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PILOTS'
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10
REASONS TO
LOVE JIMMY
COBB!



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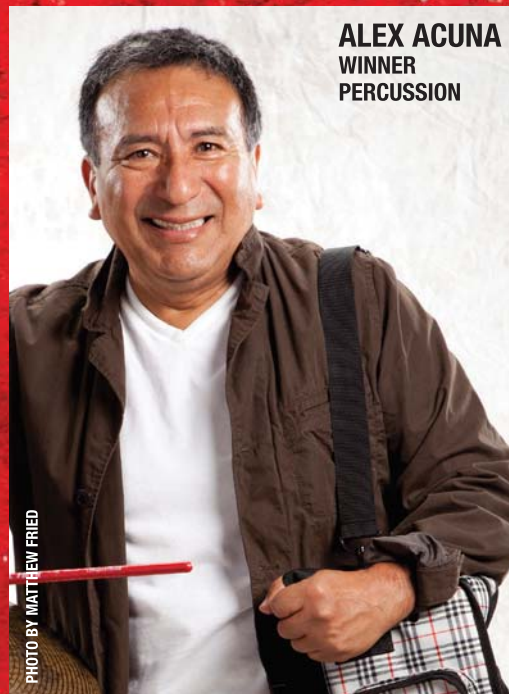


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Modern Drummer 2020 Readers Poll Winners



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Mike Portnoy

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Mark Guiliana, Beat Music!
Beat Music! Beat Music!
(Mark Guiliana)
Antoine Fafard, Borromean
Odyssey (Todd Sucherman)



ON THE COVER

32 WILCO'S GLENN KOTCHE

There's no other band in the world that sounds quite like Wilco. And there's no other drummer in the world that sounds quite like this month's cover artist, who's turned the concept of the drumset on its head by employing a maximum number of sound sources to starkly beautiful and boldly detailed beats.

by Adam Budofsky

26 THE 2020 MODERN DRUMMER READERS POLL RESULTS

It's that time of year again, when the drummers of the world show love for the most compelling players of the past twelve months. Find out how your favorites did.

44 VIRGIL DONATI

A deep dive into the artistry of the progressive-drumming master, including tracks from his latest solo masterwork, *Ruination*.

by Aaron Edgar

50 SEPULTURA'S ELOY CASAGRANDE

From fourteen-year-old Undiscovered Drummer Contest winner to one of the world's premier heavy-rock forces, it's been quite a ride for the Brazilian powerhouse.

by David Ciauro

56 10 REASONS TO LOVE JIMMY COBB

In the pantheon of late-1950s master jazz drummers, no one else had the pure, solid swing feel of Jimmy Cobb. Here we chat with the legend about Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* and other classic recordings, new and old.

by Ken Micallef

LESSONS

- 64 **BASICS**
"Rhythm Basics" Expanded, Part 2 by Andy Shoniker
- 66 **ROCK 'N' JAZZ CLINIC**
Percussion Playing for Drummers, Part 1 by Damon Grant and Marcos Torres
- 68 **STRICTLY TECHNIQUE**
The Ancient European Rudimental Codex, Part 4 by Claus Hessler

EQUIPMENT

- 16 **PRODUCT CLOSE-UP**
INDÉ RESoArmor Drumset
Gretsch Brooklyn Standard Snare
Meinl Thomas Lang and Benny Greb
Artist Concept Cymbals
- 22 **GEARING UP**
Social Distortion's Dave Hidalgo Jr.
- 60 **IN THE STUDIO**
Nashville Veteran Tommy Harden
- 70 **NEW AND NOTABLE**

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 **AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW**
Taking the Reins by Adam Budofsky
- 6 **READERS' PLATFORM**
Art vs. commerce, Rototom pros and cons, and more
- 8 **OUT NOW**
Eric Kretz on Stone Temple Pilots' *Perdida*
- 10 **ON TOUR**
Drew Christopherson and Ben Ivascu with Poliča
- NEW COLUMN!**
- 12 **INTERNATIONAL FEEL**
Mobius's Adrien Brunet
- 14 **MUST-HAVE GEAR**
The Flower Kings' Mirkko DeMaio
- 72 **RETAILER PROFILE**
Drumbite Music
- 76 **CRITIQUE**
Jack DeJohnette with Charles Lloyd, Todd Sucherman with Antoine Fafard, and more
- 82 **INSIDE METHODS**
Joe Clegg's *You're So Hybrid: Ableton Live for Drummers*
- 86 **THE 2019 HOLLYWOOD DRUM SHOW**
- 88 **BACK THROUGH THE STACK**
Jim Keltner, November, 1981

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Taking the Reins

Most months in our Critique department we include reviews of drummer-led albums. It's one way we get to show our support of players who take no small amount of artistic, professional, and financial risk on themselves. No hiding behind a band name, no blaming the bandleader for a bad mix; when it's your name on the cover, consumers have a right to assume that every note and tone have your seal of approval.



Having managed Critique for the better part of three decades, I've had the honor of hearing thousands of drummer-led albums. Of course, getting paid to analyze records doesn't make one an expert in making records. (In fact, actually *making* records doesn't even guarantee you'll become an expert at it.) But by observing the process for so long, I've definitely noticed certain qualities shared by drummer-leaders that, even if they don't always result in timeless, commercially successful recordings, certainly go far toward assuring a quality piece of art. Here are some of my takeaways after seeing how they approach the challenge.

Learn what's involved in completing the project. Don't make assumptions, even if you've contributed to dozens of other people's recordings and have developed your own theories of why they have or haven't succeeded. As a leader, you'll need to learn the basics of marketing, advertising, booking studio time, hiring technicians.... Talk to drummers who've put out their own albums—there will probably be much you haven't considered or have just plain gotten wrong.

Be the boss (even though you really aren't). In all your interactions, act like the person whose dime is being spent, because you *are* that person. Establish budgets, expect efficiency, and don't avoid awkward yet important conversations. At the same time, remember that the public is ultimately who you serve—doing everything "right" doesn't guarantee that anybody out there will actually buy what you're selling.

Be realistic, but allow for unexpected success. You want to get freaky and really push boundaries with your solo project? Go for it! Just don't be surprised if mainstream audiences are slow to "get" you. Conversely, don't assume your art will only be appreciated in avant-garde circles. People will surprise you on occasion.

Avoid obvious attempts at grabbing attention. I'm not saying that you can't employ a pun in a song title or even slap kazoo on a track. Just don't fall prey to using such devices out of some misplaced idea that, because you're a drummer, you've got to lure listeners in with some cutesy shtick. Listeners will just assume that you don't have enough confidence in your own compositional and performance skills. Act like you're the real deal, and people will view you that way.

Get out of the way. If you hire other musicians, choose wisely, and give them some space to create.

Expect some failures. Learn from them.

Listen. Take advice. Or don't. Just get your ego out of the mix.

Communicate. Commend folks. Thank them. And do it sincerely.

Be a role model. In every way.

Finally, have fun. With all the stress associated with making a solo recording, this can be easy to forget. But you owe it to yourself not to. And that joy will translate to the music, allowing listeners to feel it too. And in the end, that's what it's all about, right?

Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director



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The First Time



How old were you when you first started playing drums?

Three years old. Haven't looked back since!

Herman Watson

Twenty-two. I'm now twenty-six.

Aayush Gupta

Four! It's the best thing in the world being a student of this amazing instrument. It has given me so much.

Aditya Bhagavatula

Twenty-eight.

Lilia Toktarova

Thirty-seven.

@thescript_terhi

Forty-one.

@sour_purple_cookies

Five years old, but I had to take piano as well per my mom.

@tx_injun_joe

Forty-five. I'm a late developer.

Neil G. Foster

Seven—thirty years ago this Christmas.

Matt White

Fifty!

Gary Fryett

Ten.

Oscar Balza

Fifty-five.

Isabelle Duss Oehninger

Thirteen.

Aizen Cramp Aniq

Fifty-six and I love it.

Natasha Wiggs

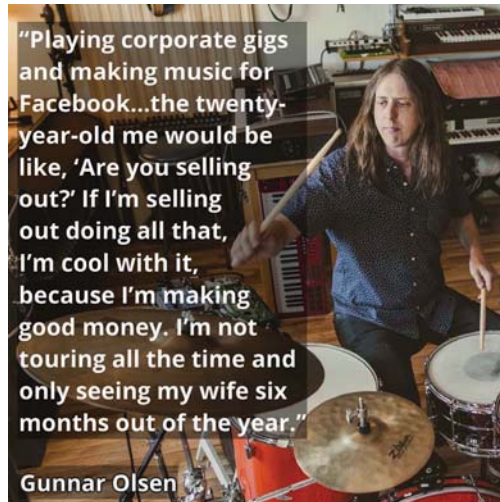
Fifteen.

@asianwiththecurlyhair

I still feel like I just started.

Hawk Lopez

Art Vs. Commerce



Gunnar Olsen

What's your take?

Well, it's respectable, but it's different for everybody. I think that if you don't risk a bit at some point and you never do the music you love, it's stupid to be a musician. Musician means artist. If you never do the art that is in your heart, it's a clueless career.

@erdoscappon

Everyone wants to call others a sellout, until they themselves have a wife and kids and realize it's easy to call people sellouts when you aren't paying your own way. It's a luxury position of youth.

Patrick Melville

Playing music I don't like kills me inside. I'd rather get a different job. I'd be lying to myself and the audience if I played something I wouldn't listen to. If you like it, though, more power to you.

Enrico Gusella

I did thirty years in cover-band land and worked with a corporate band that put me at six figures for a bit. In the end, those gigs put some money in my hand for a short while. And while I saved some, I passed up many opportunities that would have seen me getting royalties on album sales. It's such a crap shoot (emphasis

on the "crap"), but if you can make it work, then you're winning.

@billraydrums

Somewhere along the way, getting a job became "selling out."

@pope_george_ringo

Slippery slope. I would have said the same thing not too long ago. I'm currently doing both. Sometimes the cover gig outweighs the session work and original band work. It's work, so take it while you can.

@skotzo

We all need money to live. Making it playing drums is a win/win.

Joshua Karis



Rototoms: Oh, How We...Love You?

Obviously ❤️❤️❤️
Carter McLean

The drums themselves are great, but I really hate the stand.

@_rywill22

They sure sounded good on *Spring Session M*.
@tattprguy

Rototom Bozzio was the best Bozzio!
Chris Jansen

I left them but now I wish I had them back!
@KickStrap

Loved them back in the day, felt old and cheesy so I gave them away.
Michael Flaherty

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Dale Bukowski



Steve Downey

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OUT NOW

Eric Kretz on Stone Temple Pilots' *Perdida*

STP's eighth studio album exchanges the group's trademark driving rock sound for a melancholy '60s and '70s vibe, realized with an array of vintage instruments.



Peter McKinnon

Written primarily by guitarist Dean DeLeo and bassist Robert DeLeo during Stone Temple Pilots' late-2018 Canadian tour, *Perdida*—the Spanish word for loss—is largely defined by lyrics exploring yearning, heartbreak, and ultimately love and hope. Spending hours in venue dressing rooms to avoid the northern chill afforded time for the entire band, including Jeff Gutt, who joined as lead singer in 2017, to contribute to the tracks. "We didn't have any upbeat songs," Eric Kretz tells *Modern Drummer*, "but it was what Robert was feeling at the time when he came up with the title song. *Perdida* is great name for the album."

Despite the reflective and vulnerable tone of the band's first-ever acoustic album (electric guitars and keyboards make brief appearances), Kretz says that the recording process was far from somber, and perhaps even more relaxed than during previous sessions. "The writing and recording process was a lot of fun," he shares. "When you're doing rock and louder records, you're all in the room with electric instruments, bashing the songs out, trying to figure out tempos and all that stuff." But with couches spread throughout the studio, according to the drummer, and acoustic guitars, keyboards, drums, and hand percussion easily accessible, the band could take a more contemplative approach to recording and consider using instruments that wouldn't necessarily work on a fast, heavy, electric album.

Kretz notes that on previous STP records, percussion would only be used on one or two songs, usually overdubbed during the chorus or on a second or third verse. But on *Perdida* it's implemented often and intuitively. Kretz's percussion rack, which houses instruments he's gathered from around the world through the years, provided plenty of options to achieve the more subtle sound. Djembes, as well as Dean DeLeo's 12x12 American Indian drum, can be heard on several songs, along with shakers and bells. "It's about finding space for everything," says Kretz. "The record is so delicate and the space between the notes so plentiful that when the accents come in, you don't want to step on them."

Vintage mics were used to record the percussion and guitars, resulting in an easy, smooth blend, although there were some difficulties to overcome. Kretz confides that he felt some sympathy for the band members who had to tune the older guitars and basses. "You can be in first or fifth position and the

chords sound great," he says, "but once you get higher you can't get certain strings in stay in tune. It was a drag to watch Robert and Dean struggle when they had to punch in a chord, because they had to tune differently just to hit the chord up high. Luckily the guitars we had worked really well; sometimes in the past it was just laborious."

The same 1958 WFL kit (24" kick, 13" and 16" toms) that Kretz used on "Big Bang Baby," "Lady Picture Show," and other STP favorites found space on several tracks. "For modern drumsets you have to hit so much harder to get the tone out of them," says Kretz. "This kit is suited for an acoustic vibe and has a nice, dry, aged tone to it."

On the majority of the album Kretz played his 5" Ludwig Black Beauty snare—a staple since his high school days. To muffle the drum he employed Roots EQ dampeners, which helped create an early-'60s British sound. He also experimented with softer sticks, mallets, rods, and brushes to facilitate a lighter style of playing. Zildjian Ks from different decades provided a dark, moody sound for many tracks; riveted cymbals from the 1970s saw a lot of use as well. "I also used a Custom Dry Light ride," Kretz recalls, "which was pretty much the only ride on the record, as it has a beautiful decay. Constantinople hi-hats provided a pleasant mid-range."

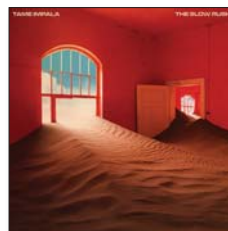
After laying down the basic kit parts, Kretz added layers of cymbals and additional hand percussion for an understated complement to the flute, saxophones, and strings that are interspersed throughout the album. Sound effects, such as scraping cymbals or dangling key chains, offered additional graceful tones. "It was about finding sounds I could create with two hands," says Kretz. "I pulled out chopsticks, wooden spoons, and anything I could to get a different sound. For one song I even used sandpaper of two different grits."

When asked if he had a favorite track, Kretz pauses and responds, "'Years' is really special to me. Robert sang on it, and it had a muffled, rolling beat when we tracked it. He usually sings backup, but it was honest for him to sing it. The way the lyrics read out, it's a beautiful, touching song, and I get choked up hearing it." Listeners will, too.

Brandy McKenzie

Eric Kretz uses A&F drums, Zildjian cymbals, Vater sticks and percussion, and Remo heads and percussion.

More New Releases



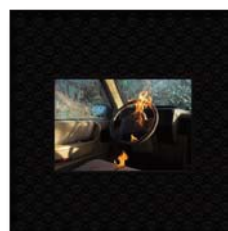
Tame Impala
The Slow Rush
(Kevin Parker)



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Khruangbin & Leon Bridges
Texas Sun
(Donald "DJ" Johnson)

Drew Christopherson and Ben Ivascu with Poliça

MD contributor Lia Braswell, who recently replaced all snare drum parts with samples on tour with the band TR/ST, finds out how the dual drummers in Minneapolis's favorite indie-dance-rock band fare with a similar challenge.

As Poliça presents their new album, *When We Stay Alive*, to live audiences, they maintain the dreamlike soundscapes they're revered for while integrating a new, entirely electronic drum setup.

