like for *All the Feels*?

John: We used maybe ten different producers. I flew down to L.A. and we recorded two songs per producer. It was odd but also kind of cool. And that whole world is very different now from what I grew up doing. Sometimes they'd use my acoustic drums, and I'd replace a demo part. Sometimes it'd be a combination of live and programmed drums. And sometimes it didn't really work out, and the programmed stuff worked better. It was honestly very challenging, yet inspiring and fun.

MD: What's the split between acoustic drums and programmed parts?

John: It's about 50/50. A couple of songs are very close to what we were originally doing. And then some are very much like having a Swedish pop producer come in and give it their thing. [laughs] So it was a very different experience—at times infuriating and at times very inspiring.

You know, if I start getting pissed off about

something in the studio, it's usually because I'm not pulling it off. And I think that's most people's most knee-jerk reactions: *Oh, this is stupid*. Well no, it's not; you're just not pulling it off. Start working on this skill set. Throughout my whole life, I've tried to make that my attitude: keep practicing no matter what.

MD: Do you feel like you're battling someone else's idea in the studio?

John: I want to see what else could be available. I don't want to have what they're hearing forced down my throat. If they're inviting me to the table, I want to have something heard, even if they don't end up using it. I don't have any ego about it. But I at least want to feel like a creative individual if I'm going to be walking into that situation, rather than some drone.

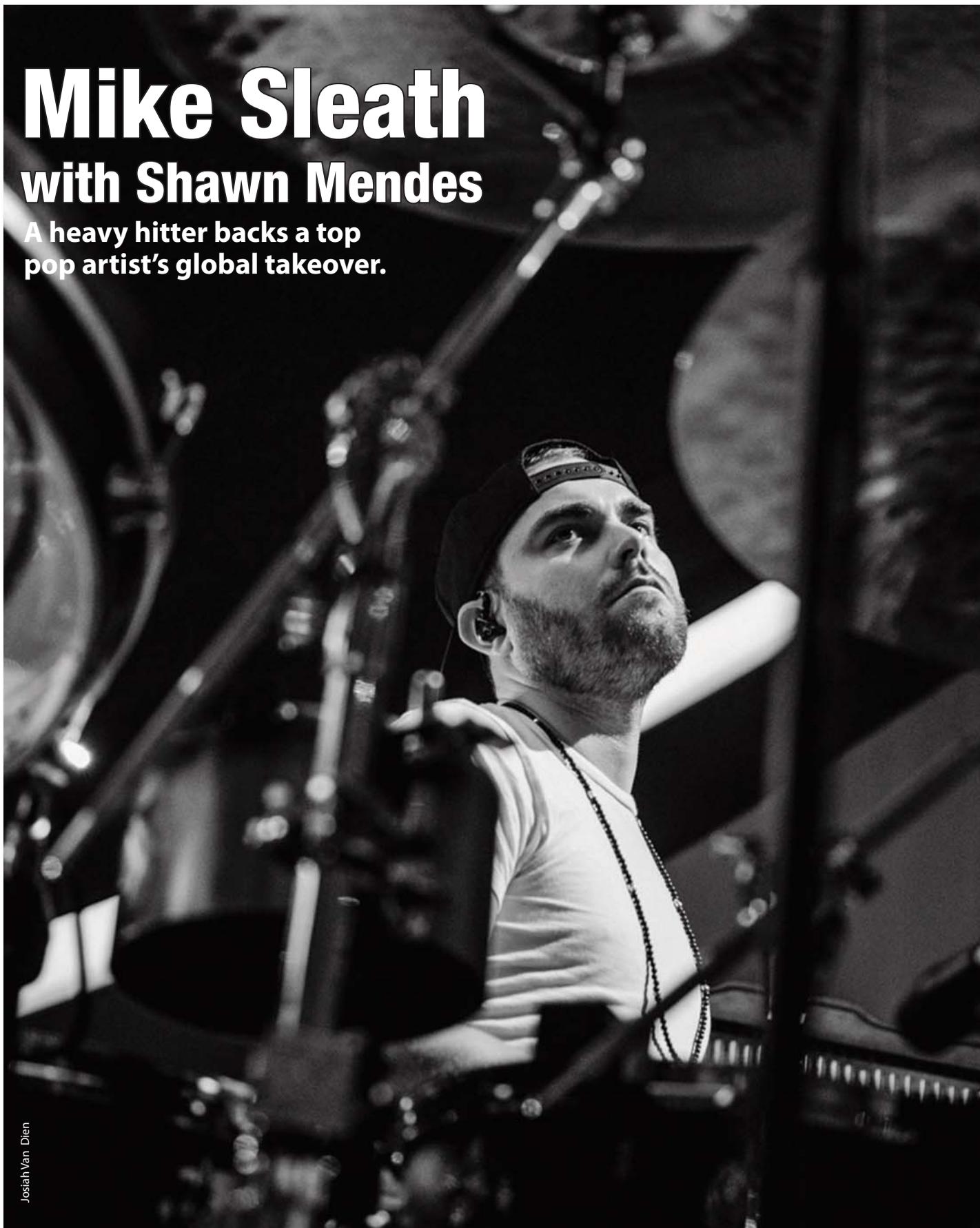
Willie Rose

John Wicks plays Pearl Drums and Istanbul Agop cymbals. He uses Vater Drumsticks as well as Tackle Supply Co. and Big Fat Snare Drum accessories.

ON TOUR

Mike Sleath with Shawn Mendes

A heavy hitter backs a top pop artist's global takeover.



Josiah Van Dien



After establishing a substantial online following through viral Vine and YouTube videos in the early 2010s—while still in his teens—the Canadian pop singer, songwriter, and guitarist Shawn Mendes went on to dominate Top 40 radio and arenas worldwide alike. The artist's first Island Records release, 2015's *Handwritten*, debuted at number one on the *Billboard* 200 chart, thanks in part to the single "Stitches." Mendes' subsequent full-lengths, 2016's *Illuminate* and 2018's self-titled album, likewise topped the charts upon release, fueling multiple global treks.

This past April, the singer launched Shawn Mendes: The Tour, an international arena run that lasts through December. Deftly backing Mendes on the road is Mike Sleath, whose powerful energy has driven the singer's live show since 2015. For evidence, check YouTube for Mendes' 2016 performance of "Mercy" on the Honda Stage, in which you might mistake Sleath for a rock or metal drummer slamming home a pop gig while sneaking in slick triplet fills.

In 2015, Dan Kanter, Sleath's friend and the musical director for Justin Bieber at the time, was putting together a band for Mendes. Kanter phoned the drummer for an audition, and he got the gig. Since then, Sleath has backed Mendes at highly prestigious shows, including performances at England's Wembley Stadium in 2018 and a 2019 spot at the Grammys.

Sleath started playing drums after watching his uncle as a youngster. "Music was always around when I was growing up," he says. "My uncle, Brian Maguire, had a giant 1974 Ludwig glossy-black kit with two bass drums, like twenty toms, and a gong behind it set up in his basement. I remember just staring up at it in awe. He taught me to always hit the drums like it was the last thing I was ever going to do, and that really stuck with me."

We caught up with the drumming powerhouse in the midst of his current international run.

MD: What's the band's rehearsal process like for a tour?

Mike: A lot of time is spent coming up with intros, outros, and transitions, and extending parts to make space for crowd moments or solos. We also spend a lot of time coming up with the right fill for the part, spots we can embellish, or parts where we should let silence speak. We spend a lot of time tweaking sounds, printing samples, and trying to get things just right.

MD: Does Mendes have any specific drumming feedback for you?

Mike: Shawn knows what's right. He has a clear understanding of rhythm and how it should fit within the melody. Sometimes he wants me to play songs a

little heavier live or a little softer. We always make sure my parts fit within what he's planning to do vocally.

As a drummer, it's important to fit within the rhythm section and lay down a solid groove. But it's equally important to know what the vocals are doing so you don't step over them. I always try to phrase things to help accent the vocals. And once I get Shawn dancing in a rehearsal, I know I've got the groove right.

MD: How do you approach Shawn's parts live?

Mike: Sometimes the parts are obvious, but most of the time it's up to interpretation. You have to find a way to make the song exciting live while keeping the integrity of the recording. Shawn's musical director, Zubin Thakkar, has an amazing ear for drums. Usually we'll start with the basic parts and grow from there while incorporating electronics.

MD: How'd you develop your ability to play with a click live?

Mike: It's important to not only be on the click, but to know where you're sitting with it. For Shawn, I'll normally sit right in the center of the metronome. For songs that have a more laid-back feel, I'll sit just behind. At times when that Stewart Copeland "rushing" feel is needed, I'll push a bit ahead.

Years ago I was in rehearsals with an artist who kept telling me to lay back, and I couldn't get the feel right. After a long rehearsal getting my ass handed to me, I went home, put on a click, and played for hours, feeling what it was like to be ahead of, on, and behind the click. I eventually got it happening, and the gig went great.

I also like to practice with a gap click. For instance, you play along to a bar of click, then silence for a bar, then a bar of click, and then three bars of silence. You go on from there until you feel comfortable with hearing only one click per every four measures. It's a great way to develop your internal time. I also like playing to a displaced click. For instance, practice along with the click on the "&," "e," or "a" of each beat.

MD: How do you maintain your level of energy onstage?

Mike: When you're behind an artist like Shawn, it's easy. If he's going for it, I want to be right there to give him the support and energy he needs. Also, I always think about the person way back in the stadium in the 500 section. To them, I'm just a tiny speck onstage. But I want to put on a show for that person. I want to move them.

Willie Rose

Mike Sleath plays DW drums and hardware, Sabian cymbals, Remo heads, Los Cabos sticks, LP percussion, Roland electronics, and Big Fat Snare Drum and Drumdots accessories.

Also on the Road

Glenn Kotche with Wilco /// Frank Zummo with Sum 41 /// Gee Anzalone with DragonForce /// Ash Pearson with Revocation /// Alan Cassidy with the Black Dahlia Murder



Yamaha

Tour Custom and Recording Custom Snares

Complementary, high-quality maple and birch options tailor-made for live and studio applications.



Yamaha recently revamped the classic Recording Custom series birch drumsets and metal snares in collaboration with longtime endorser and legendary drummer Steve Gadd. Earlier this year, the company added birch snares to the series in 5.5x14 and 8x14 sizes, as well as 5.5x14 and 6.5x14 all-maple options in the Tour Custom series. We were sent one of each to review, so let's see how they compared.

Tour Custom Specs

As the name implies, the Tour Custom series is designed for working drummers requiring versatility, simple and stable hardware, and timeless finishes, all at an affordable price. The 5.6 mm shells on the 5.5x14 (\$580) and 6.5x14 (\$640) Tour Custom snares are crafted from 6-ply maple, and the bearing edges are precisely cut to 45 degrees. That combination makes for a warm and open tone with tons of depth, exceptional sensitivity, and a wide dynamic range. The satin lacquer finishes for this series include Butterscotch (i.e., natural maple), Candy Apple, Chocolate, Caramel, and Licorice. We received a 5.5x14 in Caramel and a 6.5x14 in Candy Apple. Both drums had a deep, rich color that still was subdued enough to allow the grain of the maple to show through.

The 2.3 mm DynaHoop steel rims on the Tour Custom snares have an inverse upper flange that is folded towards the center of the drum rather than outwards. This hoop style is a modernized version of the classic Slingerland "stick saver" design and is employed to help control the overtones for a stronger fundamental tone and to provide a smoother rim click sound.

The Tour Custom snares feature ten of Yamaha's low-profile Absolute lugs, which are mounted with a single screw so as to minimize the impact of the hardware on the drum's resonance and tone. Similarly, the drums are outfitted with a compact, lightweight P-Type strainer that features a small but smooth throw-off lever and tension-adjustment thumbscrews on both sides of the shell.

Drumheads include Remo Ambassador Coated batters and Ambassador Snare bottoms, and both drums came with twenty-strand high-carbon steel coiled wires.





Recording Custom Specs

The newly revised Recording Custom birch snares are available in 5.5x14 and 8x14 sizes and have 6-ply/6 mm shells with 30-degree bearing edges. The flatter edges are used to balance out the naturally sharper, brighter tone of birch with a bit more fatness while not sacrificing response, sensitivity, or dynamic range. These are top-shelf snares with beefier appointments. These include modernized one-piece lugs that retain the classic look of the original Recording Custom series but are bridged between the connecting screws to help maximize sustain and tone.

The heavy-duty Q-Type strainer is a much more robust and slick design with exceptionally sturdy and smooth-operating parts. The triple-flange hoops are lightweight (1.6 mm), which again helps open up the sound of the more controlled birch shell while also providing stable tuning, strong backbeats, and a solid feel. Yamaha supplies the drums with Remo Ambassador Coated and Ambassador Snare heads and twenty-five-strand carbon-steel wires.

Finishes for Recording Custom snares include Solid Black, Classic Walnut, Surf Green, and Real Wood. Our 5.5x14 (\$1,140) came in the simple Real Wood finish, while the 8x14 (\$1,240) was done up in super-cool Surf Green.

The Sounds

To get the most accurate assessment of the sonic differences between these four snares, we started by tuning them as close to identically as possible. We started with the top and bottom heads cranked tight. (The tops were tuned to the note F# at each tension rod. The bottoms were tuned very high: 400 Hz at each tension rod.)

Because they shared the same shell dimensions, the 5.5x14 Tour Custom and Recording Custom snares were the easiest to pitch-match and compare. There was a very palatable difference in power, crispness, and fullness between the two series, with the Recording Custom version being discernably “more” in all three categories. Not that the Tour Custom drum was lacking; in fact it was actually a more enjoyable drum to play in terms of feel and warmth. But the Recording Custom had more presence, a tighter tone, and a punchier attack. In the studio, the Recording Custom was simply stellar, requiring very little EQ, compression, or dampening to



get it to jump through a dense mix. The 8x14 version had more reverberant attack and a longer sustain, but the snare response remained crisp and quick. And when you detuned the batter head all the way—soft, gushy perfection.

On gigs, however, the Tour Custom was a more forgiving drum, as it had a warmer timbre and produced a wider swathe of overtones that blended well with the other instruments onstage. It also felt easier on my hands, especially when they were smacking rimshots set after set. The 6.5x14 Tour Custom had a beefier overall tone; at tight tunings it had a nice, woody smack, while medium and low tunings produced a longer, richer sustain.

The old adage “you get what you pay for” rings true when comparing the ticket prices of the \$580 Tour Custom 5.5x14 to the \$1,140 Recording Custom. But it ultimately comes down to what you actually need for your particular situation. Are you primarily a session drummer who banks on providing the highest-fidelity snare tones possible? Or do you need a reliable and great-sounding drum that you can depend on for any live gig without draining your bank account? Either way, Yamaha has your back.

Michael Dawson

Tama

Dyna-Sync Bass Drum Pedals

Direct-drive options with choice adjustments to serve all playing styles.

Tama excels at making top-quality drums at every price point. It also offers some of the most innovative, high-performing, and reliable hardware in the world. In particular, its Iron Cobra and Speed Cobra chain-drive bass drum pedals are revered for their power, speed, and durability. Now Tama is poised to take over the direct-drive market with its new Dyna-Sync single and double pedals. We were sent both versions to review, so let's check them out.

The Features

The retro-sounding name of these pedals derives from what Tama has dubbed the Dynamic Synchronization System. This system consists of three elements. The first is the Optimized Transmission Design, which is a proprietary design that allows for nuanced beater and footboard angle adjustments to achieve an ideal balance of speed, power, and feel. The second element is the Dual Linkage, which connects the pedal to the cam at four points to maximize power and to stabilize the pulling motion. The third element is the Slidable Cam, which allows you to modify the response from the quick, transparent action of a direct-drive pedal to the more accelerated and powerful feel of a chain drive. With these additional features, Tama has succeeded in producing a high-quality direct-drive pedal that can be tailor-made to fulfill any user's demands, even those who've traditionally avoided those of this ilk.

There are several other improvements incorporated into the Dyna-Sync pedals that are worth pointing out. The new black-felt beater is tapered so that it impacts flush with the bass drum head when the front of the drum is slightly elevated. The Sync-Coil spring, which is similar to the one used under the footboard on Tama's Cobra Coil pedals but is made with heavier-gauge steel, helps return the footboard to its original position quicker. The main spring is mounted to a swivel, so there's minimal torque placed on the spring during use.



This results in a smoother, lighter, and more consistent action across the entire range of the beater stroke. Oiles bearings are employed in the heel hinge to reduce friction, and the Speedo-Ring cam has a built-in ball bearing to enhance the overall action of the pedal by allowing the spring to function freely.

In Use

The Dyna-Sync pedals are sleek looking and elegantly designed so that all the essential adjustment screws are easily accessible. The Para-Clamp II Pro hoop clamp has a swiveling rubber grip that can accommodate hoops of varying shapes and widths, and the thumbscrew is strategically positioned to the right of the footboard to allow for effortless tightening while seated at the kit. The springs have large, knurled nuts that are easy to access and grip to adjust tension, as are the three crucial screws used to make changes to the beater angle, footboard height/angle, and cam radius.

Out of the box, the Dyna-Sync pedals were set up to the midpoints of each adjustment. If you're someone who likes to put a new pedal to use on the kit right away, rather than first exploring all the possible speed, power, and feel options, then the factory setting of the Dyna-



Sync pedals will serve you well. Both the single and double pedals had a smooth, transparent feel that was neither too light nor too heavy, and the beater speed was consistent from start to finish. Essentially, the pedals responded accurately and precisely to how my feet moved.

Extending the radius of the cam gave the pedals a very light and lightning-quick action, which would serve well those players demanding extreme speed over power. Conversely, the shortest cam radius elicited a more powerful and accelerated beater stroke. More or less power could also be achieved by adjusting the beater/cam angle to be farther from or closer to the drumhead. The farther they were rotated back towards the footboard, the more torque and power the pedal possessed.

The angle adjustment that I found to be most surprisingly impactful was the one connected to the footboard. By lowering the footboard in relation to the drive linkage, I found that the pedals felt much lighter and quicker. Raising the footboard above the linkage made for a very powerful and energetic throw. The factory setting positions the footboard in line with the linkage and results in the most transparent feel. Regardless of how I chose to set the three adjustments on the primary pedal, I was able to perfectly match

its feel, speed, and power with parallel adjustments to the secondary pedal.

The universal joints connecting the two pedals also exhibited no lag, friction, or latency, making for one of the most comfortable and symmetrical double pedals I've ever encountered. Combining that exemplary experience with the fact that users can drastically transform the feel of these pedals utilizing just a few simple and easily accessible adjustments, we feel confident that all drummers—regardless of playing styles—will find that the Dyna-Sync pedals meet and far exceed their needs.

Michael Dawson

Alesis

Strike MultiPad

A powerhouse percussion pad poised to service the working professional's needs...and then some.



Alesis's Strike line of electronic drums is reserved for professional-grade products, such as the eleven-piece Strike Pro and eight-piece Strike mesh-head drumsets. In the multipad category, the company has previously focused on simplicity and affordability with the SamplePad Pro and SamplePad 4. With the introduction of the Strike MultiPad, Alesis pulls no punches, delivering a knockout product packed with unprecedented power, performance, and creative potential. And yet somehow Alesis has positioned this pad at an ultra-competitive price point (\$699). Let's see how it fares.

The Specs

The Strike MultiPad features six 4" square pads and three 1"x4" pads that run across the top edge. Each pad is velocity sensitive and has an animated RGB light below it that can be assigned to different colors, and illumination functions to help you customize the visual organization of the kits. For instance, one-shot samples can be set to display a solid color, while loops can be assigned separate colors for when the loop is triggered versus when it's stopped. If the pad triggering the loop is set to Fill mode, the assigned color will scroll

continuously from left to right in time with the length of the audio file being played. This subtle yet practical function can help you keep track of phrase or song lengths when playing along to longer tracks or multiple loops. The lights are bright enough to guide your aim when playing in darker rooms, but they're subtle enough to not be a distraction.

There are a handful of other design elements incorporated into the Strike MultiPad that make the playing experience easier for working musicians. First, the entire playing surface of the pad, including the recessed areas between the trigger pads and the left and right sides of the controls section, are coated in rubber. This is done so that you don't damage the casing if you accidentally strike it.

The trigger pads have a soft but decently responsive feel that allows for plenty of rebound without sending excessive vibrations back into your hands. The main pads articulated detailed drum corps-style phrases with perfect accuracy. The upper three pads also responded well, but their limited playing area makes them most appropriate for use to control loops and tracks, apply and remove effects, or trigger single sample hits.

Alesis also placed the two headphone jacks (quarter-inch and eighth-inch versions) on the front side of the pad, which makes for



much easier access than when the jacks are placed on the back of the module, especially when positioning the pad in more extreme and/or crowded areas within a hybrid setup that might include acoustic drums, cymbals, percussion, and other electronics.

The control panel features a large 4.3" display that's bright and clear and allows for quick and easy kit changes, pad assignment edits, and sample cropping. You can even view the actual waveform of a chosen sample, which is especially helpful when chopping long audio files into shorter loops and single hits.

The main, auxiliary, and headphone outputs have separate volume knobs, and there are clearly labeled buttons for a variety of performance and editing functions, including metronome on/off, bpm, kit selection, kit effects, master effects, and two very important actions: Panic, which allows you to silence all sounds when things go awry, and Pad Cue, which allows you to preview the sounds assigned to the pads by momentarily muting the main outputs and routing the audio to the headphones only.

The back panel includes all the typical connections: MIDI in/out, USB memory, USB/MIDI, left and right audio inputs, and power on/off.

However, the output and trigger input section of the Strike MultiPad has been beefed up considerably. There are two pairs of quarter-inch outputs (L/R Main and L/R Aux), which allow for routing flexibility when you want to send different elements of the kit to different destinations. For instance, you could send kick and snare one-shot samples to the left and right main outputs and then route loops or backing tracks to the auxiliary outputs.

The Strike MultiPad also includes a mono trigger input, three dual-trigger inputs, and jacks for a hi-hat controller and two dual footswitches. These extra inputs allow the Strike MultiPad to be expanded into a full electronic or hybrid rig by connecting up to five triggers or single-zone pads. Combine that with the pad's 32 GB of internal memory space, and you can likely cover all your electronic needs—including a full show's worth of backing tracks and kits loaded with multilayered samples—without using a laptop or computer.

The Sounds

The Strike MultiPad comes with over 6 GB of installed content, which includes a ton of high-quality samples of acoustic drums, cymbals, and percussion, melodic instruments, and electronic tones, plus a wide assortment of acoustic and synthesized loops. That leaves about 26 GB of space within the internal memory for uploading your own samples, loops, and tracks.

There are thirty preset kits in the Strike MultiPad, ranging from realistic acoustic drumsets (Good Ol' Rock, Jazz Kit, Power Duel) to heavily processed sets (Pink Tom Phils, Hat Grease Kit), loop- and synth-based configurations (Cash Money Kit, Synth Loops), and percussion collections (Drum Circle, Marimba, Drum Corp, Bowed Celeste). What I found most appealing about the Strike MultiPad's presets was that none of them consisted of dated, generic, or overused samples. Even the traditional drumset-oriented kits included sounds that I'd never heard before, or they were treated with effects in interesting ways that were unexpected yet musical and highly inspiring.

The samples included in the Strike MultiPad are some of the most authentic and three-dimensional I've ever heard from a stock drum module library. All of the kicks, snares, toms, cymbals, and percussion

samples sounded as if they were being played live in a million-dollar studio, and the electronic tones had amazing depth and detail. I was particularly impressed with the hyperrealism of some of the less common drum sounds, like the Rototom and super-tight DCI-style marching snare samples.

Each kit can be customized by applying up to three effects to each pad, and master effects, such as reverb, EQ, and compression, can be applied globally to the entire kit. All of the effects are editable utilizing the A-Link knobs and A/B/C buttons on the control panel. There are a bunch of other editing tools that can be used to tweak each kit further, so even without sampling new sounds or uploading your own audio files into the Strike MultiPad, you have nearly infinite options for sonic sculpting at your fingertips.



Looping and Group Functions

There's a lot going on under the hood of the Alesis Strike MultiPad, so to prevent this review from reading like a user's manual, we're going to focus on two of the most creative and practical functions: looping and pad groups.