Singer Channy Leaneagh and producer Ryan Olson first collaborated in the band Gayngs back in 2011, and soon after furthered their musical compatibility in Poliça. With the help of Chris Bierden on bass and Drew Christopherson and Ben Ivascu both holding down the beats, they've been developing their own unique sound ever since. "We basically improvised our parts on the first record," says Ivascu. "Our first practice was the first time we'd all been in the same room together."

Five full-length albums later, the drummers have reestablished their roles without giving up their individualism. While Olson solely contributes to the band's electronic textures as writer and producer offstage, Christopherson and Ivascu create polyrhythms within the band's atmospheric melodies live and in the studio, always taking care that their kick drums don't flam, as Christopherson puts it.

While discussion about the relative benefits of acoustic vs. electronic drumkits are not likely to end anytime soon (do electronics add or take away from performances; do they limit a drummer's playing style?), the musicians in Poliça have embraced

the transition with a positive attitude. "Ben and I both play Roland TD-50s now," says Christopherson, "because Poliça wanted to make a fully electronic album for once. The experience has been, frankly, a blast." Both drummers say they're still able to play with their own personal style, countering the argument that electronic kits limit a player's feel.

"We had to change a lot of things about how we approach playing," says Christopherson regarding working together as a duo, "things like blast beats and cymbal grabs. But the challenge has been really fun. The dynamic range is much bigger with two drummers. It gives us a lot of freedom to go very quiet and minimal if we want, or to hit it super hard together. Playing with Ben is incredibly fun because he's able to play a lot of different feels and fills that I cannot do myself, but it feels like they're coming from me since they are coming from *us*." Meanwhile, Ivascu jokes, "The most challenging part for me has been dealing with Drew's overall enthusiasm for everything—but I've overcome/embraced it."

Whether a band has one, two, or more drummers in the lineup, driving for hours on tour and not getting proper sleep remain a challenge. "It's important to take nights off from the party hang and to get sleep," says Christopherson. "I have a hard time



remembering even those two simple things. But spending a night in and watching movies with your bandmates is an excellent way [to maintain balance].”

Regarding Polica’s collective warm-up routine, Christopherson says, “We slap the insides of our legs like sumo wrestlers to get the blood flowing right before we go onstage,” while Ben says he utilizes his exercises from high school drumline to loosen his wrists.

Along with his own musical projects, Christopherson runs the record label Totally Gross National Product with Olson, representing artists such as Lizzo and Jason Feathers, among others. “Touring can be a motivating and inspiring time if you let it be,” says Christopherson. “It provides an opportunity to discover new music.

Totally Gross National Product is actually a little more on my radar when I’m traveling and playing [music]. The downtime at the venue before and after soundcheck is a great time to have my face in a computer.”

Admirably, Christopherson makes a point while on tour to go out on the floor and watch at least some of the other bands on the bill, if not their whole sets. Besides acclimating him to the volume and feel of the venue, “It helps to ground me in the place and time,” he says. “For a group of Wisconsin thirty-somethings to finally get to go to Europe often, and to see places like Singapore and Finland, we try to be as grateful as we can be for the opportunity.”

Also on the Road

Thomas Hedlund and **Christian Augustin** with Cult of Luna /// **Kofi Baker** with the Music of Cream /// **Cindy Blackman Santana** with Santana /// **John McEntire** with the Sea and Cake /// **Brad Morgan** with Drive-By Truckers
/// **Debbie Knox-Hewson** with Nasty Cherry /// **Justin Brown** with Thundercat /// **Michael Cavanagh** and **Eric Moore**
with King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard /// **Atom Willard** with Against Me! /// **Kris Myers** and **Andy Farag** with
Umphrey’s McGee /// **Christopher Guanlao** with Silversun Pickups /// **B.B. Borden** with the Marshall Tucker Band



Mobius's Adrien Brunet

Being from one of the most exotic locales on earth proves to be a helpful background for a drummer interested in exploring the cross-sections of world music styles—even one with a heavy-music heart.



World-music metal? Sure, why not? The music of French progressive metal band Mobius has a lot going on—in addition to the chugga-chug riffs in the djent-style heavy passages, there are odd-time excursions, atmospheric synths, and epic vocal displays from female singer Heli Andrea. But there's also the significant presence of a Middle Eastern flavor throughout their new record, *Kala* (the Sanskrit word for "time").

The album is also a showcase for drummer Adrien Brunet, who brings a developed polyrhythmic vocabulary and good ol'-fashioned metal chops to Mobius's eclectic sound stew.

On "Abhinivesha," Brunet throws in some killer Meshuggah-esque kick patterns before things give way to tabla-sounding percussion and a rocking konnakol/drums section. Big tom flurries end the

song before you've had a chance to process all that you've heard.

Brunet has done his homework, and it's his unique background and attention to detail that make Mobius stand out in a sea of cypoccat metal groups.

MD: How did all the ethnic sounds enter into the music your band makes?

Adrien: I was born in Reunion Island, a French island next to Madagascar. The important thing when you grow up as musicians in a tropical island in the Indian Ocean is the cultural background. Metal and rock are very underground styles in this kind of place, but for those people who want more exotic and ethnic stuff, it's paradise. You can find a lot of influences in our culture, especially

that of China, India, Africa, and Europe. So you have a lot of jazz, reggae, ethnic music, as well as traditional music like zouk, maloya, and sega. Unconsciously I think it inspires us in our creations.

MD: What were you listening to as you grew up?

Adrien: One day, Guillaume Deveaux, my buddy who plays keyboards in Mobius, came home with some Nightwish and Dream Theater DVDs, and that was the beginning of a long journey with progressive styles and metal prog. The drummers who inspired me are Mike Portnoy, Gavin Harrison, Dennis Chambers, Jojo Mayer, Matt Garstka, and Benny Greb. They all have the perfect balance between technique and musicality and their own styles.

MD: Are odd times a natural thing for the musicians in Mobius? Do you practice them?

Adrien: Odd times are a standard in prog music. I listened to a lot of progressive music in my life—jazz fusion, rock prog, metal prog—and it feels natural for me to incorporate odd times into our music. And if you add in the fact that we love djent, Meshuggah, and ethnic music with a lot of polyrhythms, you can be sure that's something we want to share with people.

I have no specific routine for practicing odd times, but I place a lot of importance on visualizing and writing things. It helps me to work on these concepts. I think that covering Dream Theater songs in the past helped me familiarize myself with odd times as well.

For polyrhythms, it's more a work of coordination and independence. I'll isolate the hands or feet and work on that with the metronome, and then add limbs one by one. For example, I'll work on kick pattern first, and then add a ride lead. When you're comfortable with those, you combine everything and then groove on it.

MD: What exercises do you use for working on hand speed and foot technique?

Adrien: I'm not a big technician; I focus on dynamics control more than speed. But I take a pattern, write it out, and, again, work on it with a metronome. I also work on paradiddles, singles and doubles, double paradiddles, etc.

For foot technique, my approach is more to focus on different rhythmic flows. For example, with my metronome on 90 bpm, my hands do a simple beat and my feet do different things underneath, like quarter notes, 8th notes, triplets, 16th notes, quintuplets, sextuplets, etc. When I'm comfortable and I can groove with that, I

increase tempo in 5 bpm increments.

MD: What about incorporating the ethnic and Middle Eastern flavors into your drumming? There's konnakol and all kinds of stuff.

Adrien: I'm a big fan of world music or ethnic jazz music like Hadouk Trio, Tigran Hamasyan, or the different projects of Trilok Gurtu. I also like the work of Danny Carey in Tool and Sean Reinert in Cynic, with toms and jazzy touches, and it inspires me to create sort of tribal rhythms.

We wanted to compose an album with

big Indian influences, but we extended our concepts and sounds to the entire Middle East. So you can find sitar, duduk, or Mongolian voice in our songs. For the konnakol part in "Abhivesha," I took the accents of the principal pattern and added specific syllables in 16th notes for Heli [to sing]. Then with the band, you have the pattern on snare with guitar, my kick beat on quarter notes with bass, and the synth does half notes.

Ilya Stemkovsky



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The Flower Kings' Mirkko DeMaio



The Flower Kings—the name alone conjures images of prog-rock luminaries like Genesis and Yes, who in the late '60s planted the seeds for all the fantasy-laden symphonic rock to come in the following decades.

Swedish prog ensemble the Flower Kings formed in 1994, and have since morphed several times, with their latest reincarnation coming in the past year or two. Wielding an arsenal of chops, Italian drummer Mirkko DeMaio was recruited by TFK founder, composer, guitarist, and vocalist Roine Stolt in time to record the band's 2019 release, *Waiting for Miracles*, a melodic collection with sociopolitical lyrical content and extended musical passages that give DeMaio room to groove and stretch.

DeMaio had been in touch with the Flower Kings' leader since 2010, and finally, in 2018, Stolt offered the drummer the opportunity to join the band on tour in South America and Europe—with no audition. "It was weird to not be auditioned," DeMaio recalls. "I asked Roine, 'Is it okay if I send you a video of me playing some of the tracks from the set list, so you'll know what my playing will be like?' He accepted, and after watching the video, he said something like, 'Okay, now I'm a hundred and one percent sure.'" [laughs]

DeMaio tells *MD* that he'd been a Flower Kings fan for years, and had admired Stolt's contributions to the prog-rock supergroup Transatlantic. "Playing TFK's music is a pure artistic experience," says DeMaio. "It's something I've been missing in my musical journey. Too often, we're too focused on the commercial side of music, which is important, but we tend to forget about the joy of playing creatively, from the heart."

For the recording of *Waiting for Miracles*, DeMaio added a few elements to his drumkit, such as bells, chimes, stacks, small China cymbals, a gong drum, Octobans, blocks, a tambourine, and timbales, but he's quick to

point out that the sound that's most crucial to him is the ride cymbal. "I spend a lot of time playing the ride cymbal in TFK," he says, "so it has to feel good and sound right to my ears. It has to be dark and dry, medium weight, and not too washy, characteristics that I've found in the Istanbul Agop Special Edition Jazz ride and Signature Medium ride, both 22."

DeMaio also singles out his custom Oriollo snare drum. "It's a 4.5x14 hammered, spun-brass shell with die-cast hoops," he says, "and it gives me whip-like attack without sacrificing any body or warmth. I also ask for Remo drumheads on my kits. They sound perfect to my ears and always give me that classic, punchy tone that I love.

"I also keep different-sized drumsticks in my bag," DeMaio adds. "I often start with a Vic Firth 5B, then move to a 55B, and end up playing a 2B or larger. It's not a great feeling when you are playing a 55B and it starts to feel like a 7A in your hands.

"I have my Tama Multi Tool with me wherever I go as well," DeMaio continues. "It's very helpful on tour, in the studio—everywhere." Also both on the road and in the studio, DeMaio says he habitually plays rudiments on a pad for twenty minutes to warm up. "Eventually I start to hit the drums to gain more confidence," he explains. "On tour I also stretch my arms, legs, and back, and do the same twenty minutes of rudiments on the practice pad or a pillow, then I try to keep my hands and body warm. That happens mostly in the beginning of the tour. Then, concert after concert, as I feel more loose, I spend less time practicing on the pad and focus more on my inner calm, maybe tracking in my mind a map of the performance.

"Nutrition-wise, I avoid any kind of meal within two hours of the performance, as the digestion process would make me feel hazy. If I get hungry, I just eat some fresh vegetables or low-carb fruits.

"Finally, I bring my gym clothes [on the road]," DeMaio adds, "and when I have an hour or more, I'll work out in a gym near the venue. I also bring extra Vic Firth drumsticks, because fans always want some memorabilia, and I hate to disappoint them. And it's always good to have some psychedelic shirts to wear for the shows!" [laughs]

Mike Haid

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Independent Drum Lab (aka INDē) is an American company founded in 2015 by drummer/designer/engineer Josh Allen, who got his start in the industry reimagining hardware technology for one of the most iconic brands in the States. With an emphasis on honesty and integrity, Allen now handcrafts professional-grade kits and snares at his own shop in Michigan that are meant to produce full, open tones, are lightweight and easy to tune, and are competitively priced. To provide live/touring drummers with additional durability, Allen developed a nearly indestructible hand-applied finish, called RESoArmor, which protects the shell from damage better than a plastic wrap, but without dampening shell resonance. This finish is available in a nearly limitless combination of colors, swirls, and sparkles. For this review we were sent a three-piece RESoArmor shell pack with a 14x22 bass drum and 9x13 and 16x16 toms in Solid Burgundy Sparkle (\$2,699).

Specs and Techs

INDē's proprietary ultra-thin maple shells are 4.3 mm thick and feature two thin plies with vertical grain and three thicker plies with horizontal grain. The vertical plies allow for easy transfer of vibration from top to bottom, thus improving the shell's sensitivity and resonance. The horizontal plies give the shell the necessary stiffness to remain perfectly round under drumhead tension. The bearing edges are rounded to maximize shell-to-drumhead contact, which adds punch and fatness.

The toms came with 2.3 mm triple-flange steel rims, and the bass drum hoops are maple with matching inlays. INDē's proprietary arch lugs and bass drum claws are designed to have minimal mass and no tone-dampening components, like plastic inserts and rubber gaskets. The floor tom legs and bass drum spurs are attached to the shells via sleek, small BR2 tunable suspension brackets, which allow for maximum sustain as well as sturdy positioning. These brackets can also be adjusted to tweak the amount of resonance to find each drum's specific sweet spot.

Any combination of Aquarian drumheads is offered. Our review kit came outfitted with single-ply Texture Coated Power Dot tom batters and single-ply Texture Coated resonants. The bass drum had a Force I Clear batter, which is a single-ply head with an internal muffling ring around the perimeter. The front head is a smooth-white Regulator, which has a 7" circle of dampening on the underside.

Style and Sound

Given the traditional sizes and old-school dotted tom heads on this RESoArmor kit, I expected that it would be most at home at higher tunings, à la classic rock legends John Bonham and Mitch Mitchell. While it sounded great tuned high, it also sounded awesomely full yet punchy in the middle and lower registers. There was airiness in the tone that pervaded at any tuning, even when the heads were cranked beyond the threshold of choking on most ply-shell drums. Yet with barely any tension on the heads at all, the drums somehow still managed to produce pure, focused notes.

The decay of these drums was super fast but not overly abrupt, so they spoke with a full tone that died down quickly to allow space for subsequent notes to articulate clearly. This experience was consistent at all tunings, even in the medium range, which is often plagued by excessive sympathetic shell resonance. I didn't need to add any dampening to the RESoArmor toms at any tuning, and the kick had a huge, full voice that was equally punchy and boomy. Tuned medium or medium-low, this 14x22 drum could easily fill a midsized room. If you prefer a more focused, chesty thump, simply toss a towel or small pillow inside, and you're ready to roll.

As a huge fan of vintage and modern drums, I find it incredibly inspiring to see a new, forward-thinking company like INDē



embracing the classic sounds and aesthetics of drum manufacturing from the past while introducing a slew of improvements and innovations to push the instrument



into the future. Check out more about the Independent Drum Lab, including Allen's science-based theories on drum shell and

hardware design, tuning, and more, at indedrum.com. You can also check out how this kit sounds across the entire tuning range

at moderndrummer.com.
Michael Dawson

Gretsch

5.5x14 Brooklyn Standard Snare

A classic maple/poplar option designed to be one drum you can't leave home without.

Gretsch recently teamed up with endorsing artist Mike Johnston to develop a snare drum that would be extremely versatile, have a wide dynamic range, and be able to produce a variety of useful tones at different tunings. Johnston was also adamant about keeping this model at a modest price point (\$499) that would be accessible by students and players looking to purchase their first pro-level instrument. Enter the new Brooklyn Standard snare.

Specs

The soul of the Brooklyn Standard drum is a 5.5x14 6-ply maple/poplar shell. This shell is great for versatility because the depth strikes a happy medium between the super-responsive nature of a shallower drum and the throatier/beefier tones of a deeper shell. Plus the combination of hard maple and soft poplar gives you a full, open, and powerful sound that's a bit warmer and more focused than a drum made from 100-percent maple.

To amp up this drum's sensitivity, Gretsch added wider forty-two-strand wires and utilized sharp double-45-degree bearing edges instead of the company's traditional 30-degree profile, which tends to produce a punchier tone on snares. To help focus the overtones without eliminating too much resonance, Gretsch employed 3 mm double-flanged 302 hoops, which are a nod to the rims that the company used on all of its drums until the mid 1950s. These hoops are a bit more ridged than thinner triple-flange options, but not as stiff and heavy as die-cast.

Other hardware appointments include eight chromed brass tube lugs, a quick-release Lightning throw-off that has the tension knob on the opposite side from the lever, plastic washers on the tension rods, and a classic Gretsch internal tone control system that allows you to apply varying degrees of dampening to the batter head via a large round knob.

The drum is painted in Satin Black Metallic, which gives the Brooklyn Standard a cool yet universal look that will blend well with any drumset finish. Gretsch Permatone single-ply heads (by Remo USA) are included, and each drum is adorned with a black round badge and an internal ID label signed by Johnston.

Sound

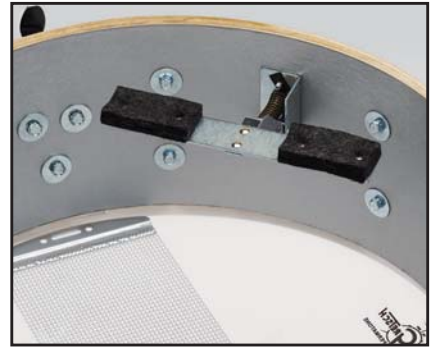
Before I dive deep into the sound of the USA-made Brooklyn Standard snare, it's important to state that you'd be hard-pressed to find a better deal for a drum of this caliber. At just \$499, it's almost a no-brainer. Okay, now that that's out of the way, let's assess its performance.

I began our test by tuning the batter head medium-high and the bottom head very high. I kept the dampener disengaged so I could see what we're dealing with in terms of overtone and sustain versus attack and snare response. The wide forty-two strand snares helped control some of the overtones by dampening the bottom head more than a thinner set would, and they provided a wide bed of white noise beneath each stroke. For some applications, such as



quiet symphonic or light jazz, the additional snare response might be too much. But in any situation requiring backbeats, they allow for greater options for dialing in the desired amount of natural sizzle.

The maple/poplar shell had a full, open voice with a nice, thick attack. The overtones were plentiful yet tuneful. And the internal dampener allowed me to go from wide-open and ringy to



completely dead and focused in the matter of a few turns of the tension knob.

Tighter tunings brought out more attack and crispness, with drier overtone, while lower tunings had tons of tone and chesty punch. The only weak point in this drum's tuning range was in the super-low, gushy register; it just didn't have enough character to my ear

to be my first choice for that vibe. But when tuned to pretty much any other tension, especially medium-high and up, this Brooklyn Standard would be a reliable and dependable go-to for just about any application. Check out a video demo of this drum across the entire tuning range at modern drummer.com.

Michael Dawson

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Meinl

Artist Concept Super Stack and 16" Sand and 8" Crasher Hats

Specialized pairings designed with two of today's most distinct and discerning players.

It's been thirty years since Meinl first teamed up with one of its endorsing artists to develop some signature models. While that original collaboration, the Tri-Tonal series, has since been discontinued, the company went on to work with other top players to develop an array of rides, crashes, effects, and hi-hats, most

of which are still in production today. Recently, award-winning drummers Thomas Lang, Benny Greb, Anika Nilles, Matt Garstka, Luke Holland, and Matt Halpern were brought into Meinl's R&D department to create some specialized stacks and auxiliary hi-hats. This month, we're checking out Lang and Greb's new offerings.

18"/18" Super Stack

Top clinician Thomas Lang is a longtime Meinl endorser and has collaborated with the company several times over the years on different signature products, like the Generation X Filter Chinas. The most recent concoction, the Classics Custom Super Stack, comprises an 18" bottom cymbal with ten holes cut into the bow and an 18" China top that has large holes cut in the bow and small holes cut into the flanged edge. Both cymbals are brilliantly finished and are made from B10 bronze, which is inherently bright and loud.

Designed to be used with both cymbals positioned upside-down, the Super Stack offers a range of tones and textures depending on where you strike and how

tightly the cymbals are held together. For loud, aggressive, midrange barks, you can strike the China on the flange with the shoulder of the stick. Softer playing on the bow or edge with the tip of the stick elicits slightly subtler yet still trashy tones. The length of the decay can be adjusted from a super-tight and focused "zap" to a more sizzling rattle via thumbscrew tension. If your musical situation requires something that's super bright, fast, and cutting, the Super Stack is for you.

8" Crasher Hats and 16" Sand Hats

Benny Greb has also been developing signature products with Meinl for a number of years, with his first creation being the popular 12"/14" Generation X Trash Hats.

More general-use Byzance Vintage Sand rides, crashes, and 14" hi-hats followed. Now the Greb collection includes oversized 16" Sand Hats and tiny 8" Crasher Hats.

The 16" Sand Hats comprise a heavy B20 bottom that's traditionally hammered and narrowly lathed and then sandblasted on top to give the cymbal a hazy appearance and a slightly muted tone. The top cymbal is very thin and flexible and is lathed on the underside only. The top has a raw finish that's also sandblasted. These hi-hats parallel the crispy, articulate tone of the popular 14" version but have a much lower pitch, softer feel, and wider foot chick. They have plenty of presence to cut through denser pop, fusion, and electronic tracks while occupying a lower register that allows





them to sink deeper within the mix, rather than sitting on top.

The 8" Crasher Hats, on the other hand, are designed to produce high-pitched, articulate sounds that are a cross between a controlled hi-hat, a crasher, and a shaker. There are four pieces to the Crasher Hats: a raw B20 Byzance bottom, a raw unlabeled middle cymbal, a B8 bronze disc, and a Byzance top. These cymbals are to be used on an auxiliary hi-hat stand but without using the bottom felt and tension screw on the clutch. Played quietly, the Crasher Hats have a subtle cabasa-type tone that blends perfectly with soft ghost notes on the snare and foot chicks on the regular hi-hats. Hit more aggressively, the Crasher Hats have a bit more bite but without any high overtones or lingering sustain. Check out some recent footage of Benny from the past year to hear this unique combo used to great effect. They're incredibly fun and inspiring.

We will take a look at the rest of the Artist Concept stacks in an upcoming issue. For now, check out video demos of these three models at moderndrummer.com.

Michael Dawson



The four pieces of the Crasher Hats include a raw bottom (right) and a B8 disc placed between the two top cymbals.



Social Distortion's Dave Hidalgo Jr.

Dave Hidalgo Jr. joined Ludwig in 2010 shortly after becoming a full-time member of legendary punk band Social Distortion. "It's pretty rad to become a part of something that you grew up listening to and being a fan of," says Hidalgo. "It's surreal."

At the center of Dave's kit is a Black Beauty snare, but every once in a while the drummer will switch it out for a Copperphonic or Supraphonic model. "They have similar sounds, with one being a little brighter," he says. "It's weird, but on occasion the Black Beauty gets worn out and stops sounding as vibrant as it once did. I'll change the heads and everything, but it just doesn't sound right." That's when Dave will set the Black Beauty aside and use the one of the others. He says that after the Black Beauty sits for a couple of weeks, it's back to normal. "It's crazy, but it's like it gets tired and needs a break."

Hidalgo says he doesn't like everything too close to him, so he keeps his setup spread out a bit. He also tunes for bigger tones. "When I was with Suicidal Tendencies, it was tighter sounding," he says. "But the sizes were evolving to something bigger. The first time I used a 24" kick, it was the best thing ever. Then I moved up to a 26". I don't think I'll be able to play a 22" again."

Drums: Ludwig Vistalite in smoke grey

- A.** 6.5x14 Black Beauty snare with tube lugs and Gibraltar Lug Locks (6.5x14 Supraphonic and Copperphonic are placed on the riser as backups)
- B.** 10x14 tom on a snare stand
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 14x26 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1.** 15" K Light hi-hats
- 2.** 18" K EFX crash
- 3.** 19" K crash
- 4.** 22" Avedis ride
- 5.** 19" K Custom Hybrid crash

Heads: Remo Emperor X snare batter and

- Ambassador Hazy snare side; Emperor Coated tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants; Powerstroke P3 bass drum batter (muffled with Evans EQ pad) and Ludwig Weather Master clear front with a Dynamo-protected 10" hole

Accessories: Tama Rhythm Watch metronome

Hardware: DW 6000 series flat-base cymbal stands without wingnuts and 5000 series bass drum pedal, hi-hat, and snare stands; Pork Pie throne

Drumsticks: Vater 5B and various brushes and mallets





5

4

3

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A

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HALL OF FAME Nicko McBrain



PAST HALL OF FAME WINNERS

2019: Dave Grohl	2012: Phil Collins	2005: Stewart Copeland	1998: Ringo Starr	1991: Art Blakey	1984: Steve Gadd
2018: Clyde Stubblefield	2011: Jim Chapin	2004: Mike Portnoy	1997: Terry Bozzio	1990: Bill Bruford	1983: Neil Peart
2017: Peter Erskine	2010: Hal Blaine	2003: Simon Phillips	1996: Vinnie Colaiuta	1989: Carl Palmer	1982: Keith Moon
2016: Vic Firth	2009: Mitch Mitchell	2002: Steve Smith	1995: Elvin Jones	1988: Joe Morello	1981: John Bonham
2015: Ian Paice	2008: Ginger Baker	2001: Dennis Chambers	1994: Larrie Londin	1987: Billy Cobham	1980: Buddy Rich
2014: Carmine Appice	2007: Jack DeJohnette	2000: Dave Weckl	1993: Jeff Porcaro	1986: Tony Williams	1979: Gene Krupa
2013: Bernard Purdie	2006: Charlie Watts	1999: Roy Haynes	1992: Max Roach	1985: Louie Bellson	



ALL-AROUND

Vinnie Colaiuta

- 2. Steve Smith
- 3. Gergo Borlai
- 4. Gavin Harrison
- 5. Rashid Williams

STUDIO

Vinnie Colaiuta

- 2. Ash Soan
- 3. Aaron Sterling
- 4. Matt Chamberlain
- 5. Victor Indrizzo

Michael Corral



LIVE

Todd Sucherman

- 2. Aquiles Priester
- 3. Jay Weinberg
- 4. Matt Halpern
- 5. Mike Portnoy

CLINICIAN/ EDUCATOR

Todd Sucherman

- 2. Thomas Lang
- 3. Mike Johnston
- 4. Scott Pellegrum
- 5. Dom Famularo

Mark Schieferholz

WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS
WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS

ROCK

Jay Weinberg

- 2. Todd Sucherman
- 3. Aric Improta
- 4. Tucker Rule
- 5. Mike Portnoy

Alex Solca



JAZZ

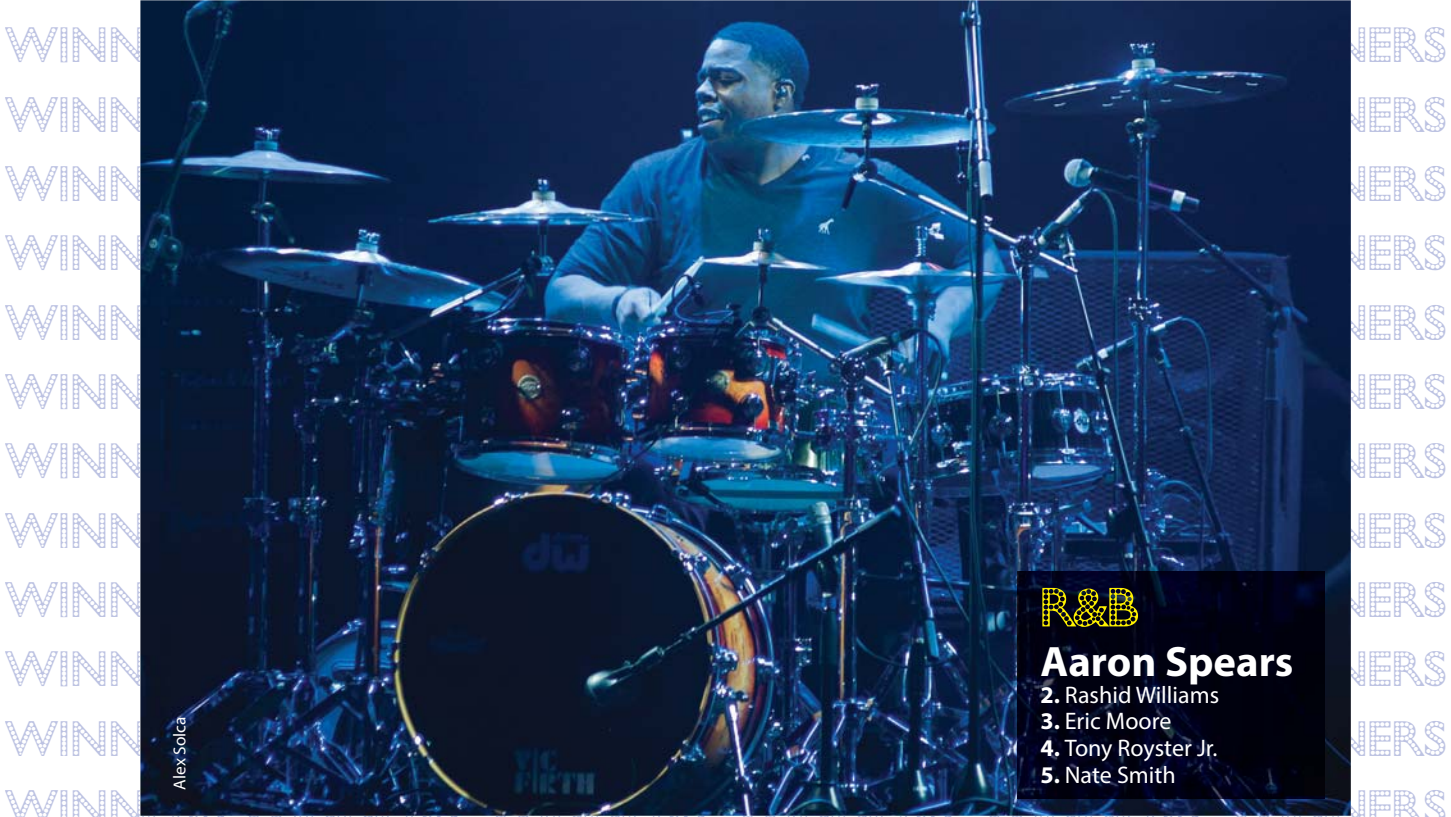
Mark Guiliana

- 2. Jonathan Barber
- 3. Antonio Sánchez
- 4. Brian Blade
- 5. Marcus Gilmore

Alex Solca



WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS



Alex Solca

R&B

Aaron Spears

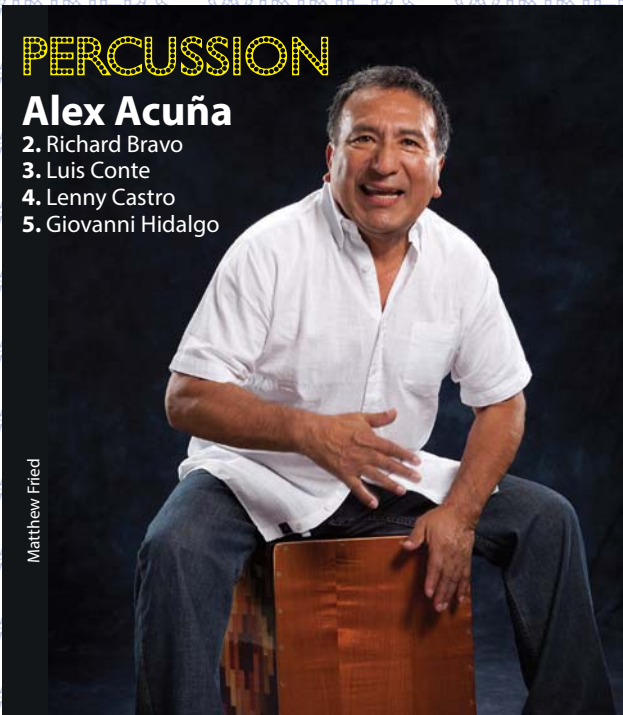
- 2. Rashid Williams
- 3. Eric Moore
- 4. Tony Royster Jr.
- 5. Nate Smith