When you're in the effect view window of the perform mode, you can press the far-right button beneath the display screen to access the built-in looper. From there, you can set the length of the loop you'd like to record to be one to eight, twelve, or sixteen measures. Pressing the third button from the left once arms the recorder, and pressing it again cues a one-measure count-in before the recording starts. Once you reach the end of the cycle, your loop plays back continuously. You can jam along to your new loop, or you can press the third button (F3) again to overdub additional ideas. If you're happy with your loop and would like to save it for future use, you can do so by stopping the playback and pressing the F4 button. This converts the loop to a WAV file and sends it to the user sample folder. At that point, your original loop can be edited, trimmed, chopped, and assigned to any pad, just as you would do with an imported audio file.

The pad group function allows you to link multiple pads together to either trigger all at once, to mute previously triggered sounds within the same group, or to cycle through each pad either randomly or through a left-to-right or bottom-to-top pattern. The Mute group mode is ideal for triggering different loops or long samples at different points in a song where you don't want the previous sample to carry through the next section. The Together mode is great for situations where you want to layer multiple samples via one pad strike, such as synth chords and bass drum/cymbal accents. The Cycle and Random modes will be most useful for more creative situations where you might want to play bass lines, melodic motifs, or hypnotic note cycles freely and in real time rather than as prerecorded loops.

We've just barely scratched the surface of what the Alesis Strike MultiPad can do, and more functions and features are being introduced with each firmware update. So your best bet is to get down to your local Alesis dealer, give the pad a go, and see if it gets your creative juices going. I was hooked from the get-go.

Michael Dawson

Creative Percussion

Hex Stax and Groove Chain-ger

Handmade metallic accessories that provide funky, trashy textures.

Creative Percussion was founded by drummer and carpenter Kevin Feeney with one stated mission: to produce high-quality, creative percussion products with no limits. Two such products are the Hex Stax, which comprises three layers of hand-hammered and torched stainless steel for short and trashy yet musical sounds, and the Groove Chain-ger, which is a steel ring with chains attached that sits atop 12", 13", or 14" drums to produce a rattling natural reverb. We were sent the 7" Hex Stax (\$33.99) and the 14" Chain-ger (\$39.99). Let's check them out.

Hex Stax

This unique stacker consists of three layers of hex-shaped steel that are cut, hammered, and torched by hand. As a result, no two versions are exactly alike. The company currently offers three models: a 7" set, which we were sent, a 9" set, and an 11" set. A combo set featuring one of each size is also available.

The steel layers are hammered on both sides, which is done strategically to create asymmetrical patterns of indentations and protrusions so that the plates never lay perfectly flat against each other. This results in a livelier sound with an adjustable amount of attack, trashiness, and rattle, depending on how tightly or loosely you set them on your cymbal stand. The torching process used on the steel not only gives the Hex Stax a colorful patina, but it also softens the steel a bit to draw out more musical tones.

Most small stackers comprise two layers of cymbals—either splashes, mini Chinas, or bells. In my experience, those combos are often limited to either a very short, trashy snap or an indistinct blast of bright rattle. You also have to deal with whether or not the bells sit properly within one another or if one of the cymbals has any lingering overtones to contend with.

Being that the Hex Stax consists of three layers of metal, you can get a much trashier sound by resting the plates lightly on top of one another. And that sound is essentially all white noise, meaning there's no discernable pitch or overtone. When tightened down fully, the Hex Stax transforms into a perfectly synthetic-sounding "chip" with a sharply gated decay.

I found that the Hex Stax sounded best with the plates tightened down enough to keep the rattle controlled but not choked, to where the sustain lasted for about the length of a 16th note. At that tension, I was able to play quick, articulate figures or short, sharp quarter notes that spoke clearly and with a funky, digital-sounding timbre. The Hex Stax also had a bit more volume and projection than a typical two-splash stacker.

Groove Chain-ger

Creative Percussion created the Groove Chain-ger for players looking for a more



controllable way to place chains, bells, and other rattling objects on their snare drums. The simple yet ingenious accessory is available in 12", 13", and 14" sizes and comprises a lightweight steel outer ring that is covered in clear plastic tubing and has eight 1" steel loops attached. The loops are used to thread on one or more of the three supplied chains. The chains vary in size and shape, from a thin beaded necklace to the thicker and more industrial-looking linked version that comes pre-installed on the Groove Chain-ger. The clips on the chains allow them to be quickly locked into place or removed.

The company suggests that you experiment with different combinations and placements of the chains to achieve different degrees of vibration, bounce, and rattle. Utilizing a full circle of chain produces the most controlled and integrated rattle, while a U-shaped half circle produces a denser and trashier texture. The suggested D shape, where the chains are threaded through only the lower six hoops, allows the chains to bounce more freely, resulting

in a slower and less distinct rattle. For those interested in customizing their snare sound even further, Creative Percussion offers attachments such as a loop of five jingle bells.

I'm a big fan of exploring effected snare sounds, especially when going for customized tones in the studio. But I rarely get that adventurous on live gigs, mainly because it requires too much time and effort to get the chains, bells, or rattles to stay put throughout the course of an entire show. But Creative Percussion's slick and secure Groove Chain-ger could turn out to be a sonic *game* changer.

Michael Dawson





320 Configuration

- 20" x 20" Bass Drum
- 8" x 12" Rack Tom
- 14" x 14" Floor Tom
- Snare Drum sold separately.

522 Configuration

- 20" x 22" Bass Drum
- 7" x 10"/ 8" x 12" Rack Toms
- 14" x 14"/ 14" x 16" Floor Toms
- Snare Drum sold separately.

324 Configuration

- 20" x 24" Bass Drum
- 9" x 13" Rack Tom
- 14" x 16" Floor Tom
- Snare Drum sold separately.

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* Pictured from Left to Right: DS MP 320 EGS, DS MP 522 SB, DS MP 324 RCS

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In the Studio with Korn's Ray Luzier



Story and photos by Sayre Berman

Korn drummer Ray Luzier moved from Los Angeles to Nashville in 2014. "I can live pretty much anywhere I want because I only meet the other members of the band on airplanes," he says. "We're an L.A.-based band, and I fly back there quite a bit to do records. But we tour so much that we'll just meet up whenever the tour kicks off."

A home studio was a paramount consideration for Luzier while house hunting. "When I first started looking at houses, I looked at the spaces that realtors referred to as a 'common area' or 'bonus rooms' for my drum room," he says. "In the house that we ended up choosing, I figured that area could be soundproofed and then one bedroom could be earmarked as a control room." Luzier estimates his drum room to be about 300 square feet, while his control room is about 80 square feet.

Home studio design can vary tremendously. Some are equipped for full band recording, while others have just enough space for a miked-up drumkit and a laptop with Pro Tools. "I knew my drum

room would have multiple kits," says Ray. "My thinking was that if an artist hired me, I'd be able to match his or her vibe by choosing one of those kits equipped with the right gear. I wanted to be able to go from a wide-open John Bonham sound to a really tight cocktail kit all in the same room.

"To get three full drumkits in this room," he continues, "I had to spread things out a certain way. I knew I needed some help, so I got Robb Wenner from Auralex to come in to balance out the sounds. It was important to me for the drum room to be live sounding, and it had to have a vibe. I want to feel inspired when I sit down to play."

When asked about what had to be done to dial in the sound of his drum room, Luzier explains, "The first thing we did was to put the drums on Auralex HoverDecks. That didn't change the sound dramatically but helped knock down the open floor sound. After that, we added bass traps and diffusers. If an artist wants me to get a more closed-in sound, we put some of those around the kit to

Equipment List

Drumset: Pearl Reference Pure series in Scarlet Sparkle Burst (14x26, 16x24, 18x22 bass drums; 14x20 gong drum; 8x8, 8x19, 9x12, 8x13, 14x14, 16x16, and 18x18 toms; 10x6 and 14x6 tube toms; 6x10 side snare)

Snares: 6.5x14 Pearl phosphor bronze, 5.5x14 Pearl Reference brass, and 8" LP Micro

Cymbals: Sabian 14" AA Rock hi-hats, 15" Paragon hi-hats, 10" HH splash, 10" prototype bell, 21" AA Rock ride, 18" AAX Studio crash, 19" AAX Dark crash, 20" HH Raw Bell crash, 18" HHX O-Zone crash, 16" Radia China on top of 15" HH Medium hi-hat bottom, 15" Radia China on top of 14" HH Medium hi-hat bottom, 12" Chopper, and 18" AA Medium Chinese

Accessories: LP Ridge Rider cowbell, Vic Firth Ray Luzier signature sticks, and Jerry Harvey Audio in-ear monitors

Drumheads: Remo Emperor tom batters, Emperor X or Ambassador X snare batters, Powerstroke P3 bass drum batters



create a smaller room."

When it comes time to record his drumming, Luzier would rather bring in an engineer than try to do everything himself. "I know I'm not that good behind the board, so I'll hire an engineer that really knows what they're doing." Before anything gets tracked, however, Ray makes sure that his drums sound great in the room. "The more you do right from the get-go, the less you'll have to do in post," he says. "The choices you make, down to the type of sticks you use, have to fit the style of music that you're playing."

Luzier's mic choices feature some standard items, as well as some unique alternatives. "The snare mics I'm using are pretty standard," he says. "I have a Shure 57 on top, but I usually put a Shure 58 on the bottom. You don't see that combination often, but I love it. The 58 gives some rattiness along with the good crack from the 57. I always have Shure 98s on my toms. For the cymbals I use a mic made by Oktava, which is an inexpensive Russian brand; they cost about \$150 each. They have a nice, glassy shimmer, so I don't have to EQ them. I also



have a relatively inexpensive Groove Tube room mic that sounds really great."

Each of the three bass drums in Ray's setup is miked differently. "I have three bass drums in my main kit," he says, "a 22", a 24", and a 26". Ordinarily the 24" is wide open, and I'll use an AKG D112 on the outside head to give it a big Bonham-esque boom. Then for the 22", I have a Shure 98 laying inside the shell and a D112 on the outside. I have some padding in there as well to help give the drum a nice pop."

For mic preamps, Ray takes a pragmatic approach. "The kick and the snare mics are really important to run through good preamps," he says. "If you have a great pre for the kick and snare, you can kind of get away with whatever you have for the other drums."

Digging into the drumset itself, Ray calls special attention to one particular piece of gear. "My favorite piece of equipment is my Sabian 21" Rock ride," he says. "I've been using it for years, both live and in the studio. Engineers love it. There's washiness to it as well as a distinctive cut. And the bell is amazing. I take that with me everywhere."



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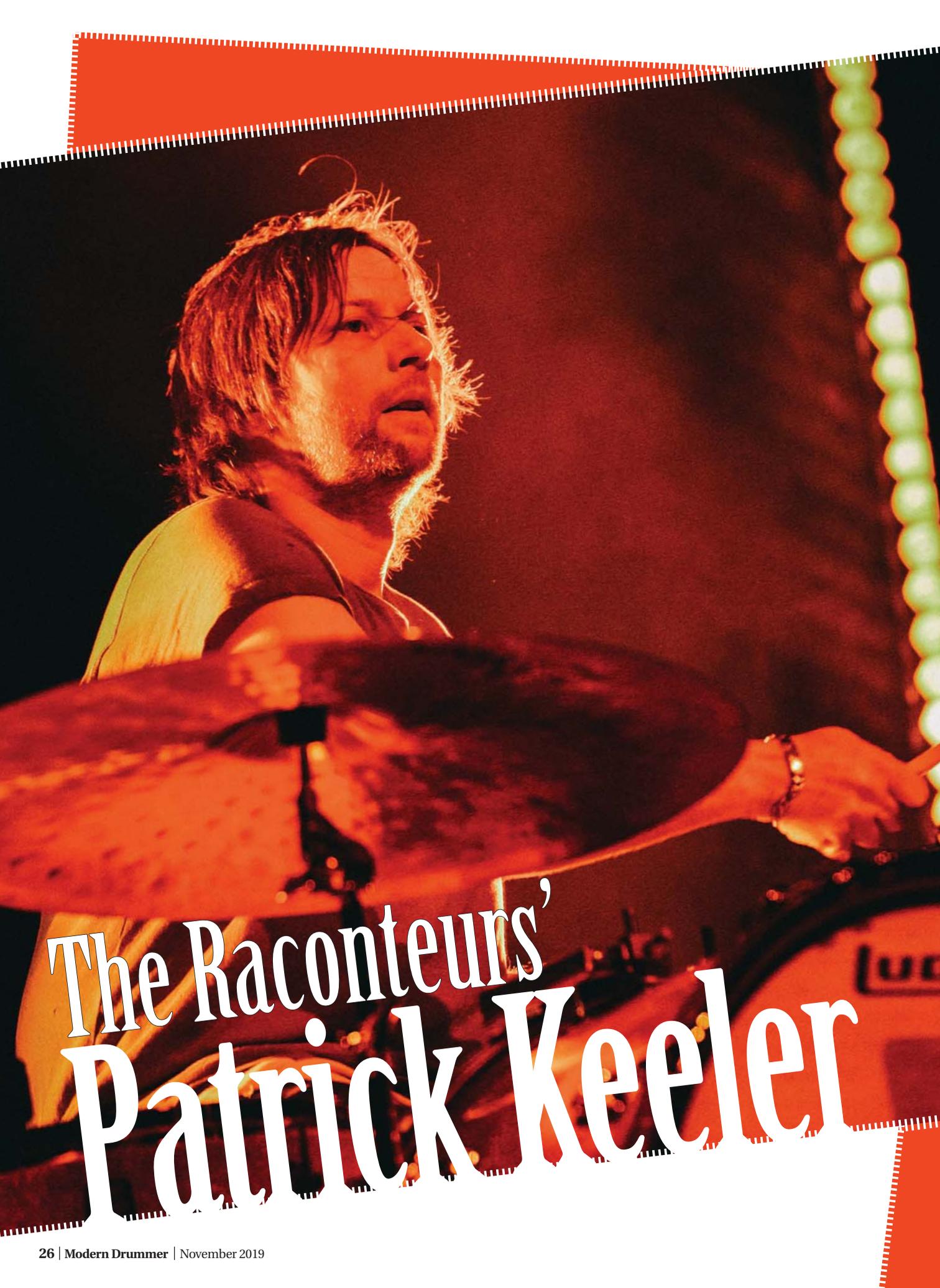
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The Raconteurs' Patrick Keeler

It's been a while since we've heard Patrick Keeler driving the Raconteurs on a brand-new set of noisy, infectious, and hard-grooving songs. In fact, for those scoring at home, it was eleven years and three months between studio albums for the all-star rock band, which also includes singer/guitarist/songwriters Jack White and Brendan Benson and bassist Jack Lawrence, aka "Little Jack." That's just too long without hearing Keeler's heavy-duty swing and glorious snare drum ring on some new Raconteurs jams.



Story by Patrick Berkery
Photos by David Swanson

To put the Raconteurs' extended absence in perspective, consider what has happened in the world at large between the release of the band's 2008 sophomore album, *Consolers of the Lonely*, and its third, *Help Us Stranger*, released this past June. The explosion of social media. The emergence of smartphones as a way to manage your life from the palm of your hand. The Great Recession. *Game of Thrones*. Podcasts. The transformation of Donald Trump from reality TV star/business magnate to President.

You get the idea. Huge changes, everywhere you look. For Keeler as well.

After the Raconteurs wrapped the touring cycle for *Consolers of the Lonely* in late 2008, Keeler kept busy behind the kit. He made contributions to Jack White's *Lazaretto* and *Blunderbuss* albums, Elle King's *Love Stuff*, Wanda Jackson's *The Party Ain't Over*, and Butch Walker's *The Spade*. In 2010, Keeler recorded instant garage rock classics with the Parting Gifts (*Strychnine Dandelion*) and the Greenhornes, his long-standing band with Lawrence (****). He also toured and recorded with alt-rock veterans the Afghan Whigs. But a big change came a couple of years after Keeler relocated from Nashville to Los Angeles in 2013. Somewhat unexpectedly, he ended up with a full-time job as an illustrator for the boutique clothing company MadeWorn, which specializes in not-inexpensive reproductions of vintage rock tees.

The MadeWorn job isn't a stretch for Keeler. He studied art in his native Cincinnati after graduating from high school, and he's been designing logos, posters, and album covers for bands and labels as long as he's been a professional drummer. It's just not every day that you see a successful musician who's played on hit records and is accustomed to performing before thousands of people put their instrument aside to pursue a "proper" job, albeit one in a creative discipline.

"I kind of fell into this job with MadeWorn," Keeler explains. "It wasn't really a hashed out plan. I went to their studio and we just hit it off, and I started hanging out a lot. I said, 'I do this stuff. I did all the Raconteurs artwork. I've done posters and designs for all my favorite bands. I've done lots of stuff for Jack White.'

"I basically said, 'Can I intern?' I hadn't had a job since I was in my twenties, bartending. I didn't have a résumé or anything like that. So they just threw me into the fire and said, 'You're hired.' So here I am, forty years old in Los Angeles, getting my first job, really focusing on the art stuff."

Though Keeler's MadeWorn job came complete with a daily commute to an office, business hours to keep, and all that working-stiff stuff, the gig did afford him scheduling flexibility. So when the Raconteurs regrouped to see if there was enough of a creative spark to begin work on a third album, Keeler was all in. And it's clear after listening to *Help Us Stranger* that focusing his creative energies on illustration for several years didn't cramp Keeler's drumming style one iota. He picks up right where he left off with the band in 2008: grooving hard, and cramming a lot of great drumming moments into each song without ever overplaying.

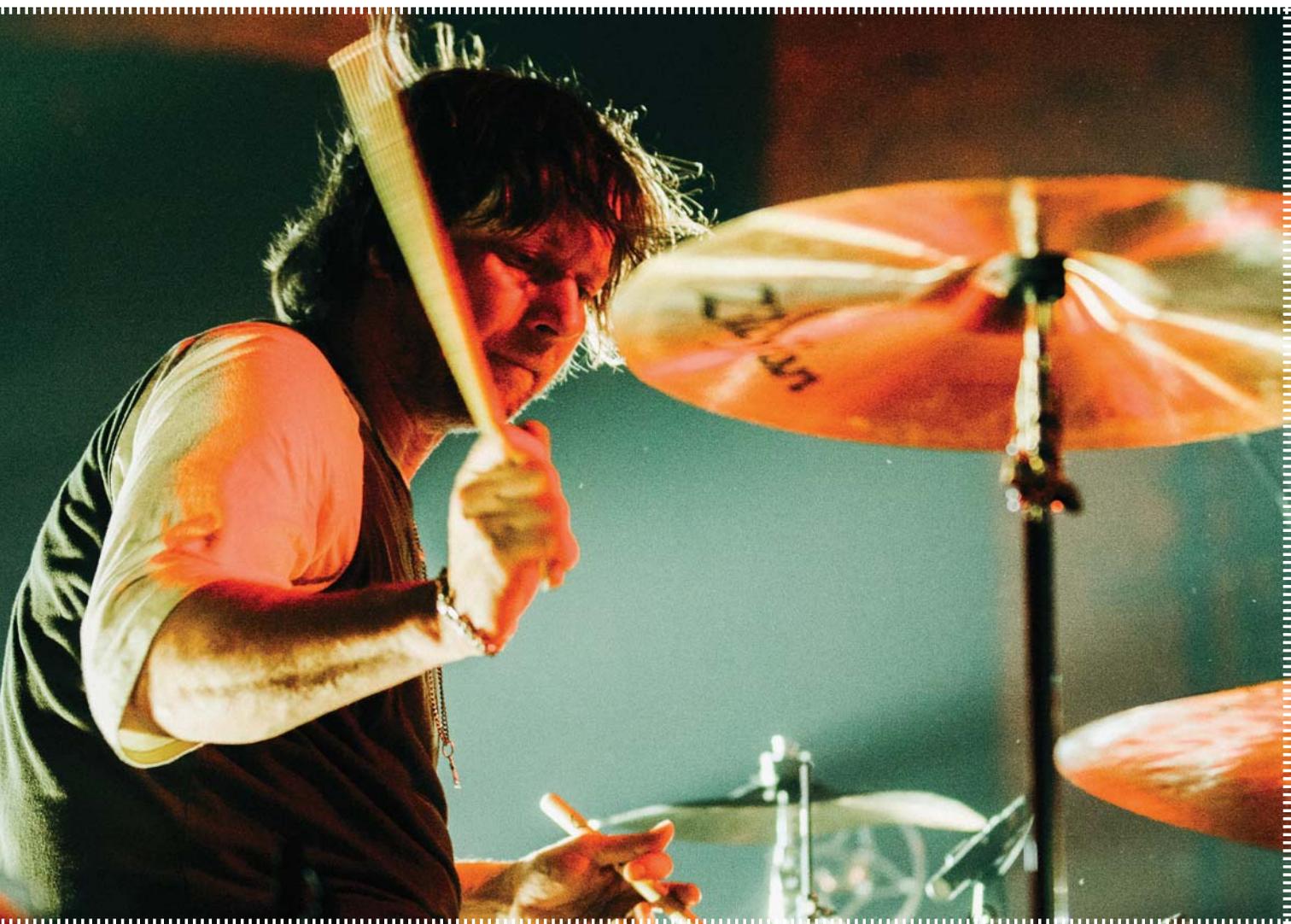
Keeler has all four limbs and some

big band mojo working overtime in an amped cover of Donovan's "Hey Gyp (Dig the Slowness)," rattling off a swinging snare-and-toms combination that stays deep in the pocket. There's more gonzo drumming in "Don't Bother Me," as the band stops the leaden, Sabbath-style shuffle cold to give Keeler room for a few Bill Ward-style drum breaks (and the room mics space to capture his left foot keeping time on the hi-hats—a great old-school sonic touch).

Typical of the band's first two albums, *Stranger* features shape-shifting songs that require Keeler to pivot frequently, as he does on "What's Yours Is Mine," sliding back and forth from a quasi march pattern

on the snare to a cowbell-driven old-school hip-hop groove. And speaking of grooves, the funky strut he puts to "Help Me Stranger" has a killer machine-like feel and sound. Keeler achieved it by tapping out a two-handed 16th-note pattern with a super light touch on a pair of oversized hi-hats and maintaining that light touch for the backbeats, which he played on the resonant side of the snare.

Let's hope it's not another eleven years before we get to hear Keeler playing on a new Raconteurs album. But even if it is, the discipline, creativity, and taste he exhibits on *Help Us Stranger* is more than enough to tide us over.



MD: When you finished the last Raconteurs touring cycle, was there any plan to get back to it eventually?

Patrick: Not really. That band was born out of, “Hey, let’s try this.” There was never a hard plan on exactly what we were doing. The first record, we just did it so quickly. And before you knew it, we were out there playing shows.