PERCUSSION

Alex Acuña

- 2. Richard Bravo
- 3. Luis Conte
- 4. Lenny Castro
- 5. Giovanni Hidalgo

Matthew Fried

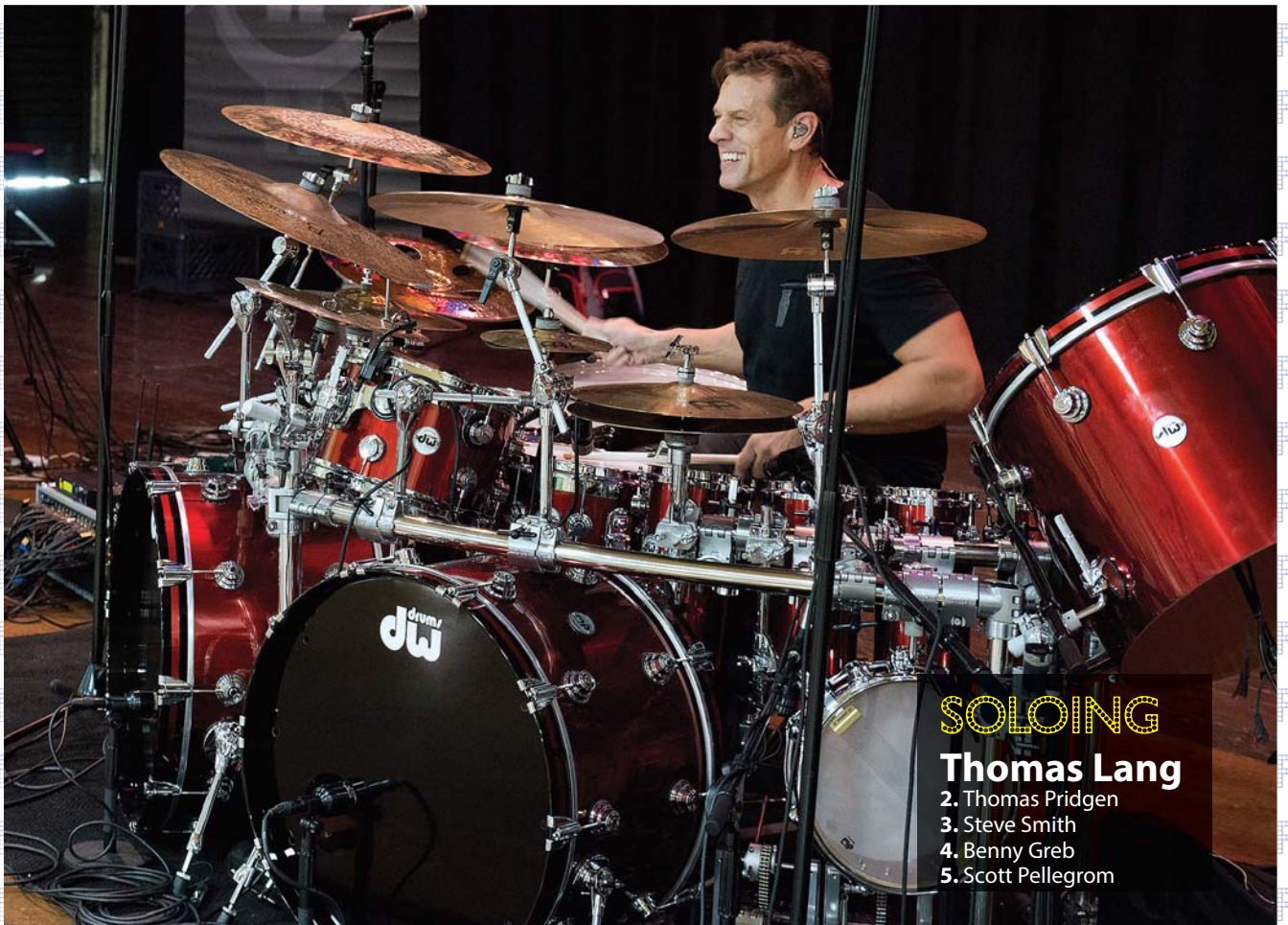


UP & COMING

JD Beck

- 2. Steve Lyman
- 3. Josh Roberts
- 4. Raghav Mehrotra
- 5. David Cola

Alex Solca



SOLOING

Thomas Lang

- 2. Thomas Pridgen
- 3. Steve Smith
- 4. Benny Greb
- 5. Scott Pellegrom

APP/ONLINE INSTRUCTION

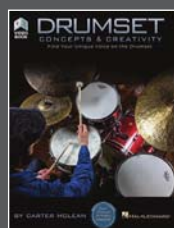
MikesLessons.com (Mike Johnston)



- 2. Todd Sucherman's Rock Drumming Masterclass for Drummeo
- 3. Dave Elitch's Getting Out of Your Own Way
- 4. Stanton Moore's Drum Academy
- 5. Thomas Lang's Drum Universe

METHOD BOOK

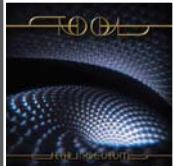
Drumset Concepts & Creativity by Carter McLean



- 2. Jost Nickel's Snare Book by Jost Nickel
- 3. 10 Snare Drum Etudes for Improvisation by Eric Binder
- 4. The Paradiddle Book by Maksym Deomin
- 5. The Book of Rhythm by Blake Fleming

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

Tool, Fear Inoculum (Danny Carey)



- 2. Periphery, *Periphery IV: Hail Stan* (Matt Halpern)
- 3. Mark Guiliana, *Beat Music! Beat Music! Beat Music!* (Mark Guiliana)
- 4. Thomas Lang, *ProgPop* (Thomas Lang)
- 5. Antoine Fafard, *Borromean Odyssey* (Todd Sucherman)

GROOVE

Nate Smith

- 2. Eric Moore
- 3. Steve Jordan
- 4. Stanton Moore
- 5. Benny Greb/Ash Soan



John Fell

DOUBLE BASS

Aquiles Priester

- 2. Thomas Lang
- 3. Jay Weinberg
- 4. Todd Sucherman
- 5. Virgil Donati



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STUDIO

👑 VINNIE COLAIUTA
ASH SOAN
AARON STERLING
MATT CHAMBERLAIN
VICTOR INDRIZZO

UP & COMING
STEVE LYMAN

JAZZ

👑 MARK GUILIANA
ANTONIO SANCHEZ
MARCUS GILMORE

GROOVE

STEVE JORDAN
STANTON MOORE
BENNY GREB/ASH SOAN

LIVE

👑 TODD SUCHERMAN
MIKE PORTNOY

ROCK

TODD SUCHERMAN
ARIC IMPROTA
TUCKER RULE
MIKE PORTNOY

PERCUSSION

RICHARD BRAVO
LOUIS CONTE
LENNY CASTRO

ALL-AROUND

👑 VINNIE COLAIUTA
STEVE SMITH
GERGO BORLAI
GAVIN HARRISON

CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR

👑 TODD SUCHERMAN
THOMAS LANG
SCOTT PELLEGRAM

R&B

👑 AARON SPEARS
TONY ROYSTER JR.

SOLOING

👑 THOMAS LANG
STEVE SMITH
BENNY GREB
SCOTT PELLEGRAM

DOUBLE BASS

THOMAS LANG
TODD SUCHERMAN
VIRGIL DONATI

METHOD BOOK

👑 CARTER MCLEAN, DRUMSET CONCEPTS & CREATIVITY
JOST NICKEL, JOST NICKEL'S SNARE BOOK

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

MARK GULIANA, BEAT MUSIC! BEAT MUSIC! BEAT MUSIC! (MARK GUILIANA)
THOMAS LANG, PROGPOP (THOMAS LANG)
ANTOINE FAFARD, BORROMEAN ODYSSEY (TODD SUCHERMAN)

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DAVE ELITCH'S GETTING OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY
STANTON MOORE'S DRUM ACADEMY
THOMAS LANG'S DRUM UNIVERSE

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👑 = CATEGORY WINNER



Wilco's Glenn Kotche

Story by Adam Budofsky

Photos by Jessica Alexander

For a drum journalist, it was the greatest unboxing ever. Well, it *would* have been, if the kit that Wilco drum tech Ashwin Deepankar was about to unveil was ours to keep. Of course it wasn't. It belonged to Glenn Kotche, who in an hour or so was about to strike, rub, scrape, stomp, flick, smack, caress, and thump it to astounding effect in service of Wilco's deep and daring setlist, to a rapturous Radio City Music Hall audience.

Modern Drummer had been invited by Kotche to check out his gear pre-show, and the anticipation as Ashwin walked us across the famous stage to the kit, which was hidden under large tarps, was intense. Glenn had previously shared some of its details with us, and we'd heard the tracks from Wilco's new album, *Ode to Joy*, finding it brimming with bracing drumming performances and kaleidoscopic percussion sounds, some familiar, some completely fresh.

Among the items we were most excited about seeing was a marching machine, a relatively obscure percussion instrument designed to mimic the sound of boots marching, which Colin Campbell, Deepankar, and Kotche had made foot-operable so that it could be played within a full drum groove. Yeah, it's as cool as it sounds. Maybe even cooler. And it's merely one of the many implements Kotche used to bring a unique flavor to each song on *Ode to Joy*, which, from a drumming standpoint, may represent the most maximal approach to minimalism we've ever heard. Think Velvet Underground classics like "Pale Blue Eyes," "Venus in Furs," or "I'm Set Free," but arranged by Max Roach's M'Boom ensemble. Kotche's approach essentially thumbs its nose at the "Less is more/More is less" argument, replacing it with a more honest and exciting declaration of "Whatever it takes... as long as it's musical."

The lengths Kotche will go to elicit the exact sounds in his head are mythical among *Modern Drummer* readers, some of whom still have his

performance at the 2006 MD Fest burned in their memory banks. Since that time he's recorded half a dozen more Wilco studio albums, as well as a bevy of other artists' recordings (see the music sidebar on page 42), all of which have allowed him to further explore sonic and rhythmic reaches. He's also continued working with his duo with Darin Gray, On Fillmore, and with modern classical ensembles, dance groups, and other non-rock projects, further widening his total-percussion approach.

But back to that unboxing—or, perhaps more accurately, unveiling. Beside his gorgeous new Sonor SQ2 Maple drumset, we gaze upon a dazzling set of commercial and homemade striking implements, multiple unique shakers that attach to his hi-hat pull rod, tom "treatments," mounted percussion, electronics, and accessories. The urge to leap onto the throne and start playing is difficult to control.

Perhaps more important than the instruments themselves, though, is the choreography that Kotche has developed to play the parts from *Ode to Joy*. As we'll hear more about below, Glenn employed significant overdubbing, and only figured out how he was going to approach the layered percussion live after the album was completed. You could spend a half hour just describing the various grips the drummer uses to get the job done, or the dancelike movements he uses while bringing Wilco's beloved songs to life. But of course it's better to hear Kotche tell it....



Glenn: I started figuring out how to do these songs live last August. I'd make videos and send them to Ashwin, like, "Here's how this beat is going to go." Because everything on the record is multilayered, I had to make a composite part to play live, and figure out ways to incorporate the percussion into the snare and bass drum parts. So I'd send him ideas, and then we'd get together and he'd modify or make things that replicated sounds from the record.

MD: This was after the writing and recording phases.

Glenn: Right. [Singer/songwriter] Jeff Tweedy and I got together at Wilco's studio, the Loft, for a couple of weeks in December [2018]. He'd play a song and I'd lay down some ideas. I basically had carte blanche to do what I do.

Typically the way we'd start is, he'd have a couple drum machines going through his pedals, a pulse or some kind of part, and we'd use that as a guide that I would play to, maybe a bass drum part for him to create his guitar part over, and then I'd layer from there. And then everyone came in at the end of January, February, and added all their parts to it.

MD: And then there's the challenge of how you're going to play it all live.

Glenn: Yes. That came about in the summer. We hadn't really played in eighteen months. We did a tour in Europe in June, but we weren't really doing any new songs. We did do a couple at our festival, Solid Sound, but those we just kind of worked out; the parts weren't necessarily what I'm playing now.

MD: Did every song involve some sort of planning out in terms of recreating the recorded versions?

Glenn: Yup. And it was surprising, too, because there were a couple that I'd procrastinated on, thinking, "This is easy; it's just a pulse," but then I'd realize, "Oh, no, it's next to impossible!"

One of the most fun things for me to do professionally is to try to replicate these parts. It's a challenge. I mean, I don't *need* to go as far as I do; no one would really know or care if that little tambourine part was missing. It's more for me and the guys in the band, because if it sounds like the record, it feels good. I think it's nice for the audience, too.

MD: The multilayered drums on the record help put an individualistic stamp on each song. Even after repeated listens, you're still...

Glenn: ...finding those layers, yeah.

MD: Give us an example of how multilayering can result in playing challenges.



Glenn: On *Schmilco* [2016], for instance, on the tune "We Aren't the World," it just felt good to put the overdubbed tambourine accents on the "and" of 1 and the "and" of 3, and when it came time to play it live, I thought, "I can do that with my left foot by putting the jingles on the hi-hat." But like most drummers, my whole life I've played the hi-hat on 2 and 4, and just that little change can make it so much more challenging—it's just not a thing most drummers are necessarily used to doing. But if you change up one little element, it can become really interesting.

MD: You're challenging yourself in an atypical way, not like if you were trying to play the most complex fill. It's a different way of getting off.

Glenn: Right. And I do get off that way, too, but a lot of times it just doesn't fly. I'm part

of a six-piece band. I need to leave space for people, and anything super flashy and busy doesn't seem to fit in lyrically or in the character of the music.

MD: How about some examples from *Ode to Joy*?

Glenn: With this album I also tried to avoid any clear-cut backbeats. That's why I didn't play "beats" on the record; every part was done individually. Take the first song, "Bright Leaves." It's just low, high, low, high, but when I'm playing the low note I'm playing a high-pitched maraca with it, and when I play the snare drum, I'm playing a bass drum with it. I'm trying to make everything more even.

We set out to try *not* to make a rock record this time. We don't usually talk a lot before we make a record, but with this one we did. We wanted it to be personal. We wanted to hear fingers on strings, exhales,



the sound of sticks and brushes.... I wanted to avoid doing anything that has baggage. A beat instantly tells people to feel a certain way. If you play this [Glenn taps a standard rock beat on the table] and then this [plays a similar beat but with the accents upside down], they both work, but one's sort of happy, and the other's different. You're telling the listener how to feel, and it's great that we have that power, but I wanted to avoid that. So if it's going to have a backbeat, I want to obscure it. And when playing this live, it's tricky when the hi-hat's just playing on 1 and not on 3, and not on 2 and 4. And it's not even a hi-hat sound—it's sleigh bells or the things I've made out of bottle caps or bells or sea pods.

MD: There's a lot of space in the grooves on *Ode to Joy*.

Glenn: The parts are very simple, which

challenged me as a drummer a lot. This is why I'm so psyched we're doing this story now, because usually it's the flashier things that get attention. It's interesting: there's been more press for this record that's called me out individually than for any of the previous three or four records, and I played way simpler this time. I think it's because it's more distinctive since it's not beats but pulses. A relatively simple thing might be the spark that bends the tune a little one way so that people listen more closely, which might make them pay attention to the lyrics a bit more closely. And that's part of our job, putting on that lens.

MD: Let's drill down a little more on how the songs were recorded. There would be you and Jeff...

Glenn: ...and Tom Schick, our producer/engineer.

MD: And your kit is all set up.

Glenn: Right. But let me go on a small tangent for a minute. My approach was influenced by my time off. Last year I lived in Finland for eight months. My wife is a bioengineering professor at the University of Illinois in Chicago, and she got a Fulbright grant to do research in Finland. And right before that, I saw it as the culmination of a long time collaborating with classical groups and dance companies. I'd written three concerti in the previous year. One was for string orchestra and percussion, which I did at National Sawdust with the 1B1 orchestra from Norway. I also wrote the finals concerto piece for the TROMP percussion competition in the Netherlands. And then I wrote a concerto for the Chicago Youth Symphony, which I was the soloist with.

So I had done these big pieces, which required a lot of preparation, and then, boom, my family and I go to Finland. I'd subbed out anything that I'd booked, got the time off with Wilco, and was just taking care of the kids, with no musical responsibilities. We rented a beautiful house right outside of Helsinki, in a birch forest right by the sea. It was perfect. All I did was read and listen and practice.

Sonor delivered a kit, and after I set it up, I was like, okay, what am I going to practice? So I played a game with myself. This is super dorky, but I thought, what if no one ever heard me play drums again—if I never recorded again, never performed again, never played with another musician again? Would I still actually play? Yeah, I love the physical feeling of playing the drums and unlocking the coordination. So what would I play? I wouldn't work on my time—I wouldn't have to, because I wouldn't have anyone to play with. I wouldn't work on chops, because I'd have no one to impress. If there was no reason to play except for the joy of it, what would I do?

I was coming off playing those concertos, and I was like, I love creating these cool beats. I was investigating some new techniques, so when I was sitting on these bus rides—because we had no car—taking the kids to and from school, beats would pop in my head. Then I'd go to the kit and play these beats, which might not have any practical application, because they're not set to music.

It was just for the joy of exploring: what happens if I do this? And it was so much fun, because it was still composing, but instead of composing these eighteen-minute concerti, I was composing a five-second mini piece, but I was treating it not as a beat as your body's used to doing it, but more compositionally.

Kotche's Wilco Kit



Drums: Sonor SQ2 Maple '70s Blue Oyster finish

- 8x14 snare
- 8x12 tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 6x16 gong drum
- 14x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- Set of three low crotales (D#, E, F#, or two full octaves of crotales)
- 15" Special Dry hi-hats
- 16" Special Dry crash
- 20" Keropé ride
- 19" Special Dry crash
- 6" FX Bel (custom)
- 12" FX Spiral

Sticks, hand percussion, and accessories (from left on percussion table):

Promark Glenn Kotche Signature sticks, Promark prototype blue rubber drumset mallets, plastic cooking spatula, Promark prototype brown rubber drumset mallets, laminated cooking chopsticks, Glenn Kotche Threaded Dowel Rods with springs, Promark B300 Accent wire brushes, Promark B600 nylon brushes,

Promark TB6 Heavy wire brushes, Promark SD5 Hickory Light multipercussion sticks/mallets, Promark MT3 Shira Kashi Oak multipurpose felt mallets, out-of-the-drawer Crackshot leather mallets, Sonor wood clapper block, Index can shaker, Sonor large caxixi, Meinl small caxixi, Meinl fiberglass maraca, small bell shaker, four vintage Noah bell shakers, Nexus finger tape, Sonor drum key, hi-hat rod percussion stopper, cymbal sizzlers designed by Matthew Yeates

In stick bag, from left: Promark Cool Rods, Glenn Kotche threaded rods with springs, Promark prototype brown rubber drumset mallets, putty scrapers, Glenn-altered ping-pong shaker/Cool Rods, Promark SD7 Hickory Heavy multipercussion sticks/mallets, miscellaneous brushes, scrapers, and rubber-tipped sticks, out-of-the-drawer Crackshot leather mallets, Promark Nylon webbed brushes

Kit accessories from left: Meinl Sleigh bells; Zildjian FX Frying Pan, Bell Cymbal, and prototype Chevron Zilbell, vintage Indian hi-hat bells, Meinl THH1BK hi-hat tambourine, Upcycled Percussion with hi-hat clutch, Keplinger hi-hat jingles

(custom), mounted Korean shamen bells, Meinl mounted vibra-slap, hanging vintage bells, Meinl FX wood handheld waterfall effect (long), Meinl foot cabasa, Snareweight M80 White on snare and M1 White on toms, Meinl double-row 8" mounted wood tambourine, Meinl large back powder-coated tambourine, Roland SPD-SX sample pad (hidden in rack) with two BT-1 triggers mounted, 12", 14", and 16" Roots EQ Solid tone controls, Index 14" wood drumhead, hand-held marching machine designed by Colin Campbell, remote marching machine designed by Colin Campbell

Hardware: Sonor 600 series hi-hat and snare stands, 2000 series cymbal stands, and Giant Step bass drum pedal; Roc-N-Soc round throne

Heads: Evans G2 Coated snare batter and 300 snare side, G2 Coated tom batters and G1 Clear resonants, UV1 Coated gong drum batter, EMAD Coated bass drum batter and EQ3 NP Smooth White resonant

Mics: sE Electronics V Kick on bass drum, V Beat on toms, and V7 X on snare, V Beat on gong drum; Shure RPM181/C overheads and KSM137 on hi-hat



I was thinking about poetry, balancing, rhyming, feng shui... just comparing it to different things. Like, in Taoism, it's about light and dark. To me that's kick and snare, that two-tone thing that's existed since the beginning of drumming. In indigenous cultures you've always got the low sounds and high sounds. Except now we're not communicating to the next village, or to the soldiers on the front lines to attack.

My next solo project, which is happening later this year, is all based on those beats. But when I got to the studio with Wilco and the idea came up about not making an overt rock record, I thought, I've been doing nothing but beats, so I'm going to do no beats at all. [laughs] So that was my frame of mind getting into the studio with Jeff.

I set up a very large kit, but not to be played all at once. It was embarrassingly large. It had four elements on which I could play a low bass sound on, four elements that I could play a high sound on, and on top of that I would just pull drums out separately. I used a lot of marching bass drum, or a concert bass drum on a stand, which I'd play with marimba mallets or with a maraca or ping pong ball shakers—it's not going to sound like a kick drum. And I'd play snare drums that were maybe broken, had detuned heads, or that I'd hit with weird implements so that they wouldn't necessarily sound like a proper snare drum. And I used the shakers, sleigh bells, seed pods....

I tried to stick to mostly antique percussion too. The exception is that some of those low drums are Meinl ethnic drums with vinyl heads. I'd double the concert bass drum with those tom sounds, or play the floor tom with preparations on them. I guess you could say I was playing the kit orchestrally. It was fun to do something completely opposite to what I'd been doing the previous nine or ten months. I mean, I've multitracked on every Wilco record, but my way of thinking was more like, here's the primary beat, and here's the percussion. I'd hear a demo and think, okay, I need three tracks: a drumset part, then maybe a second drumset part with brushes, then percussion. But this time around I was thinking, here's a pulse part, and here's another part that goes with it, or here's a part that goes against it. It was more about layering different ideas.

MD: You mentioned using antique drums, but in a way your whole concept seems very modern. Rethinking our knee-jerk reactions when sitting at a drumset—your concepts suggest that there are other ways to think, that you can free yourself of go-to ideas that we're a slave to for better or worse.

Glenn: Yeah, and maybe there's more of that

than ever these days, because so much more of the drumming we hear is programmed, and with programming there aren't those limitations of what you can do physically. A lot of producers who are programming are taking chances, doing whacky, crazy stuff, which I love. It's liberating. Though you can fall into patterns there as well.

I'm super psyched that you think that it's fresh, though so much of what I do comes from the original conception of the drumset. It's a "kit." The original kits had all these disparate instruments and Foley sound effects on them. Because those guys were backing up comedians and dancers and singers, they had this huge palette, and for me that's what the drumset is. People are like, "So you play more like a percussion set," and I'm like, "Yeah, but drums *are* percussion." Drums *should* be that. Just because there's not a steady beat throughout the whole song doesn't mean it's not drumming. Because you can go from one texture to another texture—that's still drumming. I'm just using the kit more selectively.

MD: The drumset evolved into more of a homogeneous thing—by mid century it was basically one instrument in different sizes, with the same finish or wrap, plus cymbals, which were essentially also the same thing, just different sizes. It became *an* instrument.

Glenn: Right, and that was for very practical reasons—for transportation, for economic reasons. It just made sense. But I love to think of kits sculpturally and set them up in different arrays. Every time I play a collaborative show, the drumset looks totally different, because I have different needs. Even with Wilco, every record cycle it changes its appearance, because I have new things on it, and things I don't need as much go away. And now it's easier than ever. There are so many different products, so many different cymbals and sounds. And these days with my solo stuff I'm digging the Sensory Percussion system—now the possibilities are limitless in terms of what your sounds can be. My next solo project is more multimedia-based, because now you can do that from the drums. Instead of being a drummer, you can be mission control of this whole show that you can put on.

MD: In his autobiography, Jeff Tweedy talks about how he plays an acoustic guitar that has a very muted sound. What are your thoughts in terms of your sounds working within the sounds of the other players in Wilco?

Glenn: My sounds have to cater to the band setting, for sure. Jeff does that for his own specific reason—a bright, ringing guitar doesn't work with his voice as well. I use

Zildjian Special Dry cymbals because they go away so quickly, and they're dark and fit with the music more. When I would bring up other "normal" cymbals, it would drive some of my bandmates nuts. They just like the darker sound more, which I like as well. I think a lot of drummers do, especially now. It's great, like a golden age of cymbals right now.

I'll also use the Roots EQs on the drums for a half dozen or so songs. Those are good for that Ringo tea-towel sound, just to get a different timbre. I'm so glad my new kit has an 8" deep snare drum, because a high-pitched snare drum doesn't sound good with Wilco. The 8" allows me to have a deep sound and keep the head tensioned to where it's still responsive and fun to play.

And in general I do avoid "store-bought" sounds. It's kind of a tenet of my duo On Fillmore—no sounds where you hear them and think, oh, that's an egg shaker. I use a lot of really old sleigh bells and tambourines, shakers that are indigenous or that I customize. Besides my signature sticks, on the record I used antique brushes, mallets, and sticks.

For my birthday my wife got me a drumset from around 1918. It's a WFL or Ludwig & Ludwig snare drum. The bass drum is an old marching drum with a painted head. It's got a couple Chinese toms, a Turkish cymbal, nested cowbells, a ratchet—it's a proper theater kit. I felt I wanted to play it with mallets and sticks of the era, so when I go to the Chicago Drum Show, or when I'm at Revival Drum Shop in Portland, I'll ask [owner] Jose Medeles, "What antique brushes



and sticks do you have?"

And when I go on tour in Europe or South America, they have different stuff in music stores than we do here. Live I use pretty much everything Promark makes. But I love finding these weird sticks that are used for some Portuguese marching band, or sticks made by hand in a shop in Hamburg. I got

these metal flyswatters from this company in Germany. The original brushes were literally flyswatters. But I got some of those and cut them down to half their length, so they're these little things with great big heads that make you play totally different from how you otherwise would. And they have a top and a bottom, so if you flip them, you get a

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CHICK COREA

PERCUSSION
Lenny Castro
TOTO

Innovative Percussion Inc.



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ddrum

Glenn Kotche

different sound again.

Even common things like brushes are just different from how they used to be; they might have used a different-gauge wire than they do now. The sticks are fragile and brittle. But they make me play different. And when we made this new record, I wanted to see what it was like recording with these things. I just love playing brushes; they're so useful outside of the context of jazz. I played brushes on at least one or two tracks from all the records I've made recently. On this Wilco record I was sometimes using three or four different brushes at the same time, just to get a different sound. Or I'd use multiple sticks at one time in my hand. Even if it takes you just a little bit out of your normal frame of mind—how you're striking, and the motion, it all affects the sound.

MD: We talk so much about the differences in the sound of drums, but what you're hitting them with is huge.

Glenn: After college, when I was touring all those years in the late '90s with Paul K and the Weathermen and Birddog, with the singer-songwriters like Jim O'Rourke, I'd use a two-piece kit—a floor tom with a cocktail-kit beater underneath and a snare, a hi-hat, maybe a cymbal, because we were traveling in rental cars. So since I only had two drums, I used a lot of different kinds of rods, sticks, brushes, and mallets, and preparations on the drums, so that the sound on each song could be totally different. And that carries forward to what I do now.

I think this is probably from my classical training in college with Jim Campbell, finding the exact right implement for this sound in percussion ensemble—playing a suspended cymbal with felt mallets versus yarn mallets

versus rubber mallets. When you saw me at Radio City, I used taped-together brushes, nylon brushes, wire brushes customized with a shaker, or with coins taped to them. Different kinds of rods, thin and thick, multiple rods at the same time. I have two different sets of drumset mallets that Promark built for me. I use my signature stick a lot, but also their SD5s and 7s, which have felt on the ends, just for one song. I have spatulas that I taped together. I use threaded rods with springs on the end.

The other players are switching guitars, and everyone's got effects, the keyboards have unlimited settings—so why would the drummer have the same sounds for different songs? That's why you'll see Ashwin come up and put a shaker on the hi-hat for this song, or the bells or the tambourine—single row of jingles or double row. We have six or eight variations of what goes on the hi-hat. Sizzlers on or off.

MD: Tell us about the marching machine.

Glenn: It's basically a wooden frame with dowels strung together to replicate feet marching. The dowels drop onto a piece of wood in a ripple effect. As a kid I did a lot of drum and bugle corps; I marched with the Cavaliers, and I remember seeing a Santa Clara Vanguard show—actually when I was still a kid, before I marched—and they had a marching machine on the sideline in the pit. It was hand-held. And I remember thinking, that's such a cool sound. Then I stumbled upon it years later on the Steve Weiss website or catalog, and I bought it. It hangs on my wall in my studio. And one day before going to a Wilco session, I brought a bunch of things just to see what would fit in—earth plates, this and that—and I tried

the marching machine on a concert bass drum set up horizontally, instead of on a piece of wood. Jeff and Tom really dug it, so I was using it quite a bit on bass drum, then on piano benches as a snare drum sound, and combining those with other bass drums and snare drums to obscure it.

Now, to play it live I thought I could sample it, but it's more fun and challenging to try to pull stuff off live. So I asked Jim Campbell's son Colin, who's a whiz with woodworking and works with Third Coast Percussion, to build me some that I could use on the road. Then Ashwin got together with him, and they modified a small one that's connected to a remote hi-hat cable, so I can play it foot-operated. Then I had Sonor build me a 4x16 tom that's basically like a robust hand drum, and that's what the marching machine is sitting on.

MD: Which foot do you play it with?

Glenn: My right foot. I have four pedals. On the right I go between my bass drum pedal and the remote marching machine, and on the left I have my hi-hat and my foot cabasa, which I use to replicate some of the drum machine sounds and brush parts from the record, like on "Citizens." I also have a hand-held marching machine that I play on one song right now. I put a wooden circle on the floor tom and drop the marching machine on it.