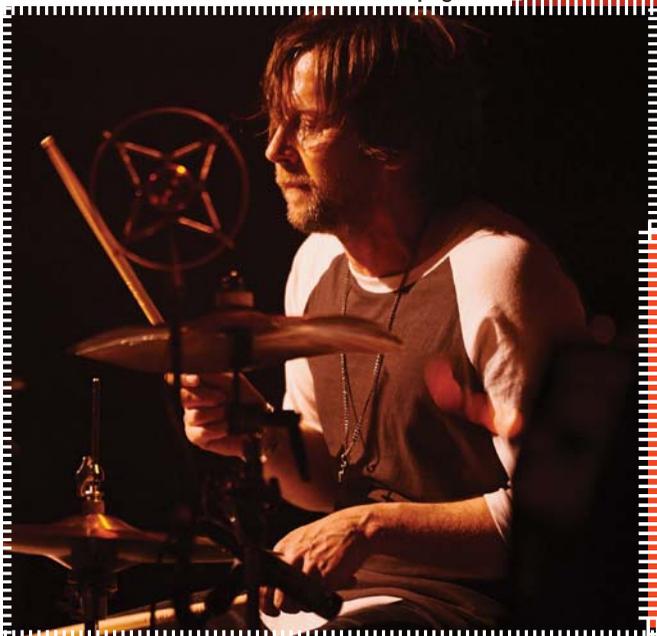
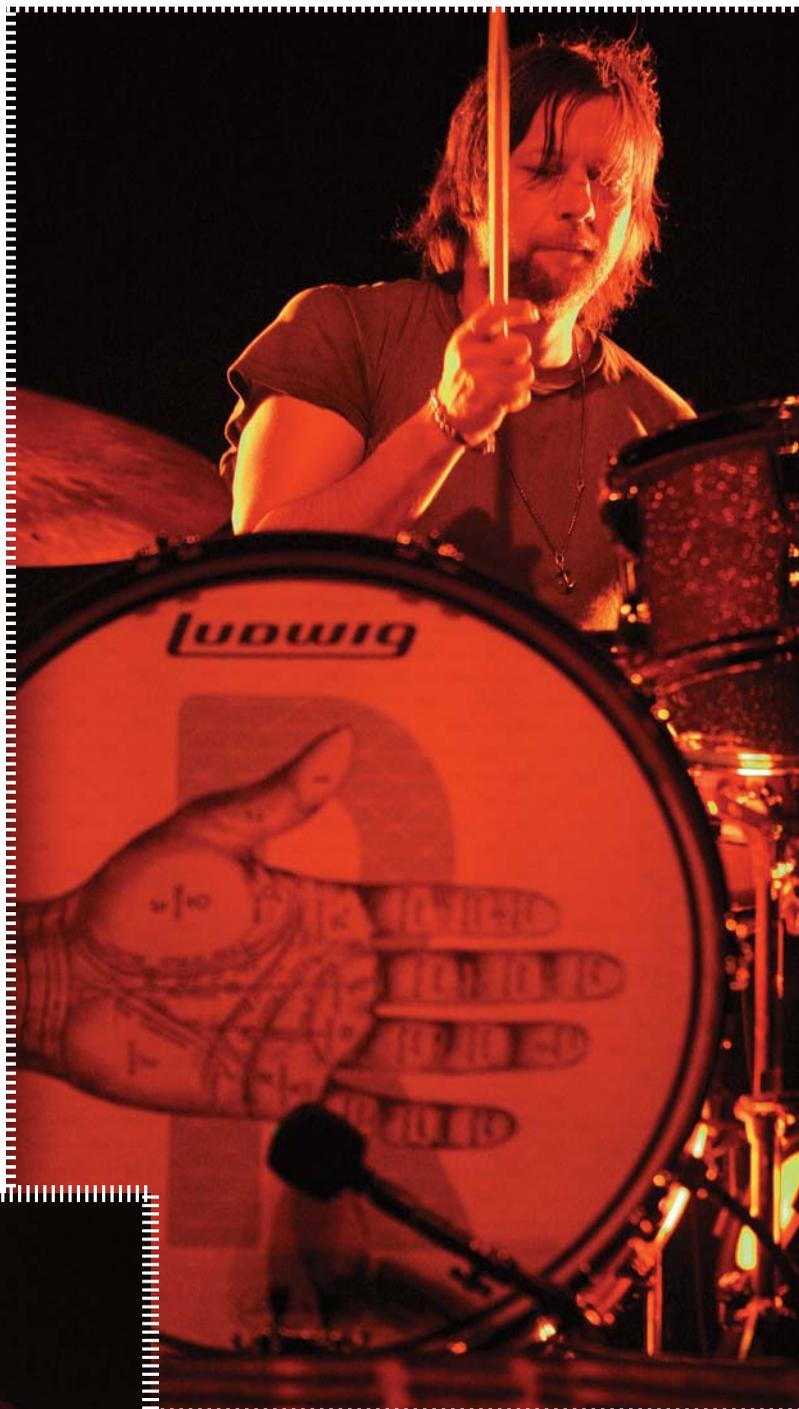
And then the second record we spent some more time on, but then we dropped it really quick. And those were kind of back-to-back. After taking a break from it for ten years, I was going back and listening to those records, watching old performances almost like an athlete would watch tapes of games. And there’s part of me that’s like, *How did I do that?* or *Why did I do that?* There are some twists and turns that I don’t know if we’d do like that now. The new record and the recent live performances are a product of me doing this for twenty-five years.

MD: Were you going back and checking out old stuff to relearn songs for touring purposes, or to get your head back in the Raconteurs dynamic?

Patrick: Both. It’s not like I was sitting around practicing Raconteurs songs for the last ten years. I had to relearn how the songs went. There’d be certain songs where I’d think, *How did I do that?* I’d have to watch video and see that I was leading with my left hand—*Oh, that makes sense*—that kind of stuff.

It’s not drastically different, but the Afghan Whigs really was a shift for my playing—just a much different approach to playing, especially live. With the way the songs are structured in that band, there’s a lot less room for improvisation. I needed to kind of learn control with the Whigs. It kept me very controlled—parts A, B, C, that kind of thing. With the Greenhornes and Raconteurs, and just a lot of the stuff I worked on with Jack and Brendan,

main article continues on page 31



“I remember that first day [back with the Raconteurs], sitting there—with all those guys, but especially Jack Lawrence—just thinking, *That felt so good.* I missed that connection.”

BONUS LESSON

“Hey Gyp (Dig the Slowness)”

We could devote this entire story to Patrick Keeler’s jaw-dropping work on “Hey Gyp (Dig the Slowness).” There’s just so much great stuff happening: the pattern, the shifting accents, the swing—oh, that swing! We took a deep dive on the track with Patrick to learn about what’s going on.

MD: Your drumming definitely gives the song a different energy from the Donovan original, or even the Animals’ version. That snare pattern that starts the song has such a classic big band vibe. Did someone suggest that crazy “Sing, Sing, Sing” type of frazz?

Patrick: It was just born out of us messing with that song, and that was the first place I went. I always liked things like “Sing, Sing, Sing.” The Greenhornes used to do the Yardbirds song “Lost Woman.” And it was the same kind of thing, starting off on the floor tom, playing this pattern over and over. I love that kind of stuff.

MD: So there was no practicing a “part” in advance?

Patrick: Zero. It’s the first thing

that came out. It was just this impromptu live thing. A lot of it came out of me and Little Jack playing that Yardbirds song for so long. It’s not the same, but it has that vibe.

MD: It sounds like you’ve got two snares going: the main one you’re playing the pattern on, which is really tuned high, and one in a lower tuning for accents.

Patrick: Yeah, that was two snares. I had the [8" deep Ludwig raw brass] snare to the left of my hi-hat, doing a thing between that snare and the floor tom. And the accents that happen later in it, that’s the main snare. I’m going back and forth between two snares and two floor toms—14" and 18".

MD: What’s the sticking?

Patrick: The sticking pattern is a mix of singles and doubles. It’s kind of a mix between 16th notes and a six-stroke roll. There are doubles happening on both sides at some point.

That whole thing I’m playing wide-armed, right hand on the floor tom, left hand on the snare drum. And for the accents on the main snare drum, I come back with the right hand. And then I add in the rack tom during the verses.

Everything on the right stays on the right; I just move it around. I think that came from early lessons, when it was like, “Here’s a paradiddle,” and you’re playing a paradiddle on the snare, and then

it’s, “Put the 1 on the rack tom; put the 1 on the floor tom.” When you start moving things around, suddenly it doesn’t sound like a paradiddle. When I was a kid, I loved doing that.

MD: You need quite a wing span to pull that off.

Patrick: Oh yeah, I feel it playing it live.

MD: Are you playing traditional grip?

Patrick: Yeah, you kind of have to.

MD: Did you get an entire basic track with you playing that pattern?

Patrick: For sure. I think we recorded that song one time. I think that was it.

MD: When it came time to play it live, did you have to relearn it?

Patrick: Honestly, that’s very much *me*, so it’s not a hard thing to summon to do it. That’s how I would play it.

@ 0:00

The image displays four staves of drum notation for the 'Hey Gyp (Dig the Slowness)' pattern. The notation is written in 4/4 time and uses a single bass drum line with 'x' marks to indicate the floor tom and snare drum. The pattern consists of a series of eighth notes, with various accents and triplets. The first staff starts with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a series of eighth notes with accents. The second staff continues the pattern with more triplets and accents. The third staff shows a variation with a triplet of eighth notes followed by a series of eighth notes with accents. The fourth staff concludes the pattern with a triplet of eighth notes followed by a series of eighth notes with accents. The notation is clear and easy to read, with a focus on the rhythmic structure and accents of the pattern.

it's just whatever you want to do. Especially live, you just take it wherever it goes.

MD: At some point, every drummer has to go back and woodshed and figure things out, no matter how long you've been doing it, or at what level.

Patrick: I grew up taking drum lessons and practicing and learning rudiments. I was reading music and playing in orchestra and jazz band and marching band [in school]. But when we started the Greenhornes, it was just like, "Forget all this shit and just play." Since I was eighteen, I've never been one to just sit around and practice.

With the Afghan Whigs I had to learn thirty, forty songs, kind of verbatim. I'd never done that. I've been listening to Led Zeppelin my whole life, but I couldn't play one of their songs verbatim. I was never that guy sitting down to figure out a song and play it exactly like it was on a record.

MD: Did you have a method for learning such a large body of work with Afghan Whigs? Were you charting things out?

Patrick: That was the first time outside of a session that I did chart it out, in my own little chicken scratch. And it was the first time I started writing notes on drums. It started out on my snare drum. Things like, "This song has a fill change," or "This song has a measure of five," or something. That soon turned into my drumset looking like [the film] *Memento*. The notes got longer and more precise. I'd have to take a picture of the head before we'd change it. But with the Raconteurs there are no notes. It's going to happen how it happens.

MD: Those bands seem to require two very different approaches from a drummer. There's a deep sense of groove to both, but the Raconteurs is like a celebration of crazy, creative rock drumming, whereas Afghan Whigs sits further back in a much deeper, more controlled pocket.

Patrick: It comes from two different worlds. Greg [Dulli] and John [Curley] from the Whigs are two of my oldest, best friends. And Jack White, Jack Lawrence, and Brendan Benson are also three of my oldest, best friends. But it's two different worlds.

MD: You told me for a story back in 2008 that the hardest thing about being in the Raconteurs is that everybody's a drummer. Still an issue?

Patrick: It still rings true. [laughs] It helps, but it's still a little intimidating sometimes. It's no different in the Whigs—Greg's a great drummer. Greg is vocal melody and drums first.

MD: But given how Jack has worked with such great players like Carla Azar and Daru Jones, and that he's such a great drummer himself, whatever suggestions he makes are coming from a pretty informed place. You're going to grow as a player playing with a guy like that, just as you would grow from playing with Brendan Benson, who operates in that Todd Rundgren/mad pop scientist world. Or Greg Dulli, who's such a compelling songwriter and performer in his own way.

Patrick: For sure. That's what's cool about having guys who understand what you're doing. I've tried other things in the studio with people I don't know, who aren't drummers, and certain things



Keeler's Setup

Drums: Ludwig Patrick Keeler signature Copper Sparkle Vistalite

- A.** 8x14 Ludwig Patrick Keeler signature engraved Raconteurs raw brass snare
- B.** 6.5x14 Ludwig Copper Phonic snare
- C.** 8x12 tom
- D.** 14x14 floor tom
- E.** 14x18 floor tom
- F.** 14x26 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1.** 14" Trashformer crash
- 2.** 16" K Light hi-hats*
- 3.** 20" K Dark Thin crash
- 4.** 24" K Light ride
- 5.** 18" K Dark Thin crash

*16" K EFX crash used as hi-hat top for "Help Me Stranger"

Sticks: Vater Patrick Keeler signature *Help Me Stranger* Studio sticks

Hardware: Ludwig Atlas flat base cymbal stands and hi-hat pedal, Tama Speed Cobra bass drum pedal

Heads: Remo Controlled Sound Coated snare batters, Controlled Sound Clear Black Dot tom batters, Powerstroke P3 Clear bass drum batter

Patrick Keeler

you can do, and certain things don't work. I've been pretty blessed to be surrounded by drummers.

I've heard some of Brendan's demos, and I'm like, *Oh, man, those drums are done.* He's got that unique style when he plays drums. He plays stuff I wouldn't think of. "Steady as She Goes" came from a groove he played. There was a hiccup in the middle of the beat, almost like a reggae thing. I don't know that I would've thought of it. And that leads to, *Hey, what if we put the 1 here?* That became kind of the way everything developed with that band.

When I first got to Nashville I started hanging out with Steve Gorman. Growing up, the Black Crowes meant a lot to me. We got together and played and it was like, *Wow, Steve Gorman's playing that pocket—there it is.* Certain people have *their* thing.

MD: Besides the Black Crowes, what other kinds of things were you listening to growing up?

Patrick: As a kid it was all about the Stray Cats or Joan Jett. I had a CD player early on, and one of the first CDs I got was Television's *Marquee Moon*. It came in the mail from Columbia House. And I only had so many of these things, so I listened to the same ones

over and over. *Born in the U.S.A.* was in the collection, probably some Billy Joel. A lot of it came from what my dad listened to or what my brother listened to.

MD: Were there any drummers in particular who were turning your head?

Patrick: Mitch Mitchell was a massive influence for me. Michael Shrieve, after I saw the Woodstock video, that freaked me out. But I was learning "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" when I was twelve, so it was all over the map.

MD: You could play "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" at twelve?

Patrick: Well, it was kind of my version of it. [laughs] It was passable. I was just so into the sticking and all that. When I was a freshman in high school we started a little band, doing classic rock covers. So we started going to Bogart's and Sudsy Malone's in Cincinnati when we were really young, and I got to see a lot of those Dayton bands like the Breeders and Guided by Voices early on. My band won one of the

"I'm all about hit it and quit it. I've never really sat and worked on fills being a certain way. I think that's kind of the jazz thing, and what I love so much about that music. And if you mess up, do it twice—make it a part."



Battle of the Bands at Bogart's, and the prize was to open for the Guess Who and Dick Dale. It was super cool.

MD: There's such a great tradition of funk and R&B in the Cincinnati and Dayton area, with the Ohio Players, Bootsy Collins, James Brown, and King Records. Were you aware of that stuff as well?

Patrick: The Greenhorns were influenced a lot by old soul music. We'd cover "I'll Go Crazy" by James Brown, and a lot of soul stuff. Going up to Detroit a lot as young men, there was the Motown influence. That's always been where I've lived, musically. I definitely was always rhythm heavy when it came to the music I liked. The first time I heard Fela Kuti, I was like, *Whoa, who's the drummer?* And then I found out it was Tony Allen, and that turned me on to other stuff.

MD: I can hear that very disciplined swing of big band drumming in a lot of what you do with the Raconteurs. Were you listening to much big band or traditional jazz coming up?

Patrick: I think that swing is a product of my drum instructor growing up, Brian Daverman. He always had this behind-the-beat kind of swing. He played a lot of fusion and jazz at this place in Cincinnati called the Blue Wisp, so my dad took me a couple of times to see him play. When I got my driver's license, I'd go to see a drummer there I really liked, John Von Ohlen. I asked them if I could take money at the door. So at seventeen I started working there a couple of days a week just to see these guys play. It was definitely a formative experience. I really liked the big band stuff, but I was seeing all kinds of stuff there.

MD: You go back almost that far with "Little" Jack Lawrence. You guys started the Greenhorns in 1996. Bands don't really exist these days as they once did—people record remotely and play with different people all the time. So it's rare to see a rhythm section having logged as many miles together as you guys have. What does that relationship mean to you, in terms of having a rhythm section partner with whom you've been through so much together?

Patrick: The first time I did something without Jack as

a professional musician, it was bizarre. Nothing against anybody else involved, but there was an unspoken pocket that we had; we didn't even have to look at each other. We were always glue. I know I took that for granted for so long. It's how I came up playing.

Besides the Raconteurs' [break], Jack and I took a break from playing with each other for the past few years. Getting back together, it wasn't like, "We're making the Raconteurs' third album. Here's the songs; let's go." It was, "Let's try this and see if it works," kind of like how we did the first record. I remember that first day, sitting there—with all those guys, but especially Jack Lawrence—just feeling, *That felt so good.* I missed that connection.

I learned how to play rock 'n' roll with him, you know what I mean? I learned how to play like *me* with him. We both came up learning a bunch of stuff together. [Getting back together] felt very familiar, but very fresh and new. It just felt so good.

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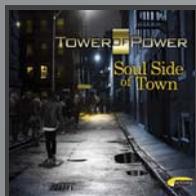
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Patrick Keeler

MD: As a drummer, there's really nothing like having a bass player you're locked in with on an almost telepathic level.

Patrick: There really isn't. If I had not met him, I don't know that any of this would be happening. We've definitely gone through the fire together.

MD: There's a fair number of Raconteurs songs that start as one thing—a swing, a half-time shuffle, maybe a riff-based thing—and then morph into something with a completely different feel and energy. On the new record, "Bored and Razed" is a good example of that. You start with a gentle swing with ghost notes, and then you're really off and rocking, digging in with those 8th notes on the snare. And "Don't Bother Me" goes from the shuffle, to the rock part in the middle, to that heavier shuffle. How labored over are those transitions? Are you drilling those? Are there edits?

Patrick: They're mainly live. The first record had some edits, but it's mostly just us playing in a room. Especially once we started playing live. Jack [White] likes to shift, quickly. Some of these things are just jams. "Bored and Razed" is how it is. We were playing that little thing, and then it was, "What if we did this?" And I started playing the main verse thing on the snare, and we took it from there. It wasn't super thought out.

MD: "Don't Bother Me" has that pretty crazy drum break. When you're listening back, does every single lick you're playing have to voice in a certain way or at a certain volume for you to sign off on it, or is it basically the take with the best feel wins?

Patrick: I'm all about hit it and quit it. A

song like that especially, whatever you can get in there, get it in there. If it works, great. If not, let's try it again. I've never really sat and worked on fills being a certain way. I think that's kind of the jazz thing, too, and what I love so much about that music. It can take such a turn at any point if you're doing it live. And if you mess up, do it twice—make it a part. That's the way I've always approached the way I play. Just go for it, and hope it works out.

MD: Typically, the drum sounds on a Raconteurs record are very resonant and roomy. That's the case with this record, with the exception of "Help Me Stranger," which has a lo-fi, almost machine-like quality. It almost sounds like a loop or a drum machine.

Patrick: We recorded this record live in one room. That particular track I had to record insanely quiet, almost as if I was using pencils. I put the snare drum upside down and played the resonant side. And I used these Zildjian 16" K EFX crash cymbals as hi-hats. It's got that *chunk* to it. And it has the holes, so it kind of inherently gets rid of the accents.

I was just trying to play it as straight as humanly possible, with two hands. There's no click tracks or anything. There's a bongo part overdubbed, and some choke-y splash stuff. The meat and potatoes of the groove is the kick, the resonant side of the snare, the hi-hats, and a Zildjian Trashformer crash. I was trying to do an electronic sound on an acoustic kit, as if I was the drum machine.

MD: How close to the snares are you hitting? It's got to be tricky to find a sweet spot on the resonant side when you're

playing a double-handed hi-hat pattern.

Patrick: It was kind of a little rimshot—a little rim, a little head. Not unlike the way I play normally. I'm not banging it super hard, so I wasn't really worried about going through it. I found a long time ago it kind of turns into a Roland 808 sound; it sounds electronic. It's a cool sound. Jack [Lawrence] was playing some old bass synth pedals, and Jack and Brendan were face to face on a mic, playing acoustics and singing it. It was a pretty small room with everybody just playing it live.

MD: Are you trying to cop that vibe live when you play it?

Patrick: When we play it live, I change the hi-hat top out to the EFX, and I play the groove on a snare to the left of the hi-hat that I use for "Hey Gyp," an 8" deep raw brass Ludwig with a Kevlar head on it, cranked tight like a marching snare.

MD: What prompted the move to Los Angeles? Was it to get more work as a drummer or to pursue things based on your background in art for a bit—like a palate cleanser almost?

Patrick: I think it was geographic. Just to change it up. It seemed like a good time to come to L.A., because it seemed like everybody was moving out here. I had friends and family out here and had spent a lot of time here, so it was nice to finally pull the trigger and do it.

MD: I think people are more aware these days that having a few successful years as a musician certainly doesn't guarantee financial security for the long haul. Did you pursue the illustrating job out of a need to find work, be it music or something else?

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Patrick Keeler

Patrick: Nothing was financially driven. But at the same time, you've got to do something. I just got inspired when I saw what MadeWorn was doing. I thought, I want to do that. It was more to keep from going crazy by doing the same old thing, or by constantly seeking out a session or waiting for the phone to ring. It was nice to have a steady gig where I got to go home every night.

That company is so music based that it never felt like a far departure from what I was doing. I was getting the same hit, creatively. It gave me the same kind of

enjoyment, but maybe in a new way, because I never really focused so much on [illustration], the way I have been for the past three years. It was a cool change of pace. Learning something new, but still being in my wheelhouse, strangely.

MD: You're really fortunate to have found steady work that was so creatively fulfilling.

Patrick: Right, I'm absolutely fortunate. I think about it a lot. They ask you what you want to be in kindergarten. I said, "I want to be a drummer or a cartoonist." For all intents and purposes, I've gotten to do both. When I said [to MadeWorn], "I can do this," I had

no clue what I was doing, but I knew I could figure it out. That's the same with most music things I get into. I'll get asked, "Hey, do you want to do this country record with Loretta Lynn [2004's Jack White-produced *Van Lear Rose*]?" I grew up listening to country with my parents, but I'd never played it, ever. I didn't know what a waltz was. I mean, I knew what it was, but I didn't know how to *play* one. You just say, "Yeah," and then learn it on your feet.

MD: Did you find that when you focused on the drums again that you had more of an appreciation for it, like you were recharged to play?

Patrick: Well, I was still working at MadeWorn full-time when I did the first Afghan Whigs tour. I was trying to do it abroad. If anything, it was hard for me to wear two different hats. A lot of the design stuff I do is digital, so I can do it on the road. But it was hard. It was hard to keep an eye on the ball with either one.

There was always a debriefing when I'd come back into town. The first week I'd be back at work, and I'd be like, *What do I do again?* The same when I would go back and play drums. *Me play drums?* [laughs] You're just kind of scatterbrained with it. That's just a personal experience. Other people seem to have no problem with that.

When we started doing the Raconteurs again, I was doing a big project in Paris that I'd been working on for months, building this massive installation for MadeWorn. The whole time we're in there jamming, starting work on the record, there are emails coming in about this project, so I had to organize these two different things. When it got to be, "We're making this record, for sure," I needed to go for it. I took a sabbatical from MadeWorn, and I'm just focusing on the Raconteurs now.

MD: Do you think you'll go back at some point?

Patrick: If there's a job for me, for sure. I feel like it's open-ended, but it's hard to say. I'm still doing some stuff for them. I'm just not going to the office every day like I was, or as soon as I'm [returning from a tour]. I'm checking in and I've done some stuff while we've been touring. It's nice to have that kind of trust, when they'll call me.

MD: And I guess the Raconteurs' future is an open-ended thing, too.

Patrick: There's no pressure on it. I think we have the luxury of everybody having other gigs and doing it when it feels right. It's not the old days of a five-album deal. When it happens, it's gonna happen. I'm just really happy the way the new record turned out.

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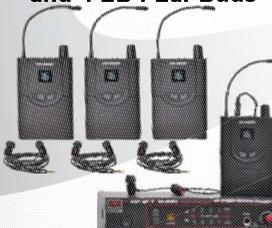
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Mark Guiliana

Blackstar in a Yellow Sweat Suit



Story by Ken Micallef Photos by Alex Solca

Thirty-eight-year-old Mark Guiliana has gone from playing New York City's seediest jazz bars to recording with one of the greatest rockers of all time. Mark's work on David Bowie's final album, *Blackstar*, jettisoned him from busy jazz drummer to international rock celebrity, interviewed in global media outlets about Bowie's impact on his life and his burgeoning solo career.

Long before recording *Blackstar*, which was tracked in the now defunct Magic Shop studio located on a small side street in Greenwich Village, Guiliana was very active in the New York jazz community, known for his acute work with Avishai Cohen, Brad Mehldau (in the duo Mehliana), Donny McCaslin, Meshell Ndegeocello, Jason Lindner, Lionel Loueke, and Matisyahu, as well as with his wife, Gretchen Parlato, and his own band, Heernt. In 2015 he released the debut album by his Mark Guiliana Jazz Quartet, *Family First*, followed two years later by *Jersey*.