I think it's useful for people to make their own gear. Whenever I have the time to go back to teaching, I'm going to insist that students try to make or modify their own sticks and mallets. There's just something about customizing and making your own sounds that's really cool and part of our history, and I think it's important for younger

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drummers because they will become more sound conscious.

I want to spark a drummer's creativity by example. My last book, *A Beat a Week*, was about showing that this beat came because I played in steel band, this one came because I played timpani, this one I played because I learned how Elvin Jones interprets his ride cymbal beat, and I played it on the floor tom on this rock song.... My hope is that you can learn this cool beat, but also about the mentality of getting into it and applying aspects of it to your own playing.

MD: Did you find early in your record-making career that you had an outlet for these diverse interests?

Glenn: Yes, I realized that a lot of the singer-

songwriters liked what I was doing with the minimal kits, with the shakers and jingles and preparations. I was also doing a lot of free improvising after college, sound explorations, electroacoustic things. That's when I came up with the prepared snare drum that I used on "Monkey Chant" and that I still use. So it wasn't just about the technique and the beats, which I love, but more about sound exploration.

MD: What was the first record you did that you felt really good about?

Glenn: There's a Paul K and the Weathermen record called *Love Is a Gas*, which [Velvet Underground drummer] Maureen Tucker produced. That was right after college, and it was a formative thing for me because I had

come out of college listening to a lot of the drum superstars of the '90s. After immersing myself in the Velvet Underground to get ready for the recording, since I knew that Moe was producing, I was really digging her minimal approach. Also, I loved field recordings of African drumming, and that was also a big influence on Maureen. She could not be more different from a Weckl or a Vinnie or a Gadd, and it was nice to have that influence on me at that time as well.

MD: Can you talk about some of the players that excite you today?

Glenn: Oh, yeah! I love Joe Russo. He's so free and open and musical. It's a combination of different styles, too, because he's playing mostly rock but has a jazz background, free

The Beats Explained

Glenn Kotche on his approach to selected Wilco tracks and other recordings he's made since his last MD cover story.

"Down I-5" (verse, from *case/lang/veirs* by Neko Case/k.d. lang, and Laura Viers)

I come up with a lot of beats like this that are inspired by something I could imagine Tony Allen doing—trying to use his vocabulary but integrating rudimental sticking combinations that I discovered when playing Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* as a duo between right and left hands. So it's in some middle ground between Afrobeat and classical-inspired rudimental drumming. A tricky beat, but it feels so good to just zone in and repeat it ad nauseam.



"Honey and Smoke" (verse, from *case/lang/veirs*)

For this I just tried to balance out the first and second halves of the beat in order to give the song more room to breathe and give k.d. lang's amazing vocals more space. The first part has snare hits on the "and" of beat 2 that mostly happen in a space left by the vocals. For the second half I displace the snare hit, moving it up an 8th note, and play the backbeat on the floor tom, which is less intrusive under the vocals.



"Chalk It Up to Chi" (chorus, from *Love Letter for Fire* by Sam Beam and Jesca Hoop)

The first half of this beat is essentially a re-orchestrated broken triplet, taking the sticking of a fill or lick idea and turning it into a pattern that balances nicely with the more traditional second half of the beat.



"Rebel Heart" (verse, from *Ruins* by First Aid Kit)

The first two counts are a recurring statement, and counts 3 and 4 are basically variations on the theme of an early snare hit on the "and" of 3, and then played three different ways. After I played this, [First Aid Kit's] Klara and Johanna Söderberg said they knew they wanted this to be the lead track—something about the presence of the drums and that beat. I bet at its core, though, this is just me regurgitating either some take on Ringo's "Ticket to Ride" beat, or Tim Welch's fantastic groove on Paul K and the Weathermen's "The Grid."



"Albion Moonlight" (verse, from *Modern Country* by William Tyler)

The hi-hat with shaker attachment provides the implied double-time backbeat for this groove (or backbeat if you feel the beat at $q=112$ instead). I use the tambourine and floor tom pairing of extreme high and low to provide the counter, regular backbeat (or half-time backbeat if at 112). The tambourine/floor tom combination seems to blend better with the sounds of the other instruments and offers more contrast and counterpoint to the hi-hat shaker than a snare sound would.



"Jornada Inteira" (verse, from *Happiness of Living* by On Fillmore)

The hands part on this is a two-against-three rhythm. When I filled in the spaces with the bass drum and orchestrated the hands around the kit, it gave the song a cool off-kilter vibe. I also tried to not do the obvious 6/8 beat here and instead thought one in 3/4 would take the song into more interesting and unexpected areas.

improv. Ian Chang, the way he approaches beats and timekeeping, the stuttering and flexibility.... His playing is extremely unusual, extremely cool and fresh. Chris Corsano, I love playing with that guy when we improvise, but also just watching him in other settings. He's a force of nature physically, the wall of sound he can get with two sticks. And it's not gimmicks; he's just a wonderful player.

Another guy I want to mention is Stéphane San Juan. He's in New York now, but he's a French guy who worked in London, then moved to Mali and drummed with Amadou and Mariam. And then he met Moreno Veloso, [legendary Brazilian musician] Caetano Veloso's son, and moved to Brazil, and that's where I met him. On Fillmore

played a percussion festival there ten or fifteen years ago with +2, which is Moreno, producer Kassin, and Domenico Lancellotti. Stéphane was double drumming with Domenico, and the feel that these guys had was unreal. On Fillmore went back in 2013 or 2014, and we made a record in Rio with these guys, *Happiness of Living*. I was double drumming with Stéphane, with Mauro Refosco on percussion, and it was incredible playing with those two guys. They're both with David Byrne now—I think they actually played together for the first time on the On Fillmore record. So it was Darin Gray on bass, with Stéphane, Mauro, and me as the drum section. And we had different guests come in on different songs. The record came out

on Northern Spy two years ago, and we did shows at National Sawdust in Brooklyn and the Wilco festival in Massachusetts, and I got to double drum with Stéphane again. Because he's coming from African and French influences, and then being in Brazil for more than a decade, he's got all of that stuff. There's a song he wrote on the record called "Foli Ke" that's in nine, and I never would have come up with that way of playing it—subdividing it. Being exposed to his drumming opened up a lot for me.

But there's rarely a drummer that doesn't inspire me somehow—even some awful drummers. Just the way they do something so bizarre and wacky. I'll think, "That's kind of cool—maybe I'll try it *this way*..."

To watch Glenn demonstrate his drum parts from Wilco's latest album, *Ode to Joy*, go to moderndrummer.com.

6

"Cave Crickets" (verse, from *Happiness of Living*)

This beat is basically a loose drum interpretation of Darin Gray's bass line with a little added punctuation at the end. I use a cowbell as the ride and move my left hand between the snare (snare off) and floor tom. The bass drum mostly reinforces the right hand.

7

"Locator" (verse, from *Schmilco* by Wilco)

This is half me trying to be Jaki Liebezzeit and half just playing around with *Stick Control* patterns between my snare drum and bass drum.

8

"We Aren't the World" (verse, from *Schmilco*)

This one is deceptively difficult due to the left foot hi-hat (with tambourine attachment) sliding forward an 8th note from where our bodies are used to playing it. But doing that gives the first two counts a nice linear sound that then all collides and stacks up for the resolution on the last two counts. The tambourine really sticks out since the "ride"/right-hand part is just a doubling of the bass drum part, played with a mallet on the floor tom.

9

"King of You" (verse, from *Star Wars* by Wilco)

This beat has a reversed backbeat, so the snare hits are on counts 1 and 3. This works better with the guitar parts and the snare drum and bass drum playing the exact guitar rhythms. The right-hand, hi-hat-ride part helps to keep all of the upbeat bass drum notes anchored.

10

"The Joke Explained" (verse, from *Star Wars*)

For this song I constantly displace/delay snare hits at various points in the verses to go along with the phrasing of the guitar parts. The hi-hat has a tambourine attached and often takes the place of the displaced snare hits. This constant interplay between the snare and hi-hat tambourine really stands out since there is no ride ostinato, but instead a crisp and dark shaker part that I play with the right hand.

11

"More..." (verse, from *Star Wars*)

This is just the beat that I came up with on the spot, but I later noticed that it's inspired by my days in steel band back in college at Kentucky. The first four beats are essentially a re-orchestrated calypso with the accents split between snare drum and floor tom flams. The hi-hat and bass drum parts add a linear or pattern aspect to the first four counts and then act as anchors for the last two counts, which have a more straight-ahead double-time feel.

12



Virgil Donati

A deep dive into the artistry of the progressive-drumming master

Story by Aaron Edgar
Photos by Alex Solca

Extreme chops and a superhuman command of rhythm are part of what make Virgil Donati one of the most technically masterful drummers on the planet. The list of equally progressive artists Virgil has worked with includes keyboardist Derek Sherinian and his band Planet X, guitarist Tony MacAlpine, and bassist Bunny Brunel. Virgil also leads his own prog-metal group, IceFish, who deliver satisfyingly syncopated, intellectually engaging, and powerfully melodic modern music.

Virgil also expresses himself beautifully as both drummer

and composer on a handful of solo records. His latest, *Ruination*, is an incredible display of musicality and technical mastery. Virgil's drumming is deep and authoritative, featuring thunderous drum tones and stunningly precise rhythms executed with exquisite dynamics. He seamlessly integrates odd groupings and polyrhythmic phrasing, resulting in music that's an adventure to experience.

In the following pages, we'll explore some of Virgil's creations from his solo records and his band IceFish, with commentary from the man himself.



“Castle Bastards,” Virgil Donati, *Ruination* (2019)

The explosive opening track from Virgil’s latest solo record features incredible subdivision switches without getting in the way of the groove. “I find that the magic happens when you allow your ideas to flow spontaneously,” says Donati. “Being mindful of the guitar and bass hits here, I could feel an opportunity to creatively juxtapose triplets and 8th notes.”

Two staves of musical notation for the guitar part of "Castle Bastards". The first staff is in 4/4 time and features a complex pattern of triplets and eighth notes with accents. The second staff continues the pattern, including a sextuplet and a specific foot pattern: R L R R R L R R L L.

“The Last Night That I Lived,” Virgil Donati, *Ruination*

The first single from *Ruination*, this song features a composite time signature of 4/8 and 6/8 during the verses. Donati drives a heavy 16th-based groove and frequently avoids playing the kick on beat 1.

Three staves of musical notation for the guitar part of "The Last Night That I Lived". The notation shows a 16th-note groove with frequent time signature changes between 4/8 and 6/8, and includes various accents and dynamics.

Contrasting the density of the groove, Virgil employs plenty of space, dynamics, and multiple subdivisions in the fills. Says Donati, “I was just relying on stream-of-consciousness, as I do more often than not.”

A single staff of musical notation showing fills for "The Last Night That I Lived". It features complex 16th-note patterns with accents and dynamic markings, including triplets and sextuplets.

“Revolution,” IceFish, *Human Hardware* (2017)

This track features a main verse groove in 13/16 that’s notated below as 2/4 and 5/16. Virgil’s mastery of dynamics plays a big role in laying a funky, syncopated foundation for this complex section. “This was the first song I wrote for the IceFish record,” says Donati. “The verse guitar riff was the hook that supplied the inspiration for the main groove and for the direction of the song.”

The musical notation for "Revolution" consists of two staves. Each staff begins with a 2/4 time signature and a repeat sign. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a quarter note, followed by a 5/16 time signature and a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff follows the same pattern. Accents (>) are placed over the first notes of each measure. The notation is repeated twice.

“Human Hardware,” IceFish, *Human Hardware*

The title track from IceFish’s debut opens with a wonderful rhythmic contrast between multiple pairs of hi-hats. Virgil’s left foot lays down a solid quarter note while he riffs in 3/16 with the auxiliary hats. The kick and snare favor a 3/16 pattern. “This groove manifests a 6/8 over 4/4 effect that resolves every other bar,” Donati explains. “As always, it’s those ubiquitous ghost notes and other nuances that give it the X factor.”

The musical notation for "Human Hardware" consists of two staves. The first staff shows a 4/4 time signature with a sequence of notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a quarter note, followed by a 3/16 time signature and a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff follows the same pattern. Accents (>) are placed over the first notes of each measure. The notation is repeated twice.

“Red Air,” Virgil Donati, *In This Life* (2013)

The bass solo section on this track displays incredible musicianship across the board. The drums build from subtle to pure rhythmic tension. Recalling this section, Virgil says, “Beautifully played by Doug Shreeve on bass, who jumps onto my 8th-note triplets, which are flipping back and forth in the last three bars.”

The musical notation for "Red Air" consists of two staves. The first staff is labeled "X-Hat" and shows a 4/4 time signature with a sequence of notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a quarter note, followed by a 3/16 time signature and a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff follows the same pattern. Accents (>) are placed over the first notes of each measure. The notation is repeated twice.

“Concerto for Drums,” Virgil Donati, *The Dawn of Time* (2016)

The Dawn of Time is a brilliant record of orchestral works. “This music,” says Donati, “is about putting aesthetic experience—our ability to have empathy and compassion for our fellow man—above politics, envy, greed, and everything else in this world. These are the great stories of who we are, all in this one experience. The drumming is simply serving the composition.”

In this piece, Virgil enters with a powerful flurry of 16th notes that lead into a driving halftime feel. After eight bars, his left foot sinks into steady quarter notes, on top of which Donati spreads the phrasing to six notes across the bar. Eventually the phrasing shifts to five and then seven equally spaced notes. “[This is] still a part of that aesthetic experience,” Virgil explains. “Nothing can communicate this like a symphony orchestra. How else can you get such depth into a piece of music?”



Drum notation sheet featuring four staves of rhythmic exercises. Each staff contains three measures of music. The notation uses asterisks (*) to denote specific drum parts and includes various rhythmic groupings:

- Staff 1: Three measures, each containing a triplet of eighth notes marked with an accent (>).
- Staff 2: Three measures. The first two measures have triplet eighth notes with accents. The third measure has a quintuplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 3: Three measures, each containing a quintuplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 4: Three measures, each containing a septuplet of eighth notes.



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Sepultura's Eloy Casagrande

Power. Passion. Precision.

Story by David Ciauro

Photos by Marcos Hermes

Eloy Casagrande was only twenty years old when he joined the legendary Brazilian metal band Sepultura. The group has roots in metal that date back to the days of MTV's *Headbangers Ball*, and Eloy was born the year that the video for "Dead Embryonic Cells," from the band's iconic 1991 album *Arise*, first aired. In fact, when Eloy came into the fold in 2011 (at twenty years old), there were no original band members remaining in the lineup, and there hadn't been for five years. Nonetheless, Eloy's presence captivated drummers and fans alike, and today he and mainstays Derrick Green (vocals), Andreas Kisser (guitar), and Paulo Jr. (bass) keep the Sepultura name as relevant as ever.

Casagrande first caught the attention of *Modern Drummer* back in 2005, when, at just fourteen years old, he won *MD's* Undiscovered Drummer Contest in the eighteen-and-under division. Eloy performed at the Modern Drummer Festival that year, and his career has been in ascendance ever since. He's the personification of raw power meeting absolute precision.

Sepultura recently released their fifteenth studio album, *Quadra*, and will be spending the next two years touring behind it. The recording was produced by Jens Bogren (Opeth, Devin Townsend, At the Gates, Between the Buried and Me), and Casagrande delivers his most ferocious drumming to date, pushing himself to the physical limit while executing envy-inducing grooves chock-full of melodic sensibility and polyrhythmic wizardry.

We caught up with Casagrande in the months leading up to the album's release, a time he covets for being able to practice in his studio every day and teach clinics and master classes during which he gets to connect with his fans. If his playing doesn't say it for him clearly enough, Casagrande is an intense and passionate man with a hunger for creative artistic expression. His goal is to continually push himself to seamlessly translate that energy into his performances. All the while he never loses sight of the creative expression of playing music with other people—and sharing that gift with audiences to create a memorable experience for all.