Even as his jazz-based work increased, though, Guiliana explored electronic music, beginning with 2012's *Beat Music*, leading to his latest release, *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!* "In 2014 I released *My Life Starts Now*, which was more compositional, coupled with *The Los Angeles Improvisations*," Guiliana says. "That had a much more improvisational, slightly more edgy feeling. This new album is almost entirely through-composed."

Joined by longtime compadres Jason Lindner and BigYuki on keyboards and Tim Lefebvre on electric bass, *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!* is initially unsettling not only for its dry, buzzing electronic production, but its ubiquitous yellow artwork, reflected in the band's wardrobe of matching yellow sweat suits.

Sounding like a cross between an all-instrumental version of '70s funk band Chic with Kraftwerk's *Tour de France*, *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!* is a weird world of buzzing tones, kaleidoscopic beats, and mind-bending production effects. It's laconic and amusing, funk-infused and animated, as sunny as a day at the beach yet as dark as urban dread.

Opener "Girl" dazzles like a strobing mirror ball. "Bones" turns the Pac-Man soundtrack into grooving dance-floor fun. "Bud" dishes a virtual world of candy-red sunsets and live glitch beats. "Bullet" recalls Chick Corea's original *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy* by way of frisky beats and warring spoken-word bots. "Roast" gurgles like electronic pinball. Finally, "Stream" lulls with low notes and excited tones, like children's toys banging against a displaced, dub-heavy Bernard Purdie backbeat.

Somehow, all of this sits comfortably within the musical aesthetic that Guiliana has become revered for in recent years, whether he's playing in this type of hyper-modern electronic setting, or in acoustic-jazz ensembles like his own. And while the David Bowie association might have spread the word of his highly appealing approach to the masses, to the rest of us, each new release and tour have simply been one more step forward in the drummer's ever-evolving and unique career. And evolution, for Guiliana, is inevitably good.



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MD: What's been the biggest change for you as a drummer since *Blackstar*?

Mark: Confidence. Around 2014 I started to focus more on my own music and compositions and making records and touring both with Beat Music and the Jazz Quartet. That can be a daunting road. I was trying to wrap my head around that artistic path, both logistically and artistically, and what it means to conceive and make my

own music and be proud of it. To be around David Bowie making *Blackstar* and to see his commitment to his vision and his relentless artistic pursuit of exactly what he wanted it to be was inspiring. I try to bring that with me and build that confidence to believe in my artistic choices and invest in my own path.

MD: He knew what he wanted, and he was using you and the other musicians to

get there?

Mark: Absolutely. It was crystal clear. The demos were rough around the edges, but everything's in there. A lot of the grooves were programmed, so I was trying to find a way to play it all at once on the acoustic kit. The thing that was truly mind-blowing was the way Bowie had this crystal-clear vision, but it was coupled with great openness to our ideas; it felt like a democracy. I've

been around people with incredible vision, but that usually meant they weren't open to other ideas. I've been around people who are very open, but they don't have that clear vision. So that was really the first time that I was around someone who really had both in a beautiful balance.

MD: *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!*—what's up with the yellow sweat suits?

Mark: It's about intention on every level. Sometimes you have these master musicians who are dealing with the music on the highest levels, and then other elements of the presentation are left unnoticed. The visual element is a powerful element. I don't know why the yellow sweat suits, but I like the idea of the uniform; it unifies us onstage. We are absolutely equals, and we're in it together. And then visually, it's a vibe. It's the intention: "Hey, we *thought* about this." We put so much energy and effort into the music, why not pay attention to some other details including presentation?

MD: Does Beat Music drumming pollinate your jazz playing?

Mark: Very much so. My goal is to always approach the music from the same place and make the best choices for the music and to be in the moment. Orchestration has so much to do with it. When I play a small kit with bebop tuning and cymbals with rivets, the instrument itself really sends me in a certain direction and makes me play certain things. A kit with a



larger bass drum with muffling and a dead floor tom and only hi-hats, that sends me in a totally different direction. So I'm not really thinking about what I can and can't do, it's more about being in the moment, and the orchestration is doing a lot of the work.

MD: How do you trigger?

Mark: I have a Roland SPD-SX, because Beat Music features vocals and spoken word and a couple one-shot sounds. We invested so much energy into the sounds on the record and certain production ideas, bringing those into the live show helps paint that sonic landscape. We're not playing to anything in time; we're not playing to samples.

MD: The *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!* material is largely through-composed.

Mark: Maybe it's an influence from *Blackstar*. I wouldn't say it's deliberate, but looking back, I really invested in the compositions, and particularly in my demos. I would play the demos for the guys and let the demos do the talking, if not all the talking. I'd be crazy to tell BigYuki how to voice a certain chord or Jason Linder what kind of distortion he should put on a sound. I tried to provide as much information as I could but absolutely left room for their mastery. It's subtle. It's not your typical improvisation over a form. You hear that kind of virtuosity,

but it's more sonic virtuosity, production virtuosity, the minimal choices. That's what separates the master musicians; it's in those details.

MD: Thematically, the record is simpler and more focused. What tools did you use?

Mark: I work in Ableton Live, but I use 2 percent of what the program can do. It's a workstation. It has MIDI and plug-ins to emulate sounds, but they're all just placeholders to inspire the guys. In a perfect world the composition will start on the piano, I get inspired by some harmony or melody, and then in the computer I'll layer things, simple programmed beats. Everything was recorded live but not always together, over different times at different places. I had confidence in that process because I've had long-standing relationships with everybody. So I trusted that because of the amount that we've played, there will still be that connection.

MD: Zach Danziger has said that his goal was to sound like a machine, but is that the goal for this music?

Mark: I'm heavily influenced by electronic music and programmed music. It takes a lot of discipline to create a certain kind of programmed feeling. But the beauty lies in knowing that at any moment I can make a new choice that a machine can't do unless

we ask it to. So I'm always trying to toe that line, if the music calls for playing in a disciplined way or to pay respect to that influence. But at any moment there can be plenty of human blemishes and choices to wake it up from time to time, to make sure that it isn't a machine.

MD: And what are those influences?

Mark: My electronic music heroes are that whole Squarepusher, Aphex Twin, Luke Vibert, Photek crew. This record is different from that music, but my heart still lies in that world. I'm trying to allow everything to come into play. The Photek influence might come out through the discipline to play a single thing for a while, but that thing might not necessarily be what he would do, so I think it's more a mentality than a style.

MD: What role do cymbals play in *Beat Music*?

Mark: I'm going for a dry sound from the drums, so the role of the cymbals is quite minimal. I actually think of the synthesizers as the cymbals in this music. If you play a lush chord on a synth with the filter open, it will be living in the same frequencies that a crash cymbal would. The role of the hi-hats is crucial in this environment, but I'm avoiding long sounds in general. If there were more cymbals in this music, it would start to get a little too "fusion-y" for my

Guiliana's Setup

Drums: Gretsch Broadkaster

- A. 5.5x14 snare drum
- B. 16x16 floor tom
- C. 14x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

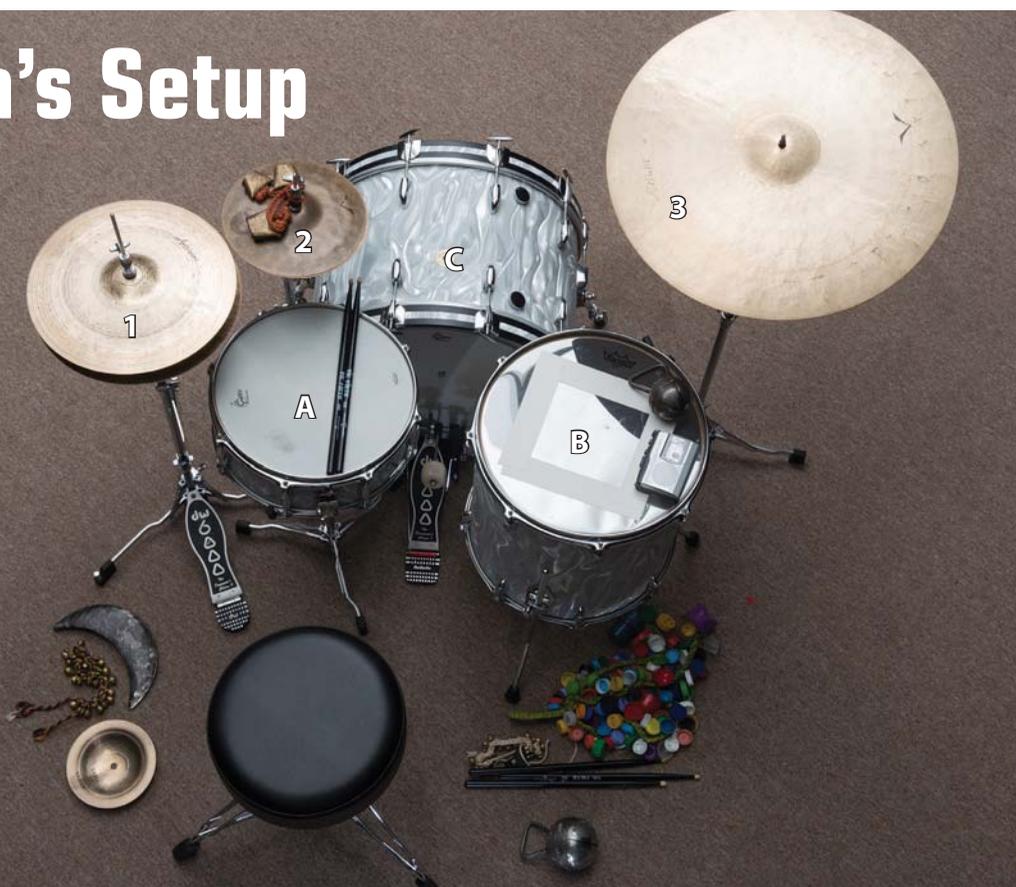
- 1. 14" Artisan Elite hi-hats
- 2. 10" Fierce hi-hats
- 3. 23" Prototype ride

Hardware: DW 6000 Ultralight series

Heads: Remo Ambassador Coated on snare and bass drum, Emperor Clear on floor tom

Sticks: Vic Firth 85A (black), 5A dual tone mallets

Electronics: Roland SPD-S



taste. By removing these longer sounds, I really love the space that's created—it inspires me to play differently from how I normally would. In the Jazz Quartet, cymbals are often the focal point, but the drums really do the driving in this more electronic world.

MD: Does your grip change at all between the two groups?

Mark: No, if I'm behaving. Adrenaline gets the best of me sometimes, and maybe I'll manipulate my technique for better or worse. I basically always play the Vic Firth 85A stick, one notch below a 5A. It's a barely lighter 5A. I've been playing the 85A for ten years, so going up to a 5A feels different.

MD: Which group, Beat Music or the Mark Guiliana Jazz Quartet, is easier to book on gigs?

Mark: The Jazz Quartet. I'm grateful to have an agent and management and all that stuff. I was doing everything

on my own, and that totally worked as a sideman drummer. But when I wanted to put more focus on my own music and do proper tours, I needed help for sure. With the Jazz Quartet we can show up and play in a tiny little bar with no amplification. We can play the nicest theater with long reverb—it works everywhere just based on the makeup of the band—whereas with Beat Music it's reliant on the subwoofers at the venue and the size of the stage. It's more [special] interest.

MD: How so?

Mark: With Beat Music, if the low end, the bass, doesn't feel right, the whole gig is different. With Beat Music when the sound is great it's almost like the music plays itself. It sounds silly to say, but it's true. Every choice makes sense, and you play *into* the sound. You're not fighting. With Beat Music, if the sound isn't right, if the bass is a little weak, then I get into that jazz space that we have to play more, because by definition maybe the space isn't being filled by the sound



and then you get self-conscious and feel we need to play more to compensate. The music really starts to change in a way that it wasn't meant to.

MD: It's great that you're getting more work as a solo artist.

Mark: It's what I always hoped for. But then you get a reputation so maybe people don't think to call you, which is okay. I need to be more proactive about creating the situations in which I want to play. Working with bassist Avishai Cohen from 2002 to 2008, that was my first proper gig with a lot of touring. We're working together this year. And Beat Music is going to Japan and Europe until the end of the year. And I'll be touring with Brad Mehldau; I recorded his latest album, *Finding Gabriel*.

MD: You're supremely placed to answer this question: how can jazz draw a younger audience?

Mark: I love jazz. I love everything about it—the good, the bad, the ugly. But sometimes it can get a little selfish, a little

self-indulgent with the amount of improvising. It's closed off to the world, and that's okay. My hero is John Coltrane; he's taken 300-minute solos, and you could say, "Look how selfish that is." But I say, "Look how generous he is. He's giving us everything he has."

But I love songs. Compositions will live longer than solos. Sometimes composition gets neglected and can serve more as a template for improvisation, for soloing. I love that, too. But regarding the music moving forward—and you don't want to make artistic choices based on trying to get young people interested in the music—but perhaps [there could be] more emphasis on good compositions that happen to have a cool solo, too.

Songs are what really grab people. Sometimes there's just so much energy and dedication that goes into being a great improviser that the emphasis on the composition might diminish. Compositions

need more love. As I get older, I want to play great songs. I want to support that song, and if we could have fun doing so with some improvising too, that's great.

MD: Why did you title one song on *Jersey* "Rate"?

Mark: It's an acronym for Roy-Art-Tony-Elvin. Those guys are on so many of my favorite records. Take Roy Haynes' *Out of the Afternoon*. The drum sound on that record, but more specifically the room sound: you feel like you're *in* the room. I just wanted to capture that. I played a couple vignettes with that in mind, thinking about the sound of the drums in the room.

MD: You've just relocated out west.

Mark: My wife, Gretchen, is L.A. born and raised, and ever since we started our family, she's been feeling the itch to head back. And I'm embracing a new start. Here's an excuse to take inventory, quite literally as I'm walking around my house full of boxes. I'm trying to refine what I do and make the most of it moving forward.

Beat Essentials

Exploring some of the baddest grooves from Guiliiana's latest release.

by Willie Rose



"Girl"

On the opening track of *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!*, a syncopated, droning bass line deceives before Guiliiana enters with a solid 4/4 groove. Check out the rhythmic phrase:

@ 0:00



And around the 0:24 mark, Guiliiana adds this minimalistic pattern.

@ 0:24



"Bones"

Guiliiana anchors the A sections of "Bones" with this driving 16th-note groove.

@ 0:21



Dig Guiliiana's pattern in the B section, in which his syncopated feel straddles a thin line between a 3/4 and 6/8 perspective.

@ 0:44



"Bud"

Don't miss the subtle dynamics here between the hi-hat accents and snare ghost notes in what could otherwise resemble a seemingly simple groove.

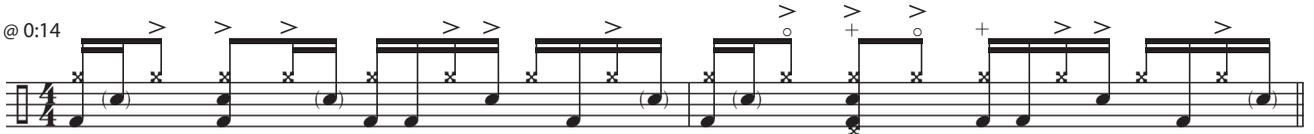
@ 0:05



"Bullet"

Perhaps one of the boldest phrases on *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!*, Guiliiana drops this syncopated pattern over this tune's bright, bustling synth lines.

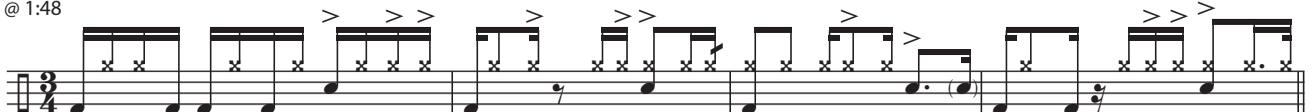
@ 0:14



"Stream"

This slick, largely linear pattern fuels the album's closer around the 1:48 mark. Pay close attention to the accents throughout.

@ 1:48



King Crimson's Gavin Harrison

Pushing forward with the ever-evolving art-rock institution, digging in deeper as a full-fledged member of the Pineapple Thief, and forever shaping the song.

Gavin Harrison speaks with carefully chosen words and a deliberate flow, with no phrase out of place. It's not overly mechanical, and there's a sincerity to his thoughts that exemplifies humanity and heart. But there's no getting around the fact that it's just, well, *perfect*. Which is exactly what he sounds like behind the drums. Check out an overhead shot of his kit, and marvel at the stick markings on the heads. Dead center. And is there a better-recorded drum sound, live or on albums? Hard to find.

The English-born Harrison spent years as a session drummer and later elevated the progressive rock group Porcupine Tree to new heights, from him joining in 2002 until that group's disbandment in 2010. Since 2014 he's been one of three drummers sharing the front of the stage for the iconic progressive rock band King Crimson, at first with Pat Mastelotto and Bill Rieflin, now with Mastelotto and Jeremy Stacey. You might be surprised to know that Harrison, who grew up a jazz fan, was never a rabid Crimson head. "The weird thing is that I'm probably the only guy in Crimson who didn't grow up listening to the band," says Harrison. "[Founder/guitarist] Robert Fripp said, 'These are the songs,' and I told him I had a confession that I didn't have any of his records. Well, I had [1984's] *Three of a Perfect Pair* on vinyl, but no record player. But he really liked that I'd be uninfluenced by the past and that I would approach it from a fresh perspective, that I'd treat every song like it was a new song, regardless of when it was written."

In 2015, returning to his jazz roots, Harrison released *Cheating the Polygraph*, an album of reworked Porcupine Tree songs in a big band style. And lately, Harrison has recorded two albums with and is now a full-time member of modern progressive group the Pineapple Thief. But it's with Crimson where his skills as an arranger and master drummer shine brightest, and the re-interpreted beats and wild drum features are on full display on the band's most recent live Blu-ray/triple-disc release, *Meltdown: Live in Mexico City*, taken from shows in July 2017.





Story by Ilya Stemkovsky

Photos by Steve Van Stappen

MD: The last time you spoke with *MD*, around five years ago, the three-drummer Crimson lineup was brand new. What's the state of the band now in terms of roles and approach?

Gavin: In 2016, Bill Reiflin pulled out of the band, so we needed to find a drummer who could play keyboards. Jeremy had come around to my apartment in the early 1980s because he knew I had a score of Frank Zappa's "The Black Page." He wanted to check out some of the keyboard lines, because I had the drum score and the master score. So thirty years later I remembered there was a drummer I knew who could also play keys, so we invited Jeremy into the band and he filled in really well.

MD: Is everything still relatively open

regarding who keeps time and who colors things?

Gavin: Everything changes around all the time. It's not like I'm playing the main beat and the other two are playing support roles. Lots of times I'm not even playing and Pat is on his own or Jeremy is on his own. We try to find interesting parts. But there's not much point in having three drummers if you're all just going to take turns. Although it's interesting from a groove perspective to hear how three different guys play time and make the music feel, it's more interesting to find unique parts that three drummers can play at the same time, not [just] doubling bass drum or snare hits.

I was given the job early on to try to arrange parts for the drummers. And I'm lucky because I've got a studio at home, so

pre-tour I work out arrangements for three kits, and before the band rehearses, we do a drum rehearsal for a week, and Pat, Jeremy, and I go through the parts and figure them out. We adjust and modify them. And it doesn't necessarily have to do with the original drum part, which lots of times was one drummer on his own. So you abandon that idea and start from scratch, which is quite challenging considering some of the songs have very signature drum parts.

MD: Are you tasked with composing the drum features?

Gavin: I get the job of arranging and composing the pieces, but it's only when I play it with the other two guys that we can manipulate it and it evolves. You can't just sit in a room with three drummers and say, "We're going to write a piece. Go!"





Tools of the Trade

Harrison plays Sonor drums and Zildjian cymbals and uses Remo heads, Vic Firth sticks, Sonor stands, a Gibraltar rack, a Tama Speed Cobra double bass pedal and Cobra Clutch, Nord electronics, and a Porter & Davies BC2 tactile drum stool monitor.

[laughs] You'll just end up with a horrible, big jam. In a band with four guys in a room, the drummer plays a beat, the bassist comes up with a riff, and you end up with a half-hour jam in E. And it's nice, but not a composition. As every year comes around, I try to think of new things we can play. For "Banshee Legs Bell Hassle" [off *Meltdown*] I had the idea to play in twenty-seven. It's three bars of seven and one bar of six. At that time Bill was the third drummer, and against the twenty-seven, he could just play in nine, [since] there are three nines in twenty-seven. And I break off the three sevens and a six to join Bill in the three nines. It's a gentle, simmering little electronic piece.

MD: Does Robert give any feedback or guide you in any way for these drum pieces?

Gavin: I never send it to Robert, and I never ask him if the pieces are okay. And he never says if the pieces are okay or not. He's a pretty good casting agent. He gets a group of people together that he trusts. The assumption is, if you're still in the

band.... He never tells me what he wants from the drums and never says, "Don't do that." He trusts that I'm going to do the right thing. And I take some incredible liberties with some of the arrangements. And we get to the first rehearsal and play it, and he doesn't say a word. It's just accepted. He's the group leader, but he's not a "bandleader" or the "musical director" of the band.

MD: You shoot a little more from the hip

in your solo in "21st Century Schizoid Man," right?

Gavin: Yes, every night we play that, and it's an open-ended solo where I can play whatever I want. The challenge for me is really to play a different solo every night. It would be easy to string together a load of pre-rehearsed licks that I've done for years that may be crowd pleasing, with lots of speed and flash. But that's not very interesting to me and not very in

"I still go at it with the same mindset and ears, to hopefully create unique drum parts that aren't necessarily complicated but are musical, that create an atmosphere and build the song."

Gavin Harrison

the spirit of King Crimson. Most nights I'm doing it for myself and the other band members, because most nights the audience is made up of brand-new people who hadn't heard the solo I did the previous night. And I've played maybe 250 solos. So it's about the improvisation more than going ballistic and crossing my arms and throwing sticks in the air.

MD: Do you usually stick to some sort of pulse?

Gavin: I try to keep it in some tempo. It might be the tempo of the piece, because I have to bring the band back in at the end of it. That way the audience has a reference point. I don't really enjoy listening to drum solos much, especially ones that abandon the tempo, because you've lost your connection to the subdivision and the beat and where you're placing your accents or doing syncopations. If you abandon the tempo, we're into a whole different area, but you've lost one of the most primal connections to the audience.

MD: Let's talk about the Pineapple Thief. Was there a major difference between the two albums you've done with them, 2016's *Your Wilderness* and 2018's *Dissolution*?

Gavin: With *Dissolution*, I was heavily involved with the writing of the songs with [vocalist/guitarist] Bruce Soord. But there wasn't that much difference in the approach for both records. I still go at it with the same mindset and ears, to hopefully create unique drum parts that aren't necessarily complicated but are musical, that create an atmosphere and progress through the song, build the song. The method we started with *Your Wilderness*, although we never met in person, was so successful that I thought I'd really love to do more with this guy and this band. I was on the same wavelength as him. And much like Robert Fripp, Bruce would let me do anything, including chopping up the arrangement into different time signatures and completely rearranging the song from his

demo. And this was before I was even in the band. He gave me that freedom right from the beginning.

MD: I guess that freedom is a testament to your creativity. You might have the better idea.

Gavin: As a session musician, which I'd been for decades, you do start to get a knack for what works and what functions well for the architecture for a song. When you've done it hundreds or thousands of times—and sometimes I was just there as a witness, but still hearing the result of something working or not—you can develop a skill for understanding how to arrange, especially from a drumming point of view. You can arrange the songs to have a better shape. The same thing happened when I was in Porcupine Tree.

MD: How'd you come up with the parts for the *Dissolution* track "Threatening War"? There's some sidestick, a double-time section with toms, and a 7/8 linear groove before the big climax.

Gavin: It took me three or four days to carefully construct it from beginning to end, to zoom out and get a good overall view of how it was going to work. I started off super simple—there's barely anything in the first verse—then the second verse gets a bit more intricate with a few more voices on the drums coming in. On the third verse I just went dead straight. On the section in seven, I did a kind of trip-hop double time.

I do enjoy that kind of rhythmic designing. I normally save the straight power drumming for the last quarter of the song. If you have a chorus where you think it needs 1 and 3 on the bass drum and 2 and 4 on the snare drum, let's not do the first chorus like that, or every chorus. Let's save it for the *last* chorus. Although doing the backbeats right from the beginning would work, there are better rhythmic opportunities to do something unique. You can play a rhythm that you haven't heard on any record, and that's quite an



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Gavin Harrison

exciting proposition for me.

MD: Crimson has some sections where you're leaning in, but Pineapple Thief has some really hard hitting parts required of you.

Gavin: When the music feels like it's rocking, I feel like I want to hit the drums harder. It's something I grew into with Porcupine Tree. I wasn't a particularly heavy drummer before joining that band, but there was a lot of metal riffing and double bass drum action that I'd never tried to play before. I enjoy it. If it feels right, I'm happy

to do it.

My signature Vic Firth sticks are really big. People who get them ask me how I play with them because they're "like tree trunks." But I've got big hands, so I've always liked playing with big sticks. Playing with a 7A or a 5A feels like a knitting needle to me. There was a drummer a while ago I really liked named Tony Beard, and he used massive sticks. I couldn't understand how he played so articulately and dynamically until I tried to. It's a different kind of vibe, but you let the sticks do the work for you. As long

as they're not heavy; there's a difference between big sticks and heavy sticks.

MD: What's the secret to your kit sound? It sounds consistently amazing in all your bands.

Gavin: Mostly it's the way you hit the drums. If I got on someone else's kit, in five minutes it would sound like me. But I do choose the equipment that serves my vision for a drum sound. And I'm careful with the tuning. I spend a long time tuning every day, and I know when a head needs changing.

It's a fascinating subject. I've watched hundreds of YouTube videos about tuning and mic placement, and I'm constantly thinking about it. I'm sure you've heard lots of drummers with Tama kits with clear Ambassadors on, but only one of them will sound like Simon Phillips. Because the sound is in Simon's head, and he makes that sound come out through those drums and those skins. Also, my kit setup has been almost exactly the same for thirty years.

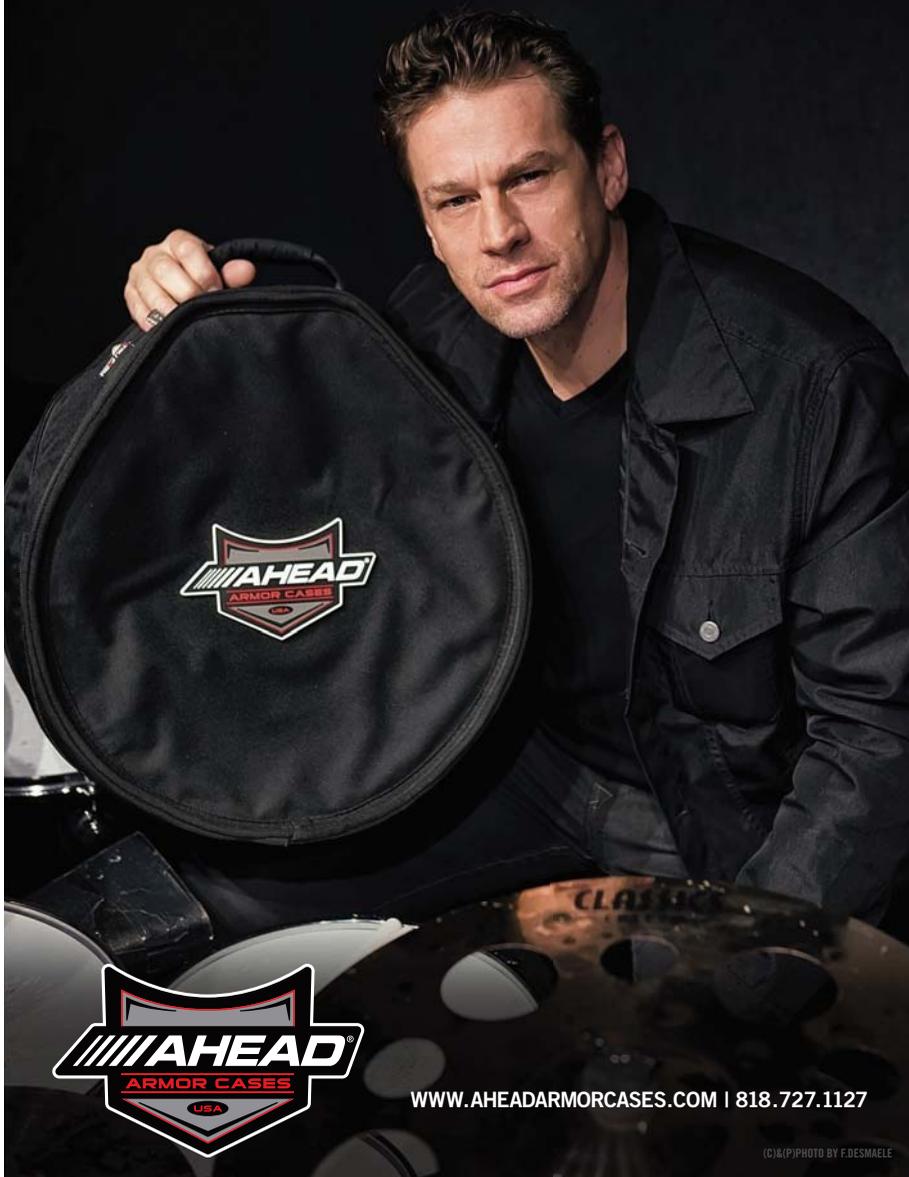
MD: Are there any plans to release another solo project? *Cheating the Polygraph* was jazzy and different.

Gavin: I don't have another record planned at the moment, and I probably wouldn't do another album like that. It was a bucket-list album for me, as I grew up listening to big band music and wanted to make a big band record. And I love the sound of fourteen guys blowing brass. That's absolute magic to me. And arranging those Porcupine Tree songs for modern brass just worked. I really enjoyed the process. It was super time-consuming and super expensive. I doubt I'll ever recoup the money I spent on it. But it was probably the best thing I've ever spent my money on. I was so pleased with the final result. In terms of now, Bruce and I are writing a new Pineapple Thief record in the gaps I have between King Crimson work. We'd like to get something out for spring 2020.

MD: Has session work taken a back seat?

Gavin: I've lost interest in doing sessions just for the money. After being a band member in Porcupine Tree, Crimson, and now Pineapple Thief, just making a living with that mercenary working mentality [as a session drummer] became unfulfilling. Eighty percent of what I played on was crap, to be honest. People still contact me, and if the music is interesting and the artist wants to collaborate with me, it's something I might be interested in doing. When something lands on my virtual doorstep, if it's musically satisfying, then we'll talk.

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THE REGRETTES' DREW THOMSEN

Goodbye Jazz School, Hello Pop-Punk Heaven

Lia Braswell of A Place to Bury Strangers compares notes with the drummer, who recently joined up with one of the freshest bands around.

California native Drew Thomsen has been holding down the rhythm with garage pop sweethearts the Regrettes, featuring singer and guitarist Lydia Night, guitarist Genessa Gariano, and bassist Brooke Dickson, for enough time to make a statement of purpose for all who come to rock out at their shows. With a highly anticipated new record, *How Do You Love?*, finally dropping, and a super-busy tour schedule, Drew's barely had time to think about what his decision to leave jazz school for the rock life means.

Photos by Alex Solca

MD: When did you first get together with the Regrettes?

Drew: It happened about a year ago. It was finals week at CSUN. Their producer called me at school and said, "Hey, their drummer just quit. You want to come to the studio and learn some songs?"

MD: Are you still in school?

isn't my thing. It takes the fun out of it for me. It feels like a competition, and it puts a lot of emphasis on aspects of drumming that are superficial, in my opinion. It makes you value flashiness that other music students care about more than the average person. I would rather just play for people to dance to or serve the music instead of the

do it because there are still people watching you, but they're also just having a good time.

MD: Did any drummers in particular influence you?

Drew: Yeah, definitely. There was this one guy I knew, Brian, who was one of those people who teaches kids how to love music first. My piano teacher was very classical, imposing that "you're gonna do this right" attitude. Brian was more about having fun as the most important part of it and then figuring out the rest later. My other teacher, Rick Water, helped with technique and getting good at the instrument itself.

MD: Is touring something you saw yourself doing?

Drew: Yeah, I mean, it's the little kid dream. It's what I wrote in my yearbook when I was eleven: "Play drums in a rock band. Go tour." It's just crazy that it still exists and you can actually do it.

MD: Is it everything that you thought it would be?

Drew: Definitely. I think because my band is so cool. I like them, and we're not killing our bodies out on tour. It's pretty ideal, honestly. It's hard to be out for that long and not see your family, not see your girlfriend or boyfriend or whatever, but when you have a good group it helps.

MD: Being around a community that keeps you in a good space is key. You can't really bring them down because they're always getting you up.

Drew: Definitely.

MD: Do you have any tour routines or rituals?

Drew: I always try to get some sort of workout thing going. I started a program that I can do in hotel rooms. I'm going to try to start that on the next tour. I also bring *Stick Control* and try to [play through] that to a metronome every day. I try to do at least a whole page. That usually takes a half hour, depending on how fast I do it.

MD: What's your schedule like?

Drew: Pretty much every day we wake up at eight, get to the venue by four, and soundcheck by five. Then we'll have six to nine to chill and get dinner. Sometimes we'll hang out after the show, but almost always we get out as soon as we can and get to the hotel so we can be well rested for the next day.

MD: I guess that's all you can do! Some people have this idea that musicians are just raging all night.

Drew: Some of them do! I'm so impressed by people who can go to bed at four in the morning and wake up at eight.

MD: You wonder how long that can last.



“TO PRACTICE HUMBLY IS WHERE I THINK GOOD FEEL COMES FROM. I’M GETTING INTO PLAYING SIMPLY, REPETITIVELY, AND IN THE POCKET WITH THE REGRETTES. EVERY SNARE DRUM HIT HAS TO BE PERFECT, WHICH IS WAY HARDER THAN PLAYING FAST.”

Drew: No, I dropped out of school immediately. I was in the jazz program there. It wasn't really my thing anyway. It was good, but it was not a fit for me.

MD: Is jazz your background?

Drew: Yeah, I started when I was nine or ten. My hometown had a jazz revival program when I was a kid. So I did that, and I was in rock bands all throughout high school. But when it came time to go to college, I thought about what would make sense. With jazz you could go to school, so I thought it would be cool. But music school

competition. It's a self-serving thing, but to go to school for that is a little much.

MD: Did you play with other people to find your groove with drums outside of the music program?

Drew: Yeah, I was in the high school jazz band, and I also had a band with my two roommates back then. We'd play in bars on the weekends. We did a lot of classic-rock covers. Mixed it up with that and jamming. It helped us develop confidence.

MD: Playing live helps with that.

Drew: Totally. It was the perfect place to



Drew: Waking up at eight in the morning after going to bed at midnight is brutal enough.

MD: What's your setup like?

Drew: I have two toms. I used to play with three, but I decided I need to get way better before I earned the third tom, so I got it out of the way. I felt a little too Neil Peart. [laughs] I have two crashes. I like having both depending on where I end up [at the end of a fill]. It's nice to have both. Then just a ride, snare, kick, and hi-hat.

MD: Do you find it challenging to keep the same setup?

Drew: It's a constant source of frustration for me. I feel like I missed the lesson on how to tune your drums and how to set them up right. I'm always messing around with it. Sometimes it works and I think, *This is how it needs to feel every night*. Then with the same kit the next day I'll think, *This feels terrible*. I need to take some time to figure that out.

MD: Are there any drummers that you particularly like right now or that you've

been inspired by?

Drew: John Bonham—he was the first drummer that I thought, *I want to sound exactly like that*. Steve Jordan is also one of my favorites. He's a huge inspiration as far as pocket goes. Nathan Followill from Kings of Leon. He's the epitome of, I'm just gonna play the song. Don't even look at me; don't worry about it. Same with the Strokes; I consider playing along to their songs as metronome practice.

MD: Do you play with any electronic elements?

Drew: I'd like to. Apart from this band, I play around with gear with friends at home. I don't have any pads, but I'll trigger different sounds by putting a microphone into a kick drum and run it into a vocoder. If you turn the release up a little bit, someone else can play the chords in time with you, which is really fun.

MD: What was recording the new *Regrettes* album like?

Drew: It was amazing! We did most of it in

Nashville at the Sound Emporium. Working with [producer] Mike Elizondo is amazing. I feel like I get better every time.

MD: Did you guys record live together?

Drew: Yeah, for a lot of it. Playing with Mike was crazy because he's so freaking good.

MD: Do you prefer recording to touring?

Drew: For being proud of what I played, recording, since the adrenaline isn't influencing or pushing in any direction. But playing a show is the best thing ever. I've had some gigs that I would show people, but more often than not, it's a show more than a musical thing. There are things I could do live that I can't do in the studio.

MD: Do you play to a click live?

Drew: No. After spending a lot of time in jazz school, I play to a metronome any time I practice. School makes practicing simple beats to a metronome feel below you, which is silly. You get in this mindset of, *I need to be learning these crazy solos and transcribing*.

To be humble and to practice humbly are where I think good feel comes from. That's where I'm at now. I'm getting into playing simply, repetitively, and in the pocket with the *Regrettes*. Every snare drum hit has to be perfect, which is way harder than playing fast.

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Drew Thomsen

MD: Are there any shows that you remember as being particularly amazing experiences?

Drew: Yeah, when we were opening for Twenty One Pilots. We played two nights at Wembley Stadium. There was one night where I was super comfortable. It's really hard to get comfortable with that many people looking at you. You worry about things you would never worry about in a club, like dropping a stick. I never, ever think about that. And up on that riser, I thought, *I cannot drop a stick... I cannot mess up.* That night, I didn't think about that at all.

MD: Did anything bad happen during one of those shows?

Drew: Yeah, the rental drumset was terrible. The shells were great, DW, but the hardware was ancient. Shit would just fall. My crash would fall off the riser, and there was one time where my floor tom leg collapsed. You have to look over to the side where [a tech] is and say, "Hey, can somebody come help me out with this? I play this drum in the next song!" But it didn't interrupt the song. I never had to stop playing, which is crazy as a drummer, because you can't stop. You don't have to worry about being out of tune, but you can't stop for a second.

MD: I think the things that aren't meant to happen at the show are what make it human. It's that much more rewarding when you're able to overcome that fear, or that chaos.

Drew: When you do it as a group, too. Most club shows, if something crazy happens like the bass amp stops working or we forget about the chorus, it's fun to look around, and if everybody's in the right mindset, think, *Dang, we made it through that!* [laughs]

MD: I just played a sold-out show at the Fonda Theater. We were using in-ears for the first time on this tour. The last six weeks we'd had the best shows. All of a sudden at the biggest show—a sold-out hometown show—as soon as we started playing the in-ear mix started crackling. I played the whole show with this happening. What was cool about it was that after the show everyone was like, "That was awesome! Didn't notice anything at all!"

Drew: I love that! That's my favorite part about shows sometimes, where you get off stage and you're like, "Darn, I'm sorry, you guys," and they're like, "What?" [laughs]

MD: Yeah. Do you feel like you get to that point a lot, or are you in touch with your bandmates?

Drew: I definitely think I'm in touch. I'm just really hard on myself. I'm a harsh critic of

my own playing. That doesn't always line up with what everybody else hears. They don't feel it since they're not playing it. It's interesting to mess up and realize that only you heard it. Just because you're thinking about it, it doesn't mean anybody else is really worried about it. I've played and thought I really messed up, but everybody else said it sounded great. You've been performing, so you haven't been talking. It's happened a couple of times where I'd had the best show of my life and then they'll be like, "Eh, not that great," and vice versa. Being on different parts of the stage can influence what you feel or what you hear. You can only guess from people's body language and go with what they've been saying on the mic about how they feel.

MD: Have you ever gotten sick on tour?

Drew: Oh, hell yeah! I mean, I'm not happy about it, but we played at the Chapel in San Francisco after getting back from Paris. I was jetlagged and super sick. I felt so bad. I threw up before we got onstage. We played the whole set. It was brutal, but I pulled it together. Right after the last song I went off and threw up again in the bathroom. Then I hear them say, "Hey! They want an encore!" And I was like, "Alright!" [laughs] It's crazy if you watch the video from that show; I just have my head down the whole time.

MD: Did you have a bucket onstage?

Drew: Yeah, somebody brought me one. Thank God I didn't puke onstage. It sucked because it was the show all of my family could come to. It was rough.

MD: When I would get sick as a young girl, my first drum teacher would tell me, "You need to play! You need to sweat this out! It's going to make you feel so much better if you do." Every time I played while I was sick I would totally feel better. There's something about going through with it and pushing your body out of that weakness.

Drew: I haven't gotten sick on any tours recently, but the first tour I ever did, when my body was getting used to touring, I got sick, but during the show it felt like the sickness almost went away. You breathe, you feel great, and then as the adrenaline starts to fade you realize that it's not over yet.

MD: Do you all eat healthy?

Drew: I think that's one of the best things about this band. Our usual meal is a Whole Foods hot bar in every city we go to, which is amazing. You don't get sick, you feel good at every show, and it feels like your health is improving on tour. It's rad to have Lydia spearheading that.

MD: There's a strong physical exertion that you put into your shows in particular.

Drew: It's like a sport—especially in these hot clubs, which I'm sure you've experienced. Basically every show we play in a club, you almost pass out.

MD: Do you think about these things when you're playing?

Drew: Yeah, when it gets extreme. Especially when venues are underground with no windows. The first show of the first European tour we played was the hottest show of my life. It feels like a different kind of hot. It's like heat stroke!

MD: How long are the sets generally?

Drew: Thirty to fifty minutes. It's not a two-hour set, but every song is intense, so I use up almost all of my energy two-thirds of the way through. Then the last third I have to really dig deep, especially when it's a good show. When the kids are falling over the stage and crowd-surfing, you just have to go for it. There's always a moment in the set where I have to take a song that isn't as thrashy to breathe and loosen up. I'll get to that point where I'm holding the sticks wrong and thinking, *What am I doing? This is so bad for my hands.* I catch myself doing that a lot.

MD: No matter how much you practice beforehand it still feels like there's another muscle you use that you can't actually exercise beforehand.

Drew: I just try to ride my bike, run, and swim as much as I can when I'm home because it's a cardiovascular exercise. There's not enough oxygen in my blood when I'm playing a show like that.

MD: Do you ever talk to people who are inspired to drum after seeing you?

Drew: Yeah, definitely. It's cool to have experience now, because I feel like I know some things about the drums now. Now I can tell someone else the specifics of how to do something. For instance, how to play fast hi-hat beats using the Mueller technique. I have things I can give people to go and do.

MD: Do a lot of girls tell you that they want to play drums?

Drew: Yeah, totally, which is the coolest thing ever. I have a little sister and our fan base is her demographic. Female drummers are underrepresented, so it's great to see this whole generation of people that watch Lydia, Genessa, and Brooke, and say they want to play drums. It feels really good to say, "Heck yeah! Do it. Also here are some things I know that can help." There are a couple of younger bands that cover our songs that have come to our show before. They'll say, "I learned your song, but how do you play this part?" And I say, "Rad, I can tell you because I do this every night!"





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Steve Lukather on Five Jeff Porcaro Toto Tracks

Interview by Billy Amendola

Transcriptions by Willie Rose

Lately it seems that Toto is finally getting the respect they always deserved. Back in 1977, after doing sessions in L.A. for a number of top acts and appearing on many hit records together, keyboardist David Paich and drummer Jeff Porcaro decided to write, record, and tour for themselves, soon adding Steve Lukather on guitar, Bobby Kimball on vocals, Jeff's brother Steve Porcaro on keyboards, and bassist David Hungate (later to be replaced by a third Porcaro brother, Mike). Some critics at the time complained that Toto was too slick, or just a passing phase. But after more than forty years of touring together and recording their own hugely popular albums—and despite the far-too-early deaths of both Jeff and Mike Porcaro—they continue making records and touring the world to this day, and are

possibly more popular than ever.

This past May, Legacy Recordings (a division of Sony Music) released the definitive *All In* CD box set, which features eleven remastered Toto studio albums, the previously unreleased *Live in Tokyo 1980* EP, and a full album of previously unreleased material, *Old Is New*, which features Jeff Porcaro on a number of tracks. Also included is a twenty-four-page booklet, which contains new essays on the band as well as previously unseen photos.

Jeff Porcaro has long been hailed as one of the greatest drummers of all time. To get a taste of how revered he is by your fellow *MD* readers, for instance, check out this month's Readers' Platform. For this article we go even deeper into Jeff's gifts and ask Steve Lukather to choose five of his own favorite Toto tracks that feature

the drummer. "Man, that's an impossible question, because *everything* Jeff ever played on was magic," says Lukather, who's been traveling with the band (which now features Shannon Forrest on drums and Lenny Castro on percussion) in between tours with Ringo Starr & His All-Starr Band. Cliché as that statement may be, it doesn't diminish its truth.

"Ask anyone who was ever on a session with Jeff," Lukather continues. "I was honored to be on so many. Not a day goes by that I don't miss him. There was only one Jeff Porcaro, and I got to be in a band with him. He was one of a kind, and no joke, I believe God touched him. He always made us all sound better. He made everyone sound better on everything we ever did together—on any record he played on."



"Everything he played on was magic." Steve Lukather (left) and Jeff Porcaro in the '80s.

“Rosanna” (Toto IV, 1982)

I was there when it all came together for the first time. David Paich’s first version was a Bo Diddley type of groove, and Jeff said, “No, no, check this out!” and he started playing the song’s now iconic groove. We all scrambled to get a chord chart together and started jamming to it. The record is the second take. The jam at the end was never even [discussed ahead of time]. Jeff broke it down, and off we went. We’d been listening to Bernard Purdie on Steely Dan’s “Babylon Sisters” and John Bonham on Led Zeppelin’s “Fool in the Rain” a lot, and Jeff just made [the half-time shuffle groove on those songs] his own.



@ 0:00

“These Chains” (The Seventh One, 1988)

This is a Toto deep cut. I picked this one because the groove Jeff plays at the end is so insane—just the hi-hat work alone. He came up with stuff like this off the top of his head all the time. It was a marvel to watch it go down. He was so effortless. And again, the second take was the record as I remember it.



@ 3:57

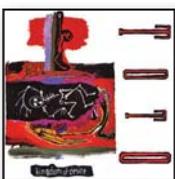
“Mushanga” (The Seventh One)

I didn’t pick this for the song itself, but for Jeff’s part. He came up with this on the fly. This is a lesson all its own, and I remember him shedding the idea of it at rehearsal and me saying, “Man, that’s a wicked part. What’s it for?” Then Paich came up with the riff on the first part of the song, Jeff played that beat, and it was perfect and spectacular at the same time.

@ 0:00

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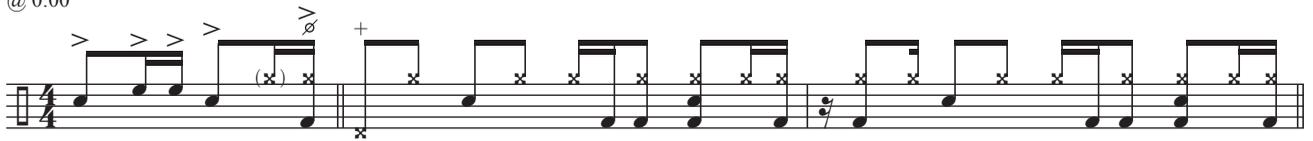
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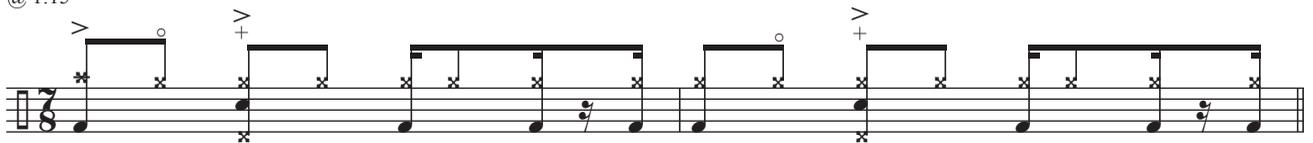
“Jake to the Bone” (Kingdom of Desire, 1992)

Jeff burns on this one. I love it for many reasons. It takes him out of his usual wheelhouse. He could play some crazy shit. I used to come early to rehearsals, and he was usually there before me, shedding when he thought no one was listening. The man had insane chops. I would throw the door open and say, “What the f—, man—you have to do that in front of a crowd!” He would smile and look at me and say, “Nah, man, f— that shit.” [laughs]

@ 0:00



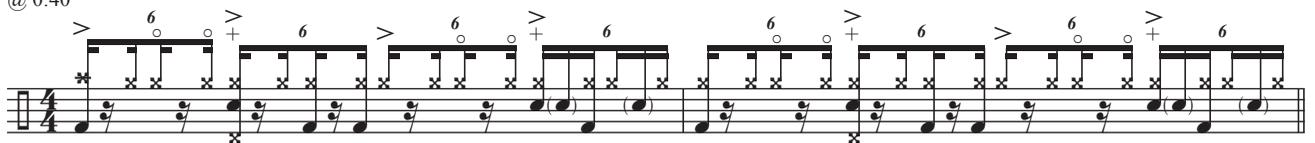
@ 1:15



"Mama" (Hydra, 1979)

This is a classic Jeff groove. His finesse is flawless. We cut this one live as a four-piece. All the solos and the [basic] track were live. We never rehearsed for records. We would show up, and Paich usually had a gem or one of us had something. This is one of my favorite Paich compositions and one of my favorite Toto tracks. I'm not sure what style of music this fits in; we all had so many influences. It's just what we sound like when we jammed.