MD: Your playing is extremely physical and explosive, yet tasteful and dynamic. Do you practice playing softly with intensity?

Eloy: My biggest problem in life is trying to play soft! [laughs] I started playing drums learning Brazilian rhythms. Sambas and bossa novas are played softly. I continue to struggle with playing quietly. When I'm doing drum clinics or master classes, it's really hard for me to play an example of an exercise quietly, but I try! To have a good sound on the drums while playing soft is difficult; you have to have the right touch. I don't consider myself a good drummer in terms of playing with soft intensity. I'm more about giving a hundred percent.

MD: Before we dive deep into the new album, how did you go from playing sambas and bossa novas to getting into heavier music?

Eloy: When I was eight and just started playing, my first drum teacher only played Brazilian music. My dad gave me four albums: Deep Purple's *Made in Japan*, Van Halen's *1984*, *Led Zeppelin IV*, and AC/DC's *Back in Black*. That was my introduction to rock music. But it wasn't until I was thirteen that I discovered metal bands like Metallica, Iron Maiden, and Slayer. My interpretation of metal was that it was strong music, so I felt like I had to play it with power and play it loud. That's something that's just natural for me, and it creates energy between the band and the crowd. They give the energy back to you, so it's an adrenaline cycle that never stops during the show.

MD: Other than the drums, it looks like you hit the gym pretty regularly as well. Do you work on any drumming-specific muscle groups when you work out?

Eloy: When I was seventeen or eighteen I started getting inflammation in my tendons, so I started going to the gym for the purpose of getting stronger to avoid those pains. When I'm working out, I don't think about the drums. I try to take care of my body so that when I'm playing I can give a hundred percent of myself.

MD: What's your approach to playing live shows versus how you play in the studio?

Eloy: A lot of metal musicians feel that they have to follow these "rules." They also think that the fans also have these rules, where what makes a good musician is someone who is able to reproduce or deliver exactly the same show every night. But to me that's just BS! I want to be different every day. I get tired of playing the same thing. I actually want to forget what I played yesterday and be a new musician today.

MD: *Quadra* definitely sounds like a record where the music and drums are interconnected and the parts are dependent on each other. It's an unpredictable record, with twists and turns that keep

the listener engaged. Was the entire band in the room hashing these songs out?

Eloy: Actually, no. Andreas Kisser and I wrote all the music together, and then Derrick Green added the lyrics and the melodies. Derrick lives in L.A. and we live in São Paulo. Andreas and I started writing the album at the end of last year, and we began by sending each other ideas. I'd send him some grooves and he'd send me some riffs, so when we got together and started rehearsing we had some place to start. It was a really easy album to write because we had a lot to say musically. We weren't thinking about the past catalog or what types of songs we wanted to write, we just started creating music in the moment, for the moment.

MD: Your drum sounds on this record are unusual compared to others on the current metal scene. They're organic and sound more like a percussion section.

Eloy: There are no samples on this record. I had to play all those parts. It was one of the most difficult recordings of my life. Jens Bogren was constantly pushing me and asking so much of me and being so evil. [laughs] He was picky with everything I was playing. He was equally concerned with how the drums sounded, and he didn't want to add samples on the drums, so I had to really nail the

performances and get the best and most consistent sound out of the drums on every performance.

Jens respected that I had more percussive sounds in how I tuned my drums and instead of using three toms with similar tunings, I [swapped in] a smaller rack tom

without a bottom head and tuned it high, almost like a timbale. That actually changed how I had to think about my fills and my parts, because my rack tom is now a new instrument. That took some thinking and adapting with how I approached what I played. I had to find new vocabulary when writing my parts because I couldn't just play these fast tom fills that I used to do.

MD: With your current touring setup, did you also have to change how you're approaching older songs?

Eloy: Yes! I use two floor toms, but one on either side of me. Some of the older songs with fast tom fills are too fast to play between the two floors, so I have to use the 12" rack tom. It sounds really different, and I like that.

MD: The song "Means to an End" is relentless in terms of the drumming. When you have the capacity to technically play whatever you want in a genre in which playing a lot of notes is encouraged, when do you know when to go for it and when to lay back and allow sections to breathe?

Eloy: "Means to an End" is more of a groovy Sepultura song, but it's also a pretty intense song. When I was trying to record that in the studio, I was dying. It's not that it's a fast or thrash metal song, but if you don't play the parts of that song with high intensity it loses the groove, and the entire point of that song is the groove. On some songs I do like to give more than I do on others. The last two songs on the album, "Agony of Defeat" and "Fear, Pain, Chaos, Suffering," are more like "ballads"—at least ballads for Sepultura, meaning slower songs. I tend to hold off a little

"I was probably playing harder and more intensely during this recording process than I even do live, because I wanted all that energy to translate."





more on songs like that to give the vocals and guitar solos more space.

MD: You'll often hear drummers say how in the studio they play completely differently from how they do live, in order to get the best sound out of the drums. They'll play softer or avoid playing rim shots. Something tells me that's not at all how you approach recording.

Eloy: No. I was probably playing harder and more intensely during this recording process than I even do live, because I wanted all that energy to translate. Each take I was playing, we had to stop and retune the drums. After almost every five minutes of playing, we had to stop and retune. I respect that Jens stopped when he heard the tuning of the drums changing, because the end result sounds incredible. Though sometimes when I'm warmed up and ready to go, I don't want to stop. I would discuss that with Jens and say, "If you don't stop me it's going to help me give a better performance. I understand you might lose a little bit of tuning consistency, but I'd rather have a good performance." Jens is a very methodical producer, so I also understand his logic. We struck a good balance, and he was really respectful of how I played.

MD: In the studio artists and producers can sometimes disagree on what defines a "perfect" take.

Eloy: We recorded in the past with Ross Robinson, and he's totally the

opposite. He likes to live in and respect the moment, and if you're crying or screaming or dying, that is better than how it sounds. I love that approach, but on the other side you do sacrifice the sound. Jens pushed me to the limit to get both the best sound and the best performance. He had no problem telling me if he felt that my energy or my sound wasn't consistent.

MD: Are you tracking to a click?

Eloy: I tracked to a click with Andreas playing along with me. We did five or six takes for each song, and then did one take without the metronome.

MD: Are the takes that made the record the ones with or without the click?

Casagranda's Setup

Drums:

- 5.5x14 metal snare
- 8x10 tom
- 10x12 tom (without bottom head)
- 14x16 floor tom
- 16x18 floor tom
- 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals:

- 20" 2002 Wild crash
- 15" Formula 602 Modern Essentials hi-hat
- 19" Formula 602 Modern Essentials crash
- 12" Rude Shred Bell stacked on top of 14" Rude Blast China
- 14" PST X Swiss Flanger Stack
- 20" Formula 602 Modern Essentials crash
- 14" Formula 602 Modern Essentials hi-hat
- 20" Formula 602 Modern Essentials ride
- 20" 2002 Novo China

Heads: Evans coated Genera HD Dry snare batter and UV1 resonant, clear G2 tom batters and Hazy 300 resonants, clear EQ4 bass drum batter with AF patch

Sticks: Promark classic 5B wood-tip

Hardware: Tama Iron Cobra Power Glide double pedal, Iron Cobra hi-hat stand, Roadpro stands for all cymbals and snare drum

Electronics: Yamaha DTX drums and EAD10 Electronic Acoustic Drum Module

In-ear monitors: Clear Tune AS-7

Cases: Bombags

Cables: Data Link

Eloy: I don't know. That was up to Jens. For some of the faster songs we actually divided them in half, recording the first part and then the second part so I could keep my energy at the highest level. I was playing so hard that I had trouble keeping my energy at the same level. It's kind of shitty to admit that for some of the faster songs I needed to stop halfway through in order to maintain my power.

MD: Well, the recording is permanent, so it doesn't sound like an inability to play the part that you were struggling with as much as wanting to put as much energy as possible into each take so it translated

"Sometimes I feel I put myself at risk when I play live, because I don't like to play the same fills every night. If I had to play identically every time, I would end up in a deep depression."

the emotion accurately. When it comes to live shows and your desire to stay in the moment, do you tend to use a click to start songs, so that your adrenaline doesn't get the best of you?

Eloy: I use the click for three or four songs, especially if the songs have some form of overdubs or sequences like violins or choirs.

But on most of them I don't use a click. The fun part of playing live is that every night the show is different, and that's a good thing.

MD: Do you record your shows to listen back to them?

Eloy: Sometimes I do, and most of the time I don't like what I hear. [laughs] Because sometimes you're feeding off the energy of a certain crowd, and so the band plays faster and it makes sense in the moment. But when I listen back afterwards, then I start being critical of myself.

MD: So listening back to shows is more about finding a balance of wanting to critique yourself in order to improve, but also not playing so conservatively that you're depriving your audience of the energy and passion you put into your performance?

Eloy: Right. I really respect the moment, and I'm good with giving myself some forgiveness when I listen back to the show. I put it into perspective and think about how the show itself was. Sometimes I feel I put myself at risk when I play live, because I also don't like to play the same fills every night. I'm always challenging myself. I'm playing the same song 120 times a year, and if I had to play it identically every time I would hate myself. It's so boring for me, and I think I would end up in a deep depression. I challenge myself and try to make the best experience for the audience. The most important thing to do when playing live is to not think. All the thoughts I have about the show are before I get to the stage. Once I'm at my drums, I just want to live in the moment and be present and enjoy the music.

MD: As an educator, when you're planning your clinics, do you go into them with a specific point you want the audience to walk away with?

Eloy: Today, with Instagram and YouTube, where it's all about likes and followers and comments, I believe this generation is growing up with the wrong idea about what it means to play music. It's really sad that kids are playing music by themselves in their rooms. They don't have the artistic vision. What inspires you on your instrument can come from outside of music. It can come from art, books, movies, or culture. I try my best to explain that you don't have to follow the rules. You have to go beyond and push yourself to have an artistic voice on your instrument.

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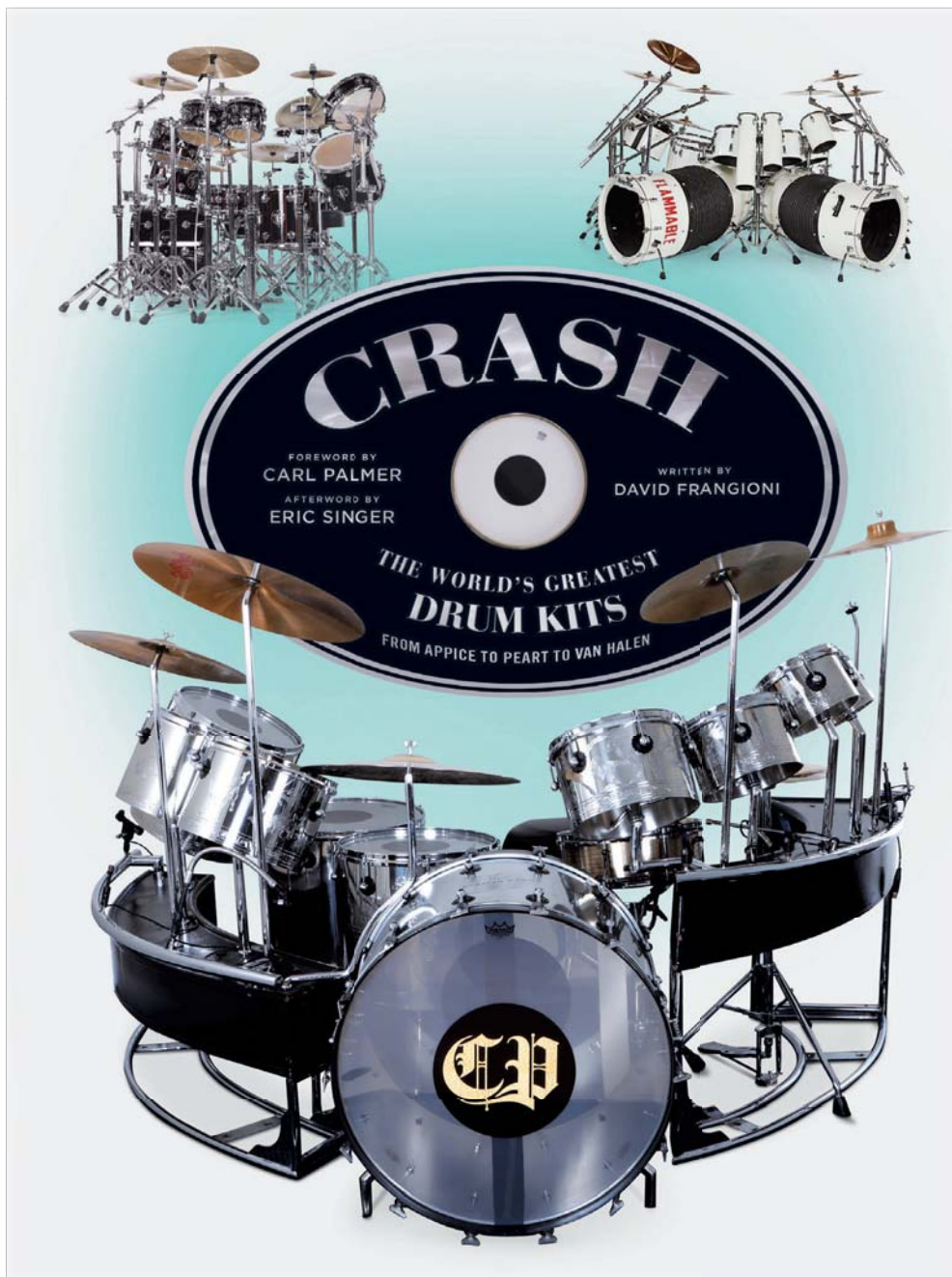
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10 Reasons to Love Jimmy Cobb

by Ken Micallef

In the pantheon of late-1950s master jazz drummers, Philly Joe Jones had rudimental brilliance; Art Taylor an immaculate sense of time-feel burn; Elvin Jones, combustible triplet ferociousness; Roy Haynes, intellectual brilliance; and Shelly Manne, musical inventiveness. But when it came to pure, solid swing feel as deep and wide as the ocean, *no one* matched Jimmy Cobb.

Miles Davis's drummer of choice on the iconic *Kind of Blue* album, Jimmy Cobb also recorded the Miles classics *Jazz at the Plaza*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Sketches of Spain*, and six others. In fact, Cobb is one of the most recorded drummers of the classic-jazz era, including albums with Cannonball and Nat Adderley, John Coltrane, Wynton Kelly, Wes Montgomery, Bobby Timmons,

Art Pepper, and Pepper Adams.

The soul survivor (and we do mean "soul") of 1959's *Kind of Blue* sessions, Cobb has also recorded eighteen albums as a leader, including 2019's *This I Dig of You* and *Remembering U*.

Now, as then, Cobb's time mastery is a thing of beauty, a large, swinging groove pendulum that has influenced everyone from Kenny

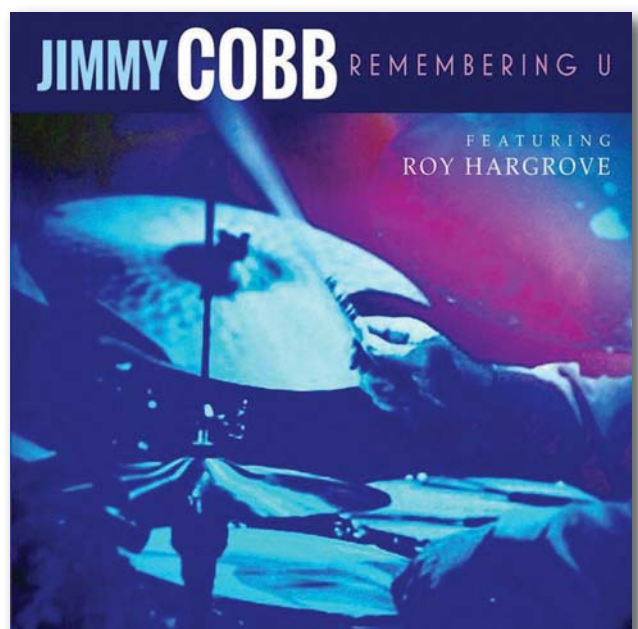
Washington and Lewis Nash to Jeff Hamilton and Bill Stewart. Cobb simply knows how to make a tune feel good, his powerful brush work and wide swinging ride-cymbal beat the very essence of jazz time-keeping. We sat with the legend to discuss some of his most iconic recordings, including tracks from his two recently released albums as a leader.

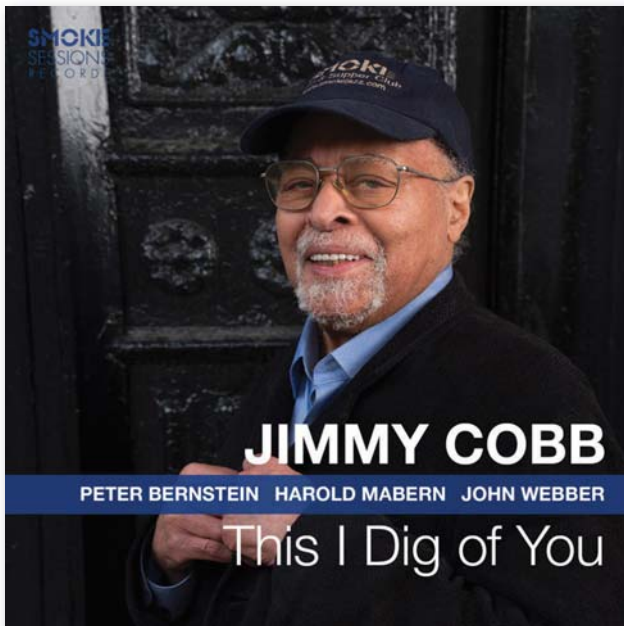
"Pistachio," Jimmy Cobb, *Remembering U* (2019)

Opening with a reverse toms-to-snare fill, "Pistachio" courses a breezy line between Brazilian and Afro-Cuban rhythms, a reminder of the era when drummers were expected to cover drumset and percussion rhythms all at once. "That's a kind of a mambo," Cobb says. "My interpretation of Afro-Cuban rhythms was influenced by the drummers I came up with, guys like Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Roy Haynes, Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Shelly Manne."

"Composition 101," Jimmy Cobb, *Remembering U*

Here, Cobb performs Afro-Cuban punctuations *within* a straight-ahead swinging time feel until he hits the solo sections, clearing the way for pure swing-feel beauty with his typically massive ride cymbal beat. "It's a little bit Afro-Cuban and swing feeling up to the solos," he explains. "When I came up, a lot of that was going on. I inherited it. The right hand is doing a rhythm on the cymbal, and the left is hitting accents on the snare drum. 'Composition 101' is my composition."



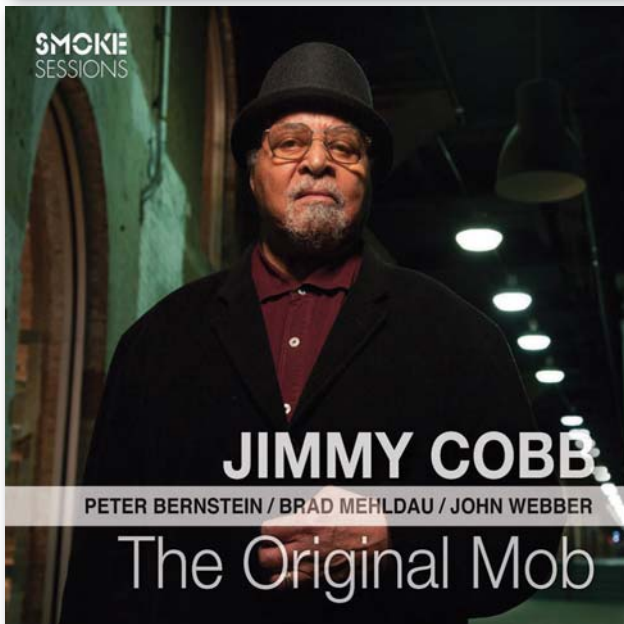


“Willow Weep for Me,” Jimmy Cobb, *Remembering U*

Slow tempos that aren't necessarily ballads were once common in jazz, but have all but disappeared. “Willow Weep for Me” inches it way forward, with accompaniment by late trumpeter Roy Hargrove. “When I was first coming up, it was all about playing slow tempos,” says Cobb. “The older guys who played slow tempos would say, ‘Make sure you keep the tempo, and make sure it’s swinging.’ You either have a feeling for it or you have to learn it. We didn’t practice tempos with a metronome, because at that time metronomes didn’t keep good time. We’d try to stay away from metronomic time as much as possible. Think in 16ths or, a slow three, or whatever it takes to get you there. Art Blakey and Max Roach could play *really* slow tempos.”

“Cheese Cake,” Jimmy Cobb, *This I Dig of You* (2019)

A tumbling mini drum solo introduces the song, followed by Cobb’s punchy time accompanying his quartet’s springboard performance. It’s classic Cobb, from popping snare drum accents to a resonant ride cymbal conveying a Mercedes-classy time feel. Cobb trades fours with the group at midpoint, then plays a full solo featuring drumset blasts impressive for a man who recently celebrated his ninetieth birthday.

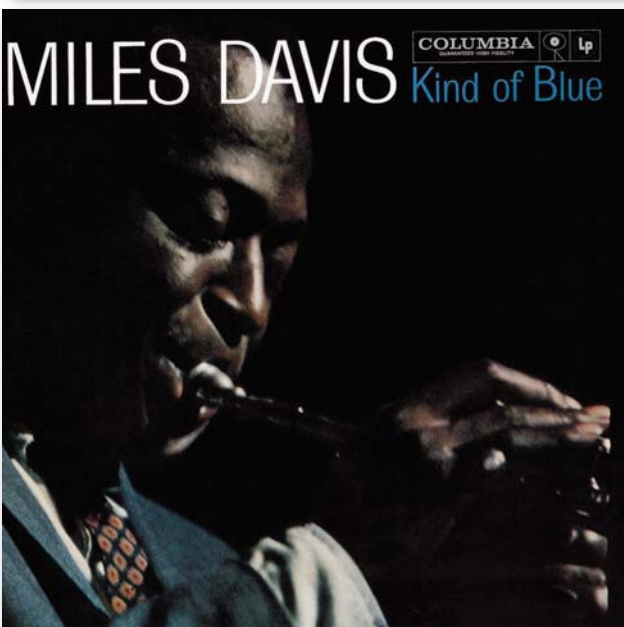


“Full House,” Jimmy Cobb, *This I Dig of You*

Playing an Afro-Cuban beat—right hand percolating on the snare drum rim, left executing tom accents—Cobb revisits the renowned Wes Montgomery original he first recorded with the guitar master on the 1962 album of the same name. “The first time I really played Afro-Cuban was with Wes Montgomery,” says Cobb. “I met Wes the day after I left Miles Davis’s band. We recorded *Boss Guitar* that day [in 1962]. He wrote a little form for me to follow to go with what he was playing on ‘Full House.’ But it’s in 3/4.”

“Old Devil Moon,” Jimmy Cobb, *The Original Mob* (2015)

On this bubbling Afro-Cuban groove played with the snares off, Cobb’s timbale-like jabs and pops underpin his immense ride cymbal pulse. “Back in the old days,” he recalls, “I had an 18” cymbal and 13” hi-hats on the left side, and a 20” A or K Zildjian ride on the right. I place the stick bead a quarter way up to the middle of the cymbal, according to the sound I want. I play near the bell if I’m playing with the bass drum, or with a bass solo. To play straight four on the ride cymbal with no accent, you have to concentrate. If you want it to sound like four you have to *play* it like four.”



“Lickety Split,” Jimmy Cobb, *The Original Mob*

Cobb can still play blisteringly fast tempos, as heard here. “You get to a place where you can handle the fast tempos,” he says. “You do whatever you think is needed to handle that tempo through a whole tune. Sometimes I kind of make it a dance, like Roy Haynes does. Instead of playing just straight time, make it dance.”

“So What,” Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue* (1959)

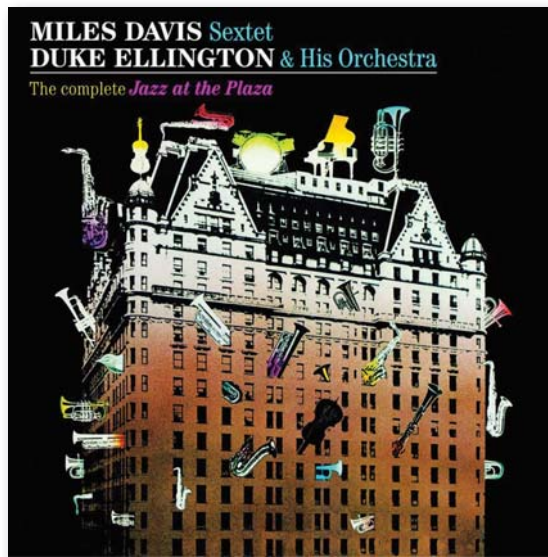
On this, one of the most popular of all jazz standards, the musicians state the melody, then at the precise moment Miles’ trumpet solo

begins, Cobb wallops a crash cymbal, opening the way for the solos that follow. "That was a mistake!" Jimmy reveals. "I hit it and I thought it was too much for the room. The engineer let it ring but lowered the volume in the booth. Everybody asks me about that. Miles liked it. Sometimes Miles would ask me to play a note on the snare drum on 2 or 4 on certain tunes, otherwise he let me do my thing."

"Straight, No Chaser," the Miles Davis Sextet, Jazz at the Plaza (1958)

Another great jazz standard, composed by Thelonious Monk, this live version of "Straight, No Chaser" recorded at New York City's Plaza Hotel is like a white-hot bolt of liquid lightning. Miles' finger snaps count in the tune, followed by him, John Coltrane, and Cannonball Adderley reciting the melody in unison. Miles' solo takes off, supported by one of the greatest rhythm sections in jazz history: Cobb, pianist Bill Evans, and bassist Paul Chambers. Chambers and Cobb maintain a relentless, high-flying tempo throughout, giving each solo a wide flight path.

We took the opportunity to ask Cobb how Chambers compares to another master Miles Davis group bassist, Ron Carter. "Ron was trying to feel the time where Paul was feeling it—most bass players are," he



says. "[But] Paul had something extra, a gift. The Lord gives something extra to some people; they don't even have to try. He had perfect time.

"I worked at trying to stay in the pocket," Cobb says. "I just listened to people that I liked doing it, keeping time, and tried to emulate that. Kenny Clarke had it—and some guys I met on the road, even rock 'n' roll drummers who had a good beat."

"Oleo," the Miles Davis Sextet, Jazz at the Plaza

Sonny Rollins' composition is given a dry, torrid treatment here, the rhythm section playing with searing drive and purpose. The beginning of each solo is marked by a sparse approach: Chambers walking bass line and Cobb's simple accent of 1 and 3 on the hi-hat, before he joins Chambers in attacking the tempo. "I'm playing 1 and 3 on the hi-hat 'til it gets to the middle," says Cobb, "then I play time. I'd heard Philly Joe do that."

Jimmy Cobb plays Pearl drums and Zildjian cymbals and uses Remo heads and Vater signature sticks and brushes.



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In the Studio with Nashville Veteran Tommy Harden



Story and photos by Sayre Berman



When Tommy Harden moved to Nashville in 1991, he hit the ground running. "I was a newlywed, and my wife, Lorrie, and I had to decide where to go to best further our musical careers," he says. "L.A. and New York were the hip, cool places, but Nashville not only had a lower cost of living, but it also was known for full-band tracking." Harden's goal was to be a studio player, but after four months in town he got a touring gig with Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers. "I had no audition, but because I was recommended by [legendary session drummer] Eddie Bayers, that was all it took," says Tommy. "I owe so much to him."

After several years with the Gatlin Brothers, Harden went on a three-year stint with country legend Ricky Skaggs. "He has such a high level of musicianship, and he demands the same from his players," explains Harden. "It was quite an honor to be in his band."

Once Harden and his wife started having children, the drummer began pursuing session work so that he could be home more often. "It took about two and a half years of really slugging it out until things finally clicked," he says. "Then about three years in I get a call from a friend who asked if I wanted to go out with Reba McEntire for a summer tour. I initially declined. My buddy pressed on, and I eventually agreed." Little did he know that what was initially a six-week tour would turn into a fourteen-year career with the singer. "Keep in mind, this was happening after my session work had taken off," Harden says. "I would get on a tour bus, go play an arena, get back home, and drive straight to a studio for a session. It's really a dream life. Now I'm playing with Alabama and doing pretty much the same routine."

Breaking into the session world is difficult, particularly in Nashville. "Folks need to know that you can come in and get the job done expeditiously because there's a lot of money being spent on a recording," Tommy says. "Of course, the only way you can show that you have what it takes is by doing it. But if they don't see you, they won't call you. You have to get one or two studios to take a chance on you just to get your face in the game. Then people start talking about you, and then doors start to open. I started out getting two or three sessions a week, then I'd get spurts of momentum, and then it would stop. I remember the week it finally started to click. It was in July 1998. One week I had twelve sessions. For the next fourteen

years, I did around 500 a year. That was about as much work as I was physically able to do.

"Songwriters, producers, engineers, other players...we all talk to each other," Harden continues. "If you're hard to work with, you'll wash out quickly. I tell young players that it's 50 percent ability and 50 percent the hang. You have to bring something to the table, musically, but it's a team effort. Everyone wins when the song turns out fantastic."

What does Harden attribute his session success to? "My drumming awareness changed when I started writing songs," he says. "Having my own home studio allowed me the luxury of crafting songs and playing on my own demos. I'd play a flashy fill, then play it back and wonder why I did that, because it was taking away from the song. That was an important lesson and taught me to always serve the song."

"Another thing that taught me how to be a better player was to become the lead singer with my own band, Lost Hollow. When I'm standing in front of a band playing guitar and singing, I'm expecting certain things from the drummer. This has taught me what *not* to do when I'm the drummer. As a lead singer, I want someone on drums who will push but at the same time hold me back. Additionally, a drummer should be able to play at a [lower] volume yet maintain the intensity. A common mistake with drummers is to equate intensity with playing loudly. I've heard some drummers play brushes at a whisper volume but at such intensity that people in the audience were holding their breath."

Harden didn't have a home studio until he built the house he's in now. "We built this home in 1999," he says. "I asked the contractor to make the basement ceilings higher than typical. My friend Mark Bernstein, who's a great engineer and carpenter in Virginia, stayed with me for a couple of months to help finish out the space. I wanted a really aggressive-sounding drum room, so we left the cement floors as they were and put some stone on the walls."

"I'm often asked whether my tracks were cut at Ocean Way, a legendary studio on Music Row," says Harden. "The folks who subscribe to my YouTube channel think I'm in a giant room, but it isn't at all. The cement floors are a big part of that, but we also took the ceiling down at one end, which effectively compresses the sounds."



"The day after we finished the room, I had folks coming to cut drum tracks—I was nervous. As a test, I brought in a throne, a kick drum, and a pedal. I shut the doors, sat down, hit the kick, and thought: *Oh my gosh, we did it!* That was the kick drum sound I'd been hearing in my head. The room paid for itself in the first six months.

"I've done somewhere