@ 0:40



To read Steve Lukather's take on his favorite non-Toto Jeff tracks, visit moderndrummer.com. And to learn more about Steve (and Jeff), check out his autobiography, *The Gospel According to Luke*.



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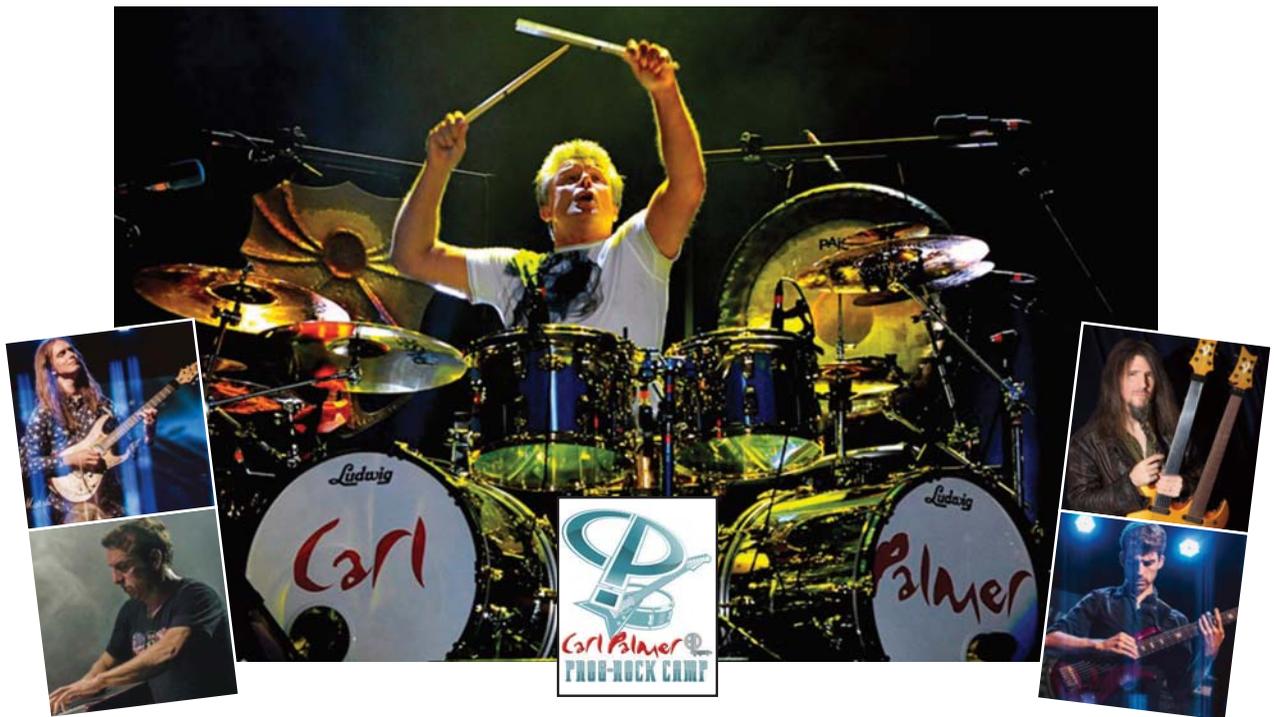
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The Ancient European Rudimental Codex

Part 1: The Final of Seven

by Claus Hessler

Welcome to the Rudimental Codex, an alternative collection of rudiments that focuses specifically on the ancient European legacy of rudimental drumming.

This collection isn't meant to rival the Percussive Arts Society's standard list of forty rudiments. Rather, its intent is to help you look differently at the art of drumming and the history of rudimental drumming's European roots. The list has been organized and published by Percussion Creativ, a German nonprofit association of drummers and percussionists similar in nature to the Percussive Arts Society in the U.S. The full poster of the Codex can be downloaded at percussion-creativ.de and at moderndrummer.com.

Before we start, a short note on the history of rudiments. The most important regions where this military-oriented drumming originated are in parts of modern-day France, Switzerland, and Germany. Mercenaries from these regions would spread their music throughout Europe (much of it was used in part of their military strategy as well) and then much later to the U.S. Because the borders between countries shifted throughout the Renaissance and medieval era, when discussing many of the drumming aspects of this rudimental style, it makes sense to speak of Europe as relating to certain cultures rather than in terms of national boundaries.

Especially during the Renaissance era, the French influence in Europe was extremely significant in regards to language, architecture, fashion, lifestyle, and more. It stands to reason that music and drumming would follow suit. With the particularly strong bonds between France and Switzerland, these two regions proved to be extremely important in the history of rudimental drumming. You can learn more about this history in my publication, *Camp Duty Update*, which is available from Alfred Music.

The Rudimental Codex differs from other lists of rudiments in a number of ways. It showcases European phrases that are not part of the forty PAS rudiments. It presents the German/Swiss and French names of the rudiments. It suggests detailed information on interpretation and phrasing. It gives you original and sometimes deviating information on how certain rudiments were structured. And it uses a single-line system of notation that's widespread throughout Switzerland and France.

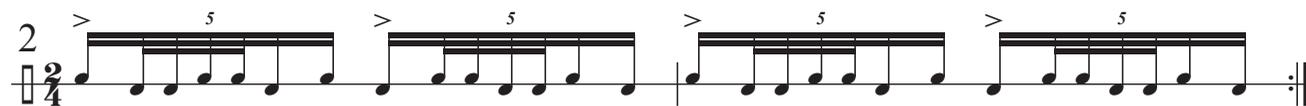
Throughout this series I'll provide you with further examples of how the Codex can change your perception of rudiments, their history, and possible ways to interpret them. It's worth repeating, however, that this is not about "right" or "wrong" ways to approach rudiments. It's simply about preserving a musical art form and its European roots, which we look at today as one of the most important foundations of drumming. Let's dig in.

The Final of Seven

In Swiss and German nomenclature, this phrase is known as a *Siebener Endstreich*. The ancient French name is *Raté saute de cinq*. The Swiss name relates to the number of strokes played in total, while the French term focuses on the aspect of the five-stroke roll, which is embedded between two more single strokes. By the way, this figure could be seen as somewhat related to the Lesson 25 PAS rudiment, which has one more double stroke inside of the pattern.



Interpretation

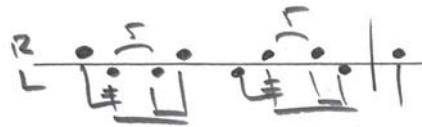


Regarding notation, a single-line system is typically used in modern rudimental drumming in Switzerland and France. In Switzerland, right-hand strokes appear above the line and left-hand strokes appear below. In France, this order is reversed. Some of the earliest American sources of rudimental drumming also make use of this strategy—Charles Ashworth's 1812 book, *A New, Useful, and Complete System of Drum Beating*, indicates sticking with different pitches, albeit using a five-line staff. The tradition of Scottish drumming, which is not as old as you might think, also uses a single-line

system, which is most likely a result of the connection and friendship between Swiss drumming great Dr. Fritz Berger and Scottish drumming great James Catherwood. With all that in mind, there's reason enough to stick with that tradition.

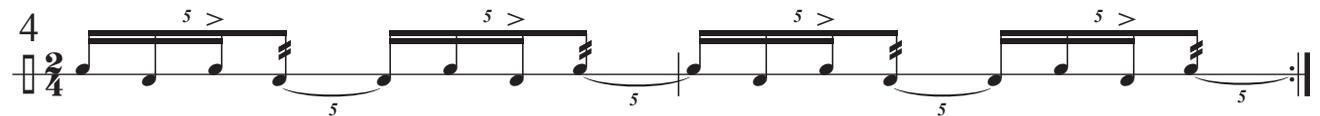
The Final of Seven really doesn't have a typical dynamic setting, and many times it's played with a brief crescendo. Still, it makes sense to accent the first note of the pattern as a general rule and understand that the two single strokes at the end employ a brief crescendo to prepare for the next accent at the beginning of the pattern.

The rhythmic phrasing of this widely used figure is very close to a quintuplet subdivision. French sources make use of that rhythmic grouping in education and methodology as well; however, in Switzerland this strategy is much less common. This may be because of different methods of notation used in Switzerland, in which so-called "Berger notation," a system invented by Dr. Fritz Berger, plays an important role. Here's the Final of Seven using Berger's notation.



Next we'll check out the reversed version of the Final of Seven, which is also very common in Swiss rudimental drumming. I included the notation of this phrase as it appears in the Rudimental Codex, along with its detailed interpretation. Just like the regular Final of Seven, there's no set dynamic level, yet many times there are brief crescendos in its actual use. In the Codex, we present the phrase with an emphasis on the third partial of a quintuplet grid, which isn't really unusual in an authentic context.

Reversed Final of Seven



Interpretation



Next we'll focus on exercises that explore musical structures and techniques helpful for the development of the Final of Seven and Reversed Final of Seven. These exercises demonstrate some rhythmic groundwork and ways to develop a basic understanding of the structure of the patterns.



7

Keeping this unique rudimental tradition of drumming alive is our passion at Percussion Creativ. We view the patterns in the Rudimental Codex as possessing a very special cultural heritage. Spread the word, and be sure to add this ancient piece of vocabulary to your own toolbox. Enjoy!



Claus Hessler is an active author, educator, and international clinician. He endorses Mapex, Sabian, Promark, Evans, Ahead, Gon Bops, and Drummershoe products. For more information, visit claushessler.com.



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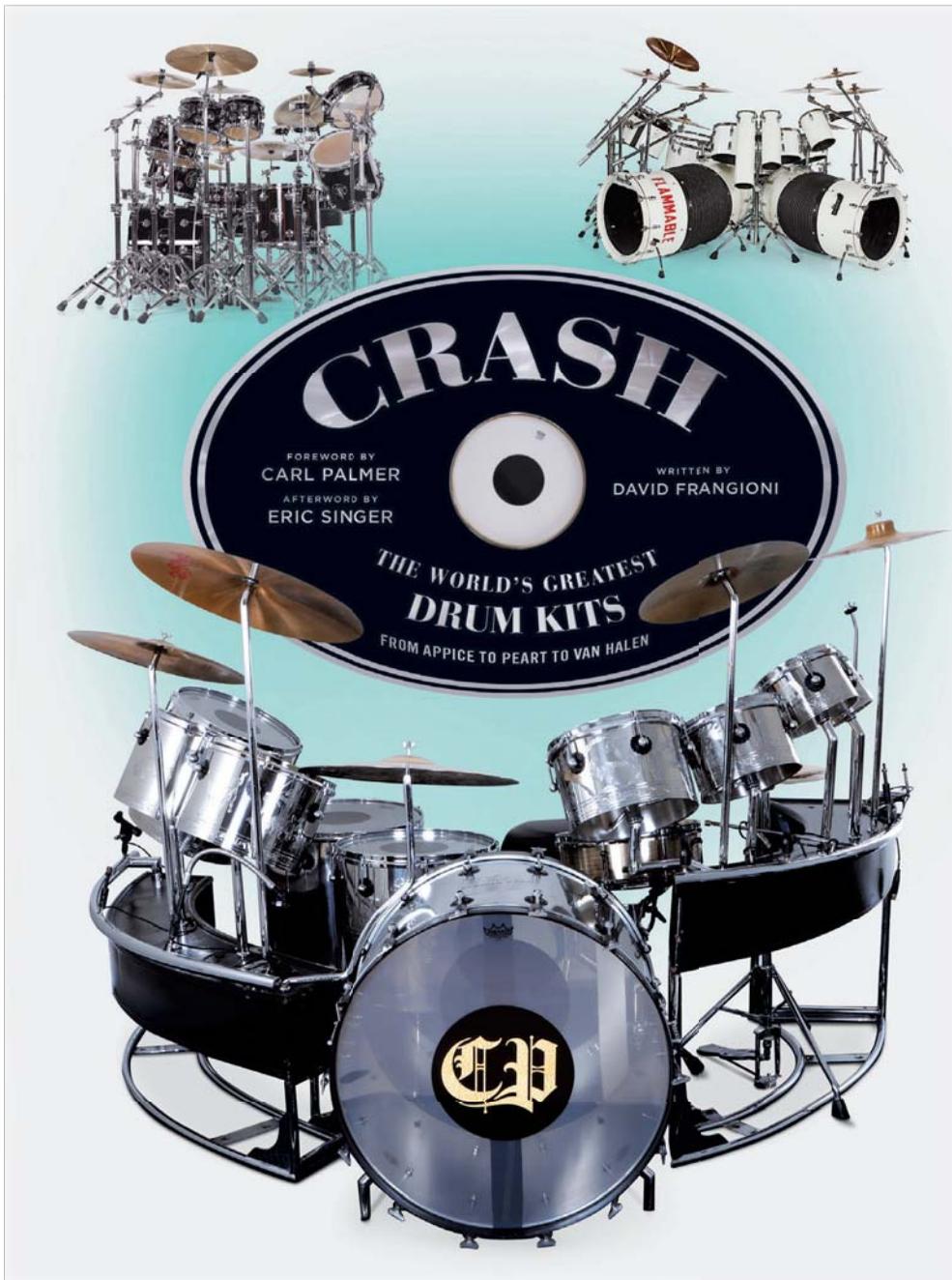
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Hand and Foot Rolls

Creative Combinations for Fills

by Jost Nickel

This workshop is dedicated to what I refer to as hand and foot rolls, a particularly powerful and interesting way to orchestrate single-stroke rolls. Be sure to check out the QR codes throughout this lesson for links to video demonstrations of some of these patterns.

To dig into this concept, first play a single-stroke roll between your right hand and right foot. In terms of coordination, this can be quite difficult at first and can take a long time to learn. But it also can be a great concept to integrate into your playing.

Let's start with preliminary exercises utilizing triplets. The right hand starts the roll and plays the floor tom. In Exercises 1 and 2, only play the right hand in the first bar. Add the bass drum in the second measure without changing the leading hand's accented figure. I don't play the following four preliminary examples within grooves, as they're purely technical exercises.

1

R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R

2

R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R

3

R R R R R R R R R R

R R R R R R R R R R

Once you're comfortable with Exercise 3, add the left hand on the rack tom, as notated in the second and third lines of Exercise 4. In the second line, play the rolls with the left hand on the rack tom, rather than the right hand. In the third line, play the rolls with both hands alternating and with accents on every beat.

4

R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R

L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L

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

Now let's explore different ways of combining the hand and foot roll with figures you might already be familiar with. To make it easier to integrate this concept into my playing, I'll often play a figure or motif that ends with a single bass drum stroke. The figure you see on beat 1 of the following example is a common one. Play this fill after three or seven bars of a groove.

5

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

In Exercise 6 we'll create a longer phrase by repeating the first three beats of the previous fill until two bars are complete. Play this fill after two or six bars of groove.

6

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

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



When playing fills using 16th-note triplets, one powerful way of phrasing is to organize the triplets into six- and three-note groupings. In Exercise 7, the hand and foot roll plays the six-note grouping. We'll use a R-L-F combination for the three-note grouping.

Six-note grouping: R R R R R R

Three-note grouping: R L

Exercise 8 demonstrates one possible combination of six- and three-note groupings. Combining these two groupings can be a simple yet powerful idea, as the six-note grouping alternates between the pulse and offbeats when combined with three-note groups. Here we'll use that phrasing to create a fill that utilizes the hand and foot roll.

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8

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

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



When practicing Exercises 5, 6, and 8, you can also play the hand and foot roll between your left hand and foot, or use both hands as in Exercise 4.

If you're interested in learning more about phrasing options or ideas on fills in general, please check out my latest book, *Jost Nickel's Fill Book*.

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



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A New Perspective on Polyrhythms

Two-over-Five Variations

by Aaron Edgar

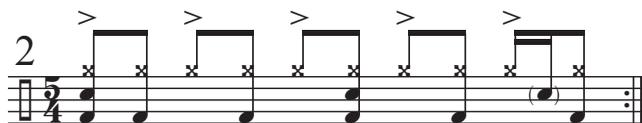


The easiest way to think about a two-over-five polyrhythm is that you have two equally spaced notes across five beats. If we use 5/4 as a foundation, the quarter note naturally implies our layer of five. To play two equally spaced notes over that foundation, we'll cut a 5/4 measure into two equal pieces. We can't cut five in half evenly, so instead of thinking about quarter notes, let's think about an 8th-note subdivision. There are ten 8th notes that we can cut in half perfectly throughout a measure of 5/4.

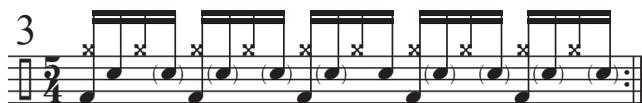
Exercise 1 puts two-over-five in the context of a beat. Quarter notes on the bass drum represent our layer of five. The snare drum plays every fifth 8th note to give us our layer of two. Ghost notes, a snare buzz stroke, and an open hi-hat embellish the beat. Concentrate on the kick and snare accents to really feel the two-over-five grouping. The best way to internalize these rhythms is to practice them for a long time while zoning out and trying to make them feel natural, funky, and groovy.



The fun starts when we explore beyond both sides of the rhythm starting on beat 1. We can permute either layer to any partial within the bar. Exercise 2 phrases our layer of five on the "&" of each beat. We're still playing quarter notes that represent the layer of five—they've just been shifted by one 8th note to the middle of each beat. A kick on beat 1 and a ghost note have been added to make this sound like more of a groove rather than a basic polyrhythm underneath 8th-note hi-hats.



Shifting our subdivision to 16th notes allows us to phrase our polyrhythm so that neither layer of the grouping is played simultaneously. Exercise 3 pulls our kick back to the quarter note and starts our layer of two on the "e" of beat 1. The two-over-five kick and snare accents should sharply poke through a subtle chatter of ghost notes between the hi-hats and snare.



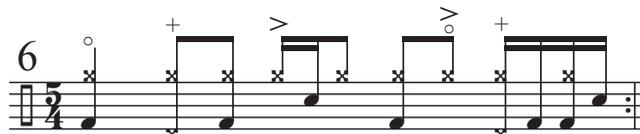
Now let's look at another one of the offbeat variations, first without any embellishments. In Exercise 4, our layer of two starts on the "e" of beat 3, and the bass drum plays quarter notes.



Next we'll try two different ways to embellish this rhythm. The first option offers a minimalistic approach with a ride bell accent pattern that contrasts with the polyrhythm.



In Exercise 6, the bar of 5/4 time implies the layer of five. One of my favorite ways to think of any polyrhythm that has a two-note grouping on top is to think about it like we're forcing two equally spaced snare notes into the phrase to create a twisted backbeat.



The next two examples explore more offbeat 16th-note placements of the two layer over a solid double bass pattern. First start the layer of two on the "e" of beat 2 (Exercise 7) and then on the "a" of beat 1 (Exercise 8).



The best thing about exploring polyrhythms with solid double bass drum patterns is that you play a note under every layer of the grouping, including the spaces. You can think about that foundation to physically quantize the odd groupings.

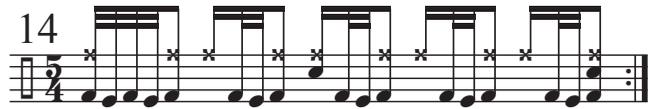
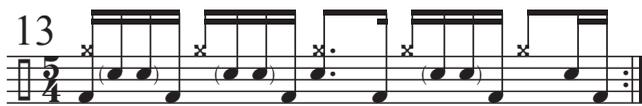
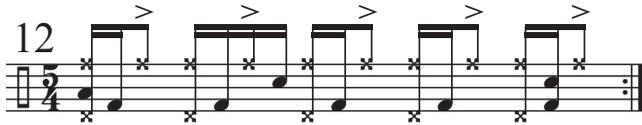
Polyrhythms take on a melodic feel when we voice them on the toms. Exercise 9 sets this up with our basic version of two-over-five to start. Exercises 10 and 11 start our layer of two on beat 1. In Exercise 10 we shift our layer of five to the "e" of each beat, and in Exercise 11 we'll play it on the "a" of each beat.



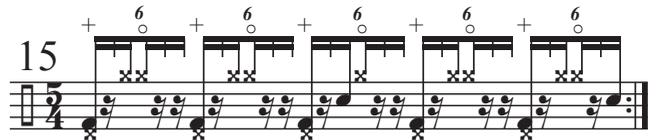
Once you've got these rhythms comfortable and groovy, feel free to experiment with snare embellishments to make these sound more like practical patterns. Playing a backbeat on beat 5 is an excellent place to start. If you have a gong drum, you can even alternate the layer of two between that and the snare to create a beat within a beat.

So far we've explored only a handful of the forty possible 16th-note permutations of two-over-five, and the full notation of all of the possible combinations is available at moderndrummer.com. By the time you've made each variation feel good, you'll hopefully never feel uncomfortable with this grouping again.

Next we'll try a few different ways to phrase these rhythms. In Exercise 12 we'll shift the layer of five to the "e" of each beat with a gong drum on beat 1 to round out the pattern. You can use a floor tom if you don't have a gong drum, or even play an extra kick on beat 1. Exercise 13 phrases the layer of five with driving quarter notes on a cymbal stack and embellishes the groove with ghost notes. Exercise 14 phrases the layer of five in the bass drum with a three-stroke ruff that lands on the "e" of each beat.



In Exercise 15 we open up a rhythmic Pandora's box by exploring a two-over-five polyrhythm within 16th-note triplets. We'll play the layer of five on each beat. We'll pull back our layer of two by a single 16th-triplet partial to the note before the "&" of beat 3 and the very final note of the bar.



As we've seen with this grouping, the layer of five represents our pulse. To get our layer of two, we place two equally spaced notes over that pulse. Next month we're tackling five-over-two. The phrasing works out similarly, except our pulse is now the layer of two, and we'll cut that foundation up with five equally spaced quintuplet partials.

Follow the things that fascinate you, and have fun practicing. See you next time!

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. His book *Progressive Drumming Essentials* is available through Modern Drummer Publications.



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Exercise for Drummers

Part 1: Four Strength-Training Moves to Improve Bass Drum

Speed and Endurance

by Brandon Green

Should drummers exercise? Time and time again professional musicians tell me they don't want to vigorously exercise. The general consensus is that exercising might increase muscle mass, slowing down execution on the instrument. Others believe exercise will not help improve their craft.

Based on basic physiology and physics, I have to wholeheartedly disagree. The right exercise is always beneficial—always. Improving your muscular control, strength, and endurance has immediate benefits. As drummers we employ our bodies, minds, and ears simultaneously to amalgamate a summation of skills. So it stands to reason that if you improve your body, you'll be in a better position to achieve the desired results. Plus, even if you're not required to play hard and fast on the gig for several hours at a time, it's reassuring to know that you have the strength and mechanical facility to deliver those extremes when they're needed.

Fun Facts About Muscles

Let's start with my favorite fact about muscles: improving your muscular quality will help your mind. As you exercise individual sections of your body, you're also stimulating specific areas of your brain. That means that as you practice moving and using parts of your body differently from the ways that you normally do, you'll improve how your mind processes mechanical information.

Improving your muscular quality will also help you move easier, because muscles produce mechanical force. So strengthening your muscles to produce controlled force will allow you to move your

limbs more easily.

In addition, improving your muscle quality will protect your joints and organs. Muscles act as force managers and aid in absorbing force. This means that when there's impact from a drumstick hitting a drum or cymbal, your muscles are better able to absorb and dissipate that mechanical energy. If your muscles are not strong enough, reactive forces can eventually hurt your soft tissue.

In fact, improving your muscular quality will improve your overall health. The majority of our internal systems are dependent on our ability to move. Improving muscular quality will help you move more easily. So you want to get a move on, or else you'll risk losing mobility over time.

More facts: Improving your muscular quality will also decrease the risk of injury and strains. Let's get serious—injury and trauma are the main reasons drummers stop playing drums. As you improve your muscle strength, you decrease the likelihood of a muscle getting so strained that you experience pain and cramping.

Improving your muscular quality can also help fight disease. The strength of your muscular system is directly correlated with your susceptibility to metabolic ailments such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Strength training alone can't remedy these conditions entirely, but it'll definitely help.

Finally, improving your muscular quality will improve your drumstick control. Dynamics are a crucial element of drumming. The greater control you have over your body, the greater control you'll have over your dynamics as you build your skills.



Standing Hip Flexion



Hip Extension/Squats



Seated Calf Raises

Identifying Your Weakest Links

Now let's discuss how we can utilize exercise to improve speed and endurance on the bass drum. Bass drum performance is ultimately the result of a combination of elements: the mechanical settings of your bass drum pedal, your bass drum head tension, and how well your body can perform.

There are many things you can do to improve your bass drum performance when you're not at your drumset. For instance, appropriate resistance exercises can exponentially increase speed and endurance on the bass drum pedal.

Have you ever noticed that a specific part of your leg will start to fatigue ahead of the other parts? Maybe it's your hip flexors, quads, shins, or calves. The human body is miraculous at adapting. As we learn how to play the bass drum, we each develop unique techniques that will unknowingly bias certain muscle groups. The goal of the following exercises is to isolate and identify the various muscle groups involved in playing the bass drum. That way you can focus on strengthening your weaker links to create a more cohesive muscular system, which will ultimately have a positive influence on your speed, finesse, and endurance.

The Exercises

These exercises should be performed on commercial resistance exercise machines. You can recreate them outside of a gym, but it would be optimal to use the suggested equipment. The machines I'm suggesting are available at most gyms.

Standing Hip Flexion: In my opinion, the hip flexor is one of the most underrated areas of the body to strengthen. Standing hip flexion can be performed on a machine called the multi-hip. This machine will help you isolate the hip flexor muscles on the front part of your leg. Your hip flexors are responsible for helping you pick up your leg and controlling the descent when you're playing the bass drum. Do two to three sets on each leg, with ten to fifteen repetitions per set.

Hip Extension/Squats: Squats are a common exercise. Bodyweight squats, machine squats, and free weight squats can be performed quite easily. The most important thing is to make sure you find the version of this movement that's most comfortable for you. Make sure to work within your active range of motion to avoid injury. The unique bar configuration shown here is the best option for my body. Do two to three sets of ten to fifteen repetitions per set.



Dumbbell Dorsiflexion

Seated Calf Raises: This is one of my favorite exercises for developing calf strength. While seated at a calf raise machine, lift up the machine with both legs, and stop at the top. Then slowly remove one

leg, and lower the machine down with the other. Each time you perform this movement, alternate which leg lowers the machine. This exercise emphasizes the eccentric (lowering) part of the movement, enhancing its strength-building benefits.

Dumbbell Dorsiflexion: The shin muscles often tire out before the rest of the leg because of their fast-twitch nature. When they get tired, they lock up, therefore inhibiting your ability to perform at an optimal level. The goal of this dumbbell exercise is to strengthen your shin muscles to help improve strength and endurance.

Elevate your heels using a block or step, squeeze a dumbbell between your toes, and lift yourself up and down. Focus on feeling the muscle contractions at the front of your shin.

Technique

As you practice the exercises described in this article, utilize slow and controlled repetitions. I suggest performing each movement for three seconds, holding it for a moment, and then gradually releasing it over three seconds. Focus on squeezing the muscles that you want to feel. If you can't feel those muscles in action, slow down until you can. And most importantly, don't exercise through pain.



Muscle and exercise specialist **Brandon Green** is the founder of Strata Internal Performance Center, and is the owner of the drummer-centric biomechanics and fitness website drum-mechanics.com.



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Sugar Percussion's Jefferson Shallenberger

A candid chat with the restless master craftsman on drum making, artistry, and building an honest business fit for his offspring's approval.

Sugar Percussion has been providing high-end, stove-built drums since 2013. When asked to describe the company, founder Jefferson Shallenberger replies, "Sugar Percussion is the neurotic distillation of twenty years of obsessive woodworking employed to masochistically attempt an answer to the foolish question, 'How perfect can you make a circle?'" Got that?

Read on to learn more about Sugar Percussion's meticulous construction process and to dig deeper into Shallenberger's sharp wit and poignant thoughts on the drum industry, artistry, and how a drum is never complete—at least to him.

MD: What's your background in woodworking?

Jefferson: I got my useless college degree, found a job building dog houses, did a couple years of cabinetmaking, and then went to a proper woodworking school, where someone finally taught me to use my eyes and hands. Twenty years later, I'm still playing in a woodshop.

MD: Why make drums when you already have a career in woodworking?

Jefferson: Short attention span is the quick answer. The long one is about feeling like I have a contribution to make. I saw a gap in the industry and felt qualified to fill it. That, and it's a crap pile of fun.

MD: Why is drum building important to you?

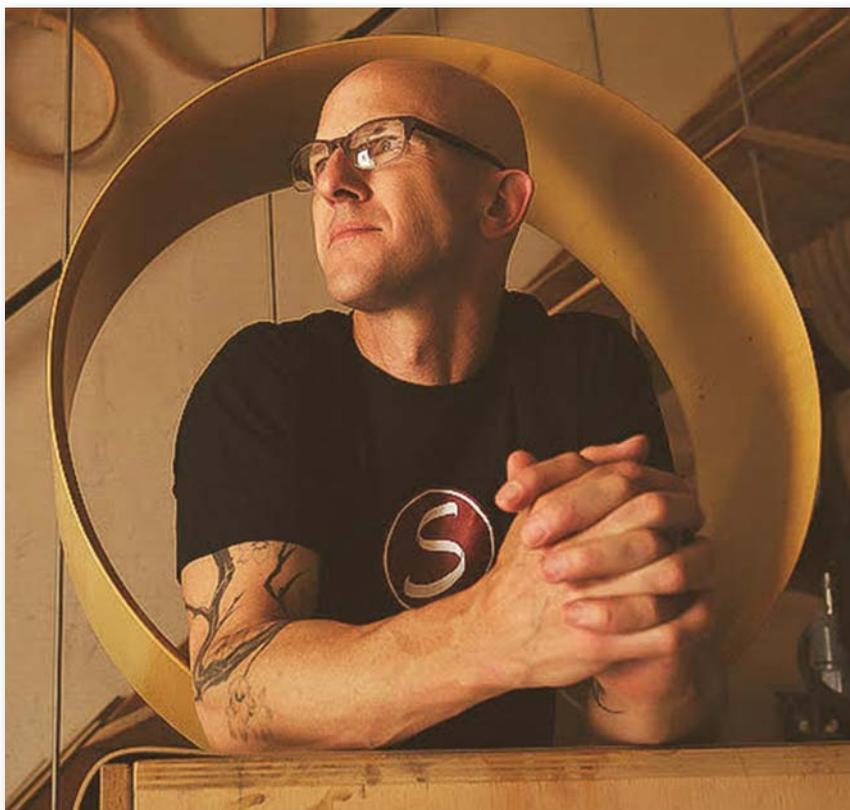
Jefferson: The world is filled with detritus. Low-quality landfill fodder is churned out at a nauseating rate. But beautiful, well-intended, well-made things have a power to buoy—if not elevate—one's spirit amidst this crap.

MD: What else is important to you?

Jefferson: My kid and my dog. Out from that tight circle comes my mom, brother, sister, niece, sisters and brothers from other mothers, my tools, my old car that may never run, my workbench that keeps me flat, straight, and true, my TV and her remote control, my toaster oven, really good ginger ale, and cheese puffs.

MD: What has constructing drums led you to that may have been unexpected?

Jefferson: The good side is there is kindness within this industry that exceeds any of my expectations. There's support and value and



praise and defense and loyalty and love. I thought drums were just for midlife pubescents venting unexplored anger. I'm thrilled to be wrong. But there are some class-A, weapons-grade [expletives] in this industry. This, of course, shouldn't be surprising. No industry is without.

I'm surprised at the questions some people ask when researching gear. There is a preoccupation with the how over the why. Instead of focusing solely on how something is made, I would ask why it's made that way. Instead of asking how much something costs, I would ask who makes it and what are their intentions in their craft. Ask the maker what it is that's important to him or her, and see if those values align with your own. This is the information I would want to know before parting with a pile of money for great gear.

MD: What continues to drive or frustrate you within the industry?

Jefferson: I'm inspired by cleverness and kindness, levels of which make one want to be better at both. I'm disgusted by petulance and possessiveness and by mommy-coddled man-boys thinking

they've invented the circle and aim to squash anyone who dares to try their own hand at it. I've experienced the former on both sides of the industry, the maker and the player, and it elicits a better version of myself. I've experienced the latter, and it makes me want to burn down buildings.

MD: What do you feel is the responsibility of an instrument maker?

Jefferson: Quality: Don't make crap. Honesty: If you do make crap, don't lie about it. Humility: If you make crap by accident, apologize and make it right.

MD: What has making drums exposed about you?

Jefferson: It's reminded me how much I still care. I've spent the past twenty years in a career that obsesses over things people rarely notice. I live gleefully in the minutiae. It's how I was taught, and it's what resonated with me immediately. Building drums has only fed and furthered that neurosis.

MD: Tell us more about your daughter, Ruby Sugar, and the legacy you would like to provide for her.

Jefferson: First of all, she's the best, empirically. Also, she's a brilliant, cutting, kind, witty, benevolent, snarky, soft, and truly decent human. I am fortunate well beyond what I've earned or deserve.

I named the company after her as an emotional guardrail. Knowing countless decisions would be made during its



development, I wanted a guide. I wanted her to feel pride in this company and in me, both in the product it makes and how I run it. Her name on every drum that leaves this shop ensures I keep to that line, and it clarifies sometimes less-than-clear situations. It turns out that asking myself *Would my kid feel shame?* is a pretty good bump stop for bad decisions.

MD: Why use the stave-shell design instead of plywood or block-style construction? What are the benefits of stave construction shells sonically, aesthetically, and in terms of durability?

Jefferson: Stave, steam, solid, ply, glue, how much glue, vibration, resonance, better, best, blah, blah, blah... Sound is subjective, but craftsmanship is not. Instead of asking which is better, ask which is better made? To say one method sounds better than any other is

crap, but to say some drums are made better than others is spot-on. I've seen brilliant drums and shitty drums, both solid and ply. They're all just circles after all. It's how one got them there that's most important.

That said, I chose the stave method for two reasons. One, there weren't many doing it. Other methods were saturated with builders, and if I couldn't add something new or better, then the industry certainly didn't need another copycat. Second, it made sense to me. My woodworking vocabulary jibed with this method. It was logical in my head, and I was certain I could do a great job building this type of drum.

The benefit of stave construction is also twofold. First is material exploitation. All species of wood have distinct resonant characteristics. They all vibrate uniquely based on density, porosity,

grain structure, softness, hardness, etc. This provides a huge range of tone, voice, warmth, cut, mush, and projection. Slather that wood in glue, as with plywood shell construction, and those distinctions are diminished, homogenizing their differences and narrowing that glorious range. Assemble them with far less glue, and the distinctions are preserved. Solid shells use a fraction of the glue and subsequently remain closer to the material's natural state, thereby preserving the wide range of voices.

Secondly, stave construction produces a circle at rest. All trees have inherent tension, and when you cut them apart, things start to move. Make a circle wrought with tension, and you're rolling the dice on it staying a circle. Throughout our building process we are repeatedly flattening and squaring material, undoing the ill effects of tension release, so that by the time the circle is glued up, she's completely calm. If you're going to beat the crap out of something and hope it stays round and true, I'd prefer it start out relaxed and ready for duty.

MD: Do you have a favorite species that you work with?

Jefferson: Nope. This company was founded on the principle that different species offer different voices. If we did our job well, we can coax out that variety of voice. So I appreciate the medley. Sure, some woods are fancier and some are plainer, some are lighter and some are heavier, and some acquiescent while others fight you every

Spotlight

step of the way by sending spear-like splinters through your hands and destroying every tool in your shop. It's the fact that all these distinctions exist that makes the medium special.

MD: What are the primary sonic characteristics of the different wood types? Explain the density scale that you use to determine sound and feel.

Jefferson: The density scale was intended as a quick comparative reference for warmth and cut. The softer woods, such as Alaskan yellow cedar, are self-compressing, mushy, warm, and round—like fresh baked bread just pulled from the oven. The medium woods, such as mahogany, have almost all of that warmth but introduce a little cut and bark, like high heat-baked cookies where the outside is crispy but the center is still a bit raw. And the hard woods, like cherry, oak, and ebony, trade in more of the warmth for a bare-knuckle punch of crack and projection. Those woods are wildly unshy and expressive, like a bowl of hard candy swimming in a pool of angrily carbonated ginger ale.

MD: How long does it take to make a drum? What are the stages of construction?

Jefferson: To make a single snare takes twelve hours from the lumberyard to the shipping box. These hours are not consecutive, however, as there are processes that need time to dry.

The first step is lumber hunting. All the painstaking and subsequent efforts are wasted if the material is crap. We sort through a veritable boatload of lumber to find glorious stock.

Next is milling. From the rough lumber, we joint, plane, edge, rip, and bevel the staves for each circle. The result, if done well, appears like we were never even there.

The faceted circle then goes on the lathe to be shaped into a smooth circle. From there the long road of sanding, sanding, and more sanding begins.

After sanding, we drill for the hardware, and then apply several coats of polyurethane. Different woods require different amounts, but the finishing process is typically a weeklong affair.

The last step is to assemble the drum, test her out, take photographs, and ship her off.

MD: How do you know when a drum is complete?

Jefferson: It's done when I can't find anything wrong. (I can always find something wrong.)

MD: Why did you start doing snare construction workshops? What's the experience like?

Jefferson: My woodworking background was graced with profoundly generous and wildly talented teachers. The classes are an attempt to put some of that back into the world. The experience is fantastic. Teaching people how to use their hands and eyes to build something that looks and sounds wonderful is a beautiful thing. We repeatedly have people who've never set foot in a woodshop, thinking they've come to watch me build them a drum. But by the end of day one, they've dug through the lumberyard, jointed, planed, band sawn, table sawn, and glued up an arguably

perfect circle, all the while being jacked up on fancy coffee, glorious burritos, and homemade cookies.

Day two has them lathing and sanding their circles, making their own badges, and applying the finish. On day three, they're assembling with hardware, hoops, and heads and playing to their massive delight what was—two days earlier—a chunk of wood in a lumber rack. Smiles are wide and frequent in these classes, both for the students and for my coworker and me. I get just as much as I give.

MD: What are your thoughts regarding the company's alternative to the typical artist endorsement?

Jefferson: I think endorsement used to mean something pure and good. People used to be inspired by others' work and feel compelled to speak about it. Nowadays that dynamic is commodified. It's trading product for praise, which feels inherently insincere and untrustworthy. I know it's a fast track to growth, but I don't want any part of it. I just give stuff away when I'm inspired and feel compelled to do so, often soon after coffee.

MD: Is marketing needed for a boutique drum brand?

Jefferson: If an instrument builder builds a perfect instrument in the woods, no one sees it—unless it's photographed and put on Instagram. So hell yes, marketing is needed. Were it not for social media, only my mom and kid would know about my drums.

MD: Do you have any current plans for growth or expansion?

Jefferson: Ours is a calm and paced growth. Word of mouth, though slow like cold molasses, is a beautifully honest, sincere, and dependable vehicle, and I have seen how fiercely loyal a following it



can render. The term *family* is dreadfully overused in this industry, but there isn't a better word to describe what's happened with this company and the people who we've come to know and love. Our plan is to continue doing that which we do well and let that family grow organically.

MD: What are the challenges you face regarding both the business and artistic sides of Sugar Percussion? Are you able to reconcile being a businessman and an artist? Are there any internal thoughts or difficulties being both?

Jefferson: Do I have internal thoughts? My head is an overcrowded dinner party from dawn to dark. There is little distinction between art and business for me. There is a common misconception that in order for something to remain art, it can't be business. Bullshit. This woodworking thing, for whatever convoluted series of events that transpired in the last forty-seven years, is what I love and know how to do, and this company is both art and business. I believe that if I'm lucky and deliberate, the mixture of the two can bring beauty, grace, and poetry to a vast number of people without sacrificing an inch of its form. Sorry.... I got a little fired up there at the end.

Brandy Laurel McKenzie

To learn more about Sugar Percussion, visit www.sugarpercussion.com.



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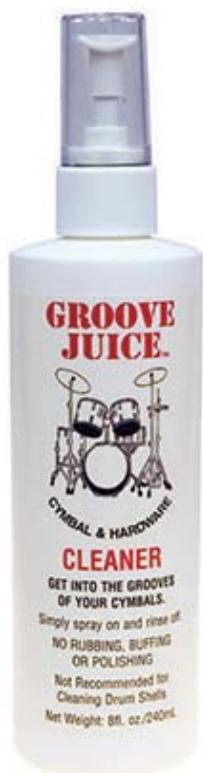
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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Lettuce *Elevate*

On *Elevate*, the funk band Lettuce continues to evolve, treading into trap, psychedelic dub, Latin rock, '80s synth-wave, Thai and Bay Area funk, and Texas blues, always fueled mightily by the creative syncopations of drummer ADAM DEITCH. Here we check out the album and chat with the drummer about it.



Adam Deitch makes the simplest things mean a lot. On "Trapezoid," the opening track of Lettuce's latest long player, he locks in with the subterranean tones of bassist Erick Coomes, stepping it up underneath Benny Bloom's trumpet solo. "Royal Highness" is

MD: The rhythm section comes up big on "Trapezoid."

Adam: Drumistically, that's coming from a style of hip-hop called trap music, which has the basic kick drum pattern of go-go music. And then there's a lot of 16th-note and 32nd-note and triplet stuff on the hi-hat, really getting more creative on that side. The hi-hat is really what's creating a lot of excitement. The kick drum pattern is very close to a 3:2 clave. It's fun to keep that clave pattern with my right foot, and go between 16ths, 32nds, triplets, and ruffs on the hi-hat, to keep that forward motion happening.

MD: "Royal Highness" brings in the straight-up funk.

Adam: That tune is based on a Prince sort of vibe, where the kick drum is 1 and 3, snare is 2 and 4, and that's what works. If you listen to a lot of Prince's uptempo funk, that's where he's coming from, where the kick and snare are simple, and the bass and guitar are creating all of these counter rhythms. The drums are very supportive, as opposed to playing a bunch of more advanced kick drum rhythms. It really sets it in stone and creates a kind of foundation for all of the other rhythms happening up top with the horns and guitars.

MD: "Krewe" must be referring to the band Khruangbin.

Adam: They definitely inspired that song. They have that laid-back funk sound, which is really interesting. To make it ours, we had to inject some energy and urgency into that vibe. We were also thinking of old school B-Boy breakdance grooves. A lot of break dancers like to break to old-school funk and uptempo funk as opposed to hip-hop. They really dig the underground classic funk from the '70s, so this is also an ode to that. And we've been listening to a lot of the same bands that Khruangbin is into—you know, the *Éthiopiennes* and Thai funk compilations. Khruangbin has Americanized it but kept a lot of that vibe in, so it's been an influence on us for sure. And their drummer, DJ, is one of the great, simple groove drummers of our generation.

funk fit for a king, and Deitch's open hat on the downbeats gives the tune a nice push. The expected nods to J Dilla are present in the groove of "Purple Cabbage" and flammed backbeats of "Gang Ten." Elsewhere, Deitch goes Garibaldi on their pumped-up cover of Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," "Shmink Dabby" has a playfully sinister overtone (think "Inspector Gadget") before blasting into Santana space, and the drummer's blend of ghost notes and phased cymbals

highlight "Larimar." Closing the set, "Trapezoid Dub" is a delightful marriage of dancehall and hip-hop elements, and Deitch's cross-sticks, buzz rolls, and snare shots are at once complementary and provocative.

MD: Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" gets a nice makeover.

Adam: I've always loved that song, and for us to do a cover of a very popular song like that, it's very important to change it somehow. The melody is so timeless that I think it could be done with any sort

of beat. When [singer/keyboardist] Nigel Hall and I first met and started jamming together about eight years ago, we had this idea to take the melody and throw a go-go swing on it, sort of a mash-up of a go-go beat with a great '80s synth-wave song. It just had a vibe, and it really works live. And Nigel is a phenomenal singer.

MD: I enjoy your flam backbeat on "Gang Ten."

Adam: Yeah, I think we added a clap or some sort of sound to flam off of my snare. That groove was written in my house, on my drums. I was trying to come up with sort of a J Dilla-inspired lazy hi-hat, hinting at the 8th-note triplet on the hi-hat over a normal hip-hop kick and snare pattern. It has that

slinky feeling that's in between straight and swung.

MD: On "Purple Cabbage" your stops are almost like fills.

Adam: Yeah, sometimes the best fill is space, complete blank space. That's a hip-hop concept, when on the fourth or eighth bar of the track the DJ would take the track out completely to allow the final phrase to be raps from the MC. When you have a serious beat happening and do a quick drop, it just kind of pulls the rug out, and when it comes back in, the whole thing is ignited again. "Purple Cabbage" is based on the J Dilla aesthetic of playing drums with the laid-back hi-hat, a forward-motion kind of groove, and a spaciness that's happening above the groove.

Sometimes the flam and hi-hat being laid-back just gives it a relaxed feel and separates it from the quantized world, which most things are these days. It's purposefully humanizing parts of the groove. We're hoping that more music comes out highlighting the human element of drumming as opposed to the robotic stuff. I feel like this is the antithesis of that. (Lettuce Records) **Robin Tolleason**



Hellyeah *Welcome Home*

One final—and predictably raging—performance from the recently departed heavy metal maestro VINNIE PAUL.

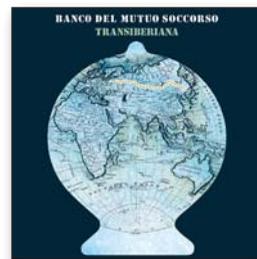
Hearing an album with the foreknowledge of finality creates a different kind of listening experience. There's a sadness in knowing it will be the last album graced by the drummer's unique creative voice. At the same time, you appreciate the joy of being able to hear that voice on something new one last time. On June 22, 2018, Vinnie Paul passed away at the age of fifty-four, soon after completing his drum tracks for Hellyeah's sixth album, *Welcome Home*. The album's opener, "333," gives us Vinnie's signature smile-inducing ferocity. From there, the record is an ever-present, unrelenting reminder of just how special Vinnie's drumming was, always elevating songs by providing an immovable concrete slab of heavy groove, and peppering in some seriously spicy chops. "Sky and Water," the last song on *Welcome Home*, is a heartfelt tribute to Vinnie written after he passed away, but the final, "hidden" track on the album, "Irreplaceable," is a short, unscripted clip of Vinnie expounding his philosophy on living life in the moment. Wise words, and a bittersweet way to say so long. (Eleven Seven) **David Ciauro**



Banco Del Mutuo Soccorso *Transiberiana*

An iconic Italian prog band proves there are still compelling statements to be made in the genre.

Banco's musically baroque and operatic qualities have virtually defined Progressivo Italiano, a movement in rock that emerged from the social and political turbulence of late-'60s/early-'70s Italy. The band's latest studio record, the conceptual *Transiberiana*, is bolstered not only by BDMS's typically grand, recapitulated musical themes and Romantic vocal performances, but a new lineup and hypnotic rhythmic patterns. In "L'Imprevisto" drummer **Fabio Moresco** glides through mesmerizing odd times and recurring passages in 6/8, while on "L'Assalto Dei Lupi" he closely follows tightly choreographed accents (and lays down the funk). This entire production seems fresh and rhythmically cyclical, encapsulating nearly everything that is and likely will be vital about Continental European progressive rock. (Inside Out) **Will Romano**



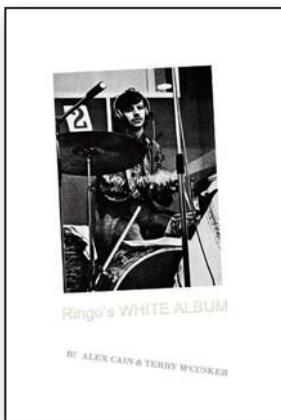
MULTIMEDIA

Ringo's White Album by Alex Cain and Terry McCusker *Finding the Fourth Beatle* by David Bedford and Garry Popper

A pair of recent publications go deep into the weeds of Beatle-dom—you might not even find your way out.

Beatles disciples Alex Cain and Terry McCusker follow up their *Ringo Starr and the Beatles Beat* with the comprehensive, well-researched volume *Ringo's White Album*. The authors Ringo-centrally cover the history of the iconic double LP's recording sessions along with production details, including gear specs and miking techniques. Each track's drumkit/percussion contributions are analyzed. There is some overlap with the previous book, but this go-round is far more detailed. Drummers will want the deluxe edition, which includes the complete drumkit/percussion transcriptions for every number.

To provide accuracy, the authors have sourced the stereo and mono 2009 remasters as well as the 2018 anniversary-edition remix that Ringo himself has



praised for its improved drum clarity. It's edifying to view Ringo-isms such as his relaxed, split-up triplet fills on "Cry Baby Cry," responsive elastic passages on "Long, Long, Long," and seamless navigation of numerous shifting meters on "Happiness Is a Warm Gun." Also illuminated are tracks with two layered drum parts: on "Helter Skelter" the layers heighten the frantic intensity, while on "Don't Pass Me By" they color the wobbling, semi-inebriated feel. (ringoswhitealbum.com, deluxe edition: \$49, standard edition: \$22.59)

For those who must consume every morsel of Beatles history, *Finding the Fourth Beatle* by David Bedford and Garry Popper will sate even the thirstiest fanatics. The exhaustive 327-page book focuses on the circuitous path leading to Ringo's throne ascendancy. The story chronicles many lesser-known drummers along the way—and beyond.



Naturally, the famed Pete Best saga is covered extensively. And among the "forgotten" drummers, some hold worthy bragging rights—like Tommy Moore, who, after a month-long stint, departed for the security of his forklift job, and Jimmie Nicol, who covered for the hospitalized Ringo during two weeks of the Beatles' 1964 world tour. Others, however, remain micro-footnotes, including a notorious bar hooligan who jumped behind an unoccupied drumkit, bashing away for an evening while the lads cowered in fear. It's maddening minutiae for some, nirvana for others. (thefourthbeatle.com, hardcover edition: \$53, paperback: \$37.99) **Jeff Potter**



Dave Weckl's Master Plan

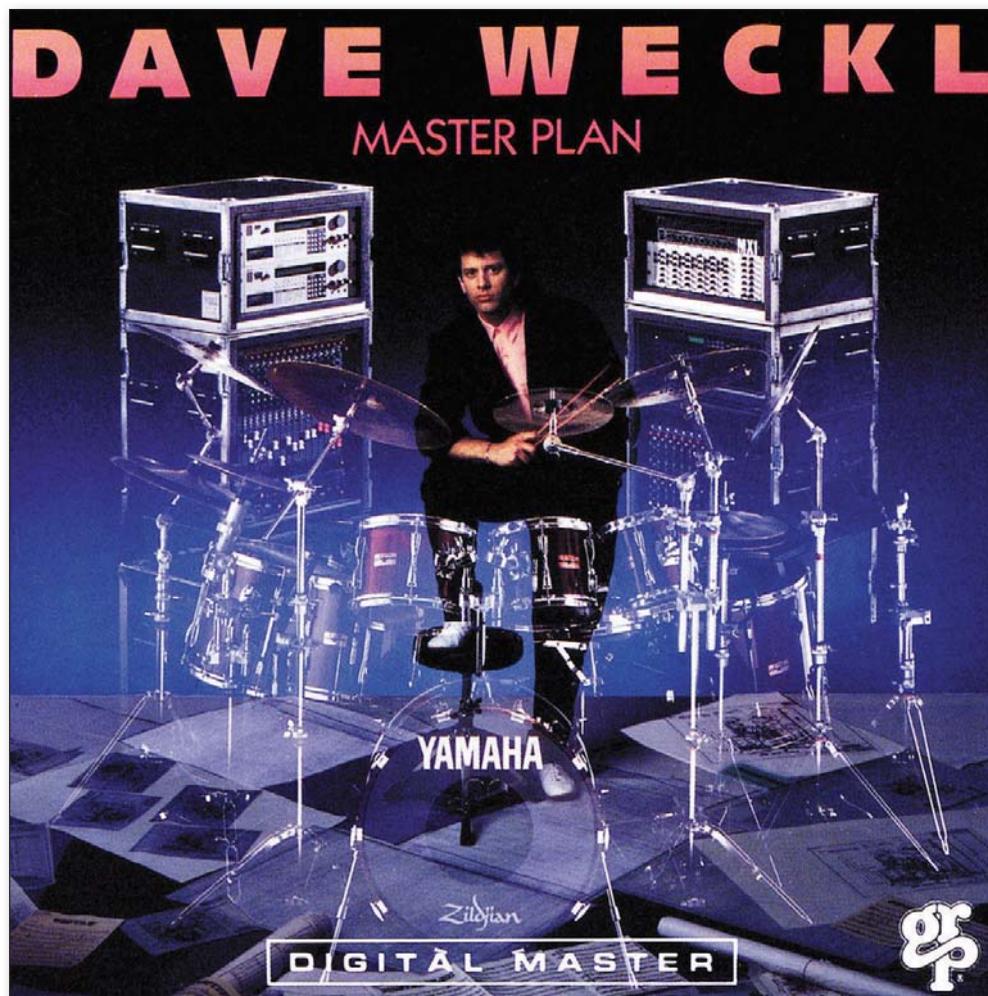
A monster debut from a monster talent, and the beginning of a series of game-changing fusion recordings as a leader.

By 1990, Dave Weckl was the talk of the drumming world. A headlong dive into the New York jazz scene in the early '80s yielded recognition from a variety of musicians. Among them was Peter Erskine, who recommended the young drummer to play in a group called French Toast, featuring pianist Michel Camilo and bassist Anthony Jackson. That band was a precursor to Camilo's own group that would form soon after, giving Weckl the hard-earned opportunity to innovate on his instrument with incredible technical facility and brilliant musicality.

Soon Weckl found himself working with everyone from Simon and Garfunkel to Michael Brecker, while also doing TV jingles and session work. Chick Corea took notice and recruited the drummer for his Elektric Band, which gave Weckl his biggest stage yet to lay down inspired grooves and solo with a laser-like precision as yet unheard in the jazz genre. Weckl's time with Corea brought about several records with both the "plugged-in" main group and the offshoot Akoustic Band, which featured piano, upright bass, and a repertoire heavy on standards but no less mind-blowing.

By the turn of the decade, Weckl was working to have his own voice as a leader heard. In 1990, with major songwriting and production assistance from his friend, keyboardist Jay Oliver, Weckl released his first solo album, *Master Plan*. Helping the drummer make his dreams a reality was a lineup of stellar revolving musicians, including Chick Corea, Anthony Jackson, Michael Brecker, Elektric Band sax player Eric Marienthal, and future Dave Weckl Band bassist Tom Kennedy.

Weckl wastes no time establishing his



assertive presence with the opening track, "Tower of Inspiration," a tip of the hat to the Oakland funk and soul legends Tower of Power. Digital recording was all the rage in this era, so you're immediately thrown into a clean, in-your-face mix where the clarity of the instruments stands out and the drum mix is undeniably front and center. Weckl pays homage to David Garibaldi's signature style with some funky, syncopated snare work and slick linear hi-hat phrasing on the B sections. The whole thing grooves hard, and Weckl is especially active underneath Oliver's organ solo, with written-out hits showing off the band's tightness.

"Here and There" brings a loping half-time shuffle, and Weckl locks in with Jackson's bass like his life depends on it, opening up to his ride for Marienthal's sax solo and generally making it all feel slightly behind the beat. The drummer then brings his considerable Latin chops (after years with Camilo and Corea) to "Festival de Ritmo," a nice Carnival-esque romp that leaves room for Weckl to throw down a short-but-sweet solo with all the goodies that made him such an imitated figure.

From 1:02 to 1:17, on top of a keyboard montuno, Weckl whips out arresting snare and tom jabs, cymbal crashes with

Encore

nothing underneath them, and lightning-quick triplet patterns, before returning to his initial groove. Weckl sounds free and loose underneath the sax solo here, almost suspending the original pulse to snake around the time with Jackson's bass. It sounds as if they're each trying to leave space for the other to fill, and the feel is close to that of an improvised studio jam. At 3:44, Weckl returns with another blazing solo, until the band plays the out head and you're given a chance to catch your breath.

"In Common" flirts with subtle adult-contemporary jazz styles, with Weckl playing sidestick until eventually bringing in a four-on-the-floor kick pattern that moves things along nicely. "Garden Wall" features Corea on synthesizer and Brecker on tenor sax, with a driving ride cymbal part that keeps time for the soloists without overdoing it.

While the reverb-heavy snare and world music vocal of "Auratune" haven't stood the test of time terribly well, Weckl's piano-trio arrangement of "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise" with Ray Kennedy on the ivories, Tom Kennedy on acoustic bass, and the drummer on a dry, unaffected jazz kit, still slays. Weckl is swinging his behind off here, with beautiful snare ghosting, engaging tom fills, and an extreme level of hand speed and

control. He brings the dynamic way down for the bass solo, burning underneath a barrage of notes, before having his own moment over the standard's breaks. Weckl's trades go by in a flash, ending with some fun cymbal chokes and snare ruffs.

The title track brings Corea back on acoustic piano and features another special guest in the form of Steve Gadd, who is heard in the right channel while Weckl is in the left. It's a painstakingly notated Corea composition, and each drummer is given space to show his stuff. At times Gadd is riding his cowbell as Weckl colors with cymbals, while other moments find Gadd on his cymbals as Weckl works his toms. Midway through, the drummers trade brief solos, each laying down big snare-and-tom-heavy phrases before the track turns to an enchanting Jackson bass solo.

Gadd then returns with tighter snare work, echoed in the other channel by Weckl. The listener gets a sense of the respect that each player holds for the other, with neither trying to show the other one up. Gadd then brings in a propulsive, uptempo offbeat ride pattern, and the track fades out. Bringing in Gadd and giving him solos and a prominent voice in the arrangement is a testament to Weckl's egoless approach on the album. He

didn't have to have another major player (and a likely influence) grace his debut, but Gadd's work adds a different flavor to the material, and makes Weckl's singular voice stand out that much more.

The 7/8 of "Island Magic" ends the album on an upbeat note, and is filled with some low-key drum programming, Weckl's timbale overdubs, and more Latin vamping. Time is elastic for the drummer's solo, with fiery singles broken up between toms and dynamic phrases brought from a whisper to a roar.

Other acclaimed albums as a leader would follow Weckl's debut, including 1992's *Heads Up* and 1994's *Hard Wired*, before the drummer formed a touring band under his own name and released yet more excellent records. But it was on *Master Plan* where the highly regarded sideman now staked his claim as the guy to watch, a player with the *serious* goods. Here, Weckl was able to bring one of the highest levels of technique heard on record, not to mention a group of strong songs—not a given in the fusion genre. Soon after, students at music schools had to grapple with Weckl's monumental playing and check him out on the live stage whenever they could. **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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Dave Weckl: Master Tracks

Analyzing a few choice picks from the monster's gamechanging solo debut.

by Willie Rose

"Tower of Inspiration"

On *Master Plan's* opener, Weckl kicks things off with a tight, sharp flurry before diving into a David Garibaldi-inspired groove.

@ 0:00

Weckl varies this slaying, syncopated hi-hat pattern during the song's first B section, which starts around the 0:31 mark.

@ 0:31

"Here and There"

Weckl's take on a classic half-time shuffle shines throughout *Master Plan's* second track. Here's a taste.

@ 0:14

"Festival de Ritmo"

After a rapid tom- and splash-laden intro, the drummer dives into the following burning Latin-fusion groove.

@ 0:14

Check out the displaced floor tom variation that Weckl incorporates into the second half of this pattern's four-bar phrase to create the feeling of a shifting time signature.

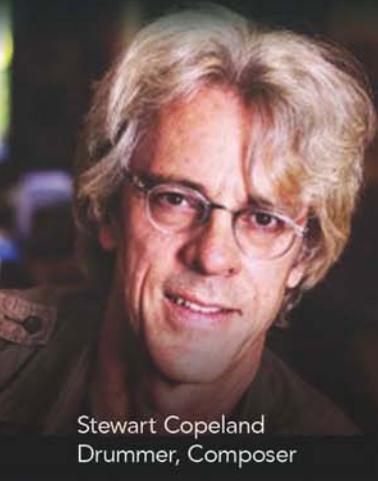
@ 0:19

"Island Magic"

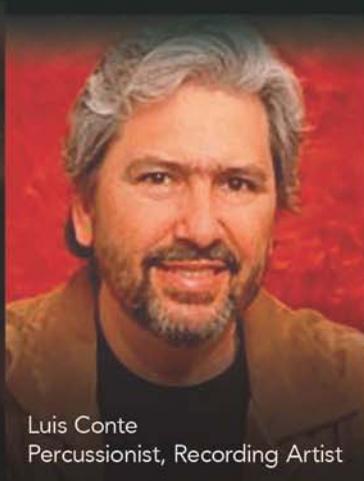
Master Plan's closer showcases the drummer's deft navigation through 7/8. Here's the opening groove of the A section, which enters around the 0:14 mark.

@ 0:14

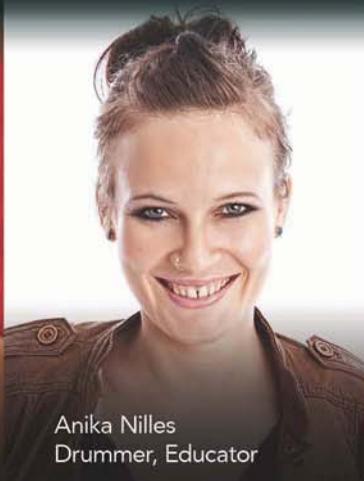
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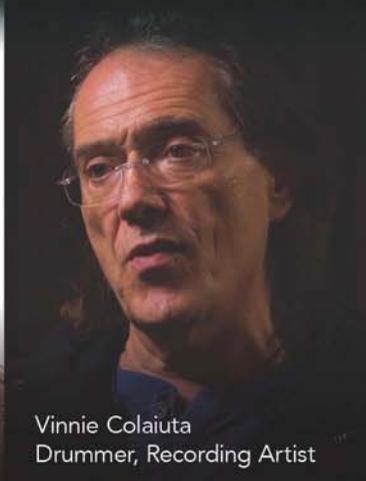
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Luis Conte
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IN MEMORIAM

Nashville Great Jerry Carrigan

A country legend remembered.

For much of the country music world, Jerry Carrigan's drumming contributions from the late 1960s through the '80s carried the same amount of weight that Hal Blaine's innovations gave to pop and rock music. Carrigan, who died this past June 22 at the age of seventy-five, was a first-call session drummer in Nashville, working with the biggest names on some of their greatest hits: "The Gambler" by Kenny Rogers, "He Stopped Loving Her Today" by George Jones, Charlie Rich's "Behind Closed Doors," "Elvira" by the Oak Ridge Boys, "Everything Is Beautiful" by Ray Stevens, Waylon Jennings' "Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line," and many others.

Like many studio musicians, Carrigan was a shadow figure to the world at large. But after he passed, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* each ran obituaries—and this fact alone speaks volumes in terms of his national reach.

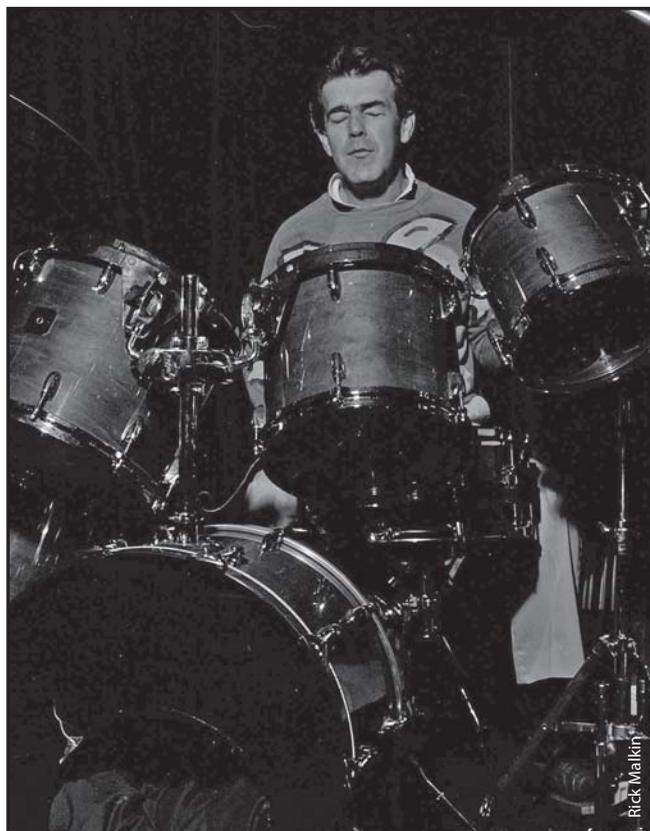
Before Carrigan was recording with the likes of Elvis Presley and Kris Kristofferson, touring the world with John Denver, or playing on one country hit after another as a Nashville studio first-call, the Florence, Alabama, native helped lay the groundwork that would establish nearby Muscle Shoals as a musical hotbed in the '60s and '70s.

As a teenager, Carrigan joined pianist David Briggs and bassist Norbert Putnam to record Arthur Alexander's 1962 pop hit "You Better Move On" under the guidance of producer Rick Hall at the legendary FAME studio. The Rolling Stones would go on to cover "You Better Move On," and Alexander's songs would catch the attention of the Beatles. This led to Carrigan and his Muscle Shoals cohorts serving as the backing band for opening acts Tommy Roe and the Righteous Brothers at the Beatles' first U.S. concert in Washington, D.C., in 1964.

The following year, Carrigan, Briggs, and Putnam moved to Nashville, looking to take what they'd learned at Muscle Shoals and apply it to the burgeoning country scene in Music City. It was a steep learning curve on a couple fronts for the young drummer, as he told *MD* in a 1986 feature story. "So I moved, and David, Norbert, Herschel (Wigginton), and I got us an apartment over on 17th Avenue. Sharing an apartment—mistake number one. Four guys away from home, and it just did not happen there with all of us together. We all began to get a lot of work, so I was the first one to move out and get my own place. They all followed. It was all my furniture in there, and I never did see it again.

"I had a lot of good people helping me," Carrigan continued. "I didn't know a thing about playing country. I had my brushes taped for a black [sic] sounding shuffle, not a lazy triplet shuffle, which is what country is. I quickly learned. Mort Thomason, the engineer, grabbed the brush out of my hand, flung it open, and spread it all apart. It looked like a peacock's tail to me. He said, 'Try that. It might work a little better.' Okay, so that's the way you do it."

Once Carrigan got his domestic, shuffling, and brushing matters in order, his career began to blossom. He laid down the swampy grooves on classic songs that blurred the lines between R&B, country, and rock, such as Tony Joe White's "Polk Salad Annie" and



Jerry Reed's "Guitar Man." And in addition to the aforementioned country legends, Carrigan recorded with Dolly Parton, Merle Haggard, Bobby Bare, Reba McEntire, Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, and Chet Atkins. He also branched out of country to record with Henry Mancini, the Boston Pops, Joan Baez, Sammy Davis Jr., Jerry Lee Lewis, and J. J. Cale.

At the height of his success in Nashville, Carrigan was typically doing twelve three-hour sessions per week. By the time he spoke with *MD* in 1986, he was still touring steadily with Denver. However, his studio work had slowed down, and this was something he had tried to come to terms with. "My work has slackened off from what it was," he said, "but that comes from a number of things: More drummers have come into town, and there are a lot of very good ones. Going out with John Denver makes people think I'm unavailable, and this is a terrible thing to say, but some people would like me gone all the time.

"You do have peak years.... Then you kind of cool off, and someone who has come to town plays a little differently. [The artists are] going to want that. You've got to be able to understand that, accept that, and not take it as a put-down to yourself. That's hard to do."

Patrick Berkery



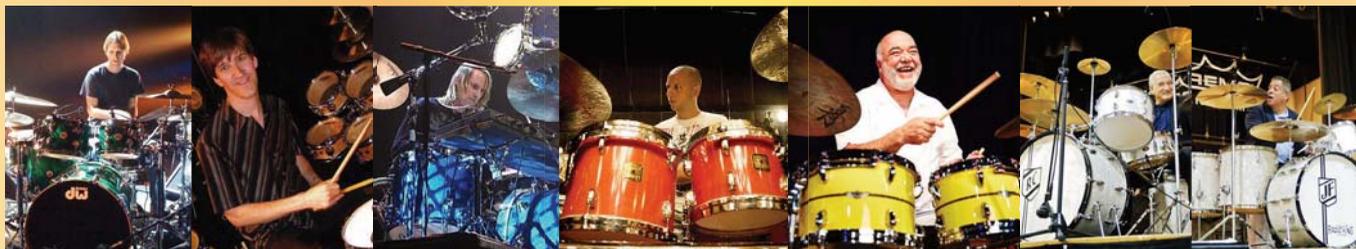


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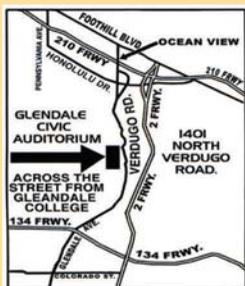
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**KIT
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A Boutique Beauty



This month's featured gem comes to us from Garrett Clagett of Annapolis, Maryland, who tells *MD* that he custom-ordered the Masters of Maple setup after hearing about the boutique drum manufacturer in 2015. "When it came time to purchase a kit, I couldn't stop thinking about the beauty of the drums created by Sahir Hanif and his team," Clagett says. "Even though I'd never personally played one of their kits, I felt comfortable making the investment based on their reputation within the industry and the positive reviews that I'd read from people who've played Masters of Maple."

Clagett's custom Neo-Classic setup consists of a 9x12 rack tom with a 9-ply gum/rosewood blend, a 14x16 floor tom with a 10-ply gum/mahogany blend, and a 16x22 bass drum with

an 11-ply gum/mahogany blend—all in a Black Candy Fade finish with black nickel hardware. The drummer also uses a Masters of Maple Limited series 6.5x14 Brazilian rosewood/maple snare.

"While small builders allow customization, I felt that it's best to let artists be artists when it comes to the final design of the kit," Clagett says. "My only requests to the company were that the wood grain was prominently featured and that the lugs had a beavertail design."

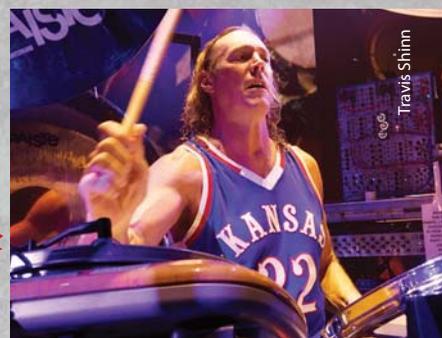
Clagett says that the setup sounds even better than it looks, with a warm and punchy growl. "I couldn't be happier with the final product. These drums are just as much a piece of art as they are an instrument for creating art."

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



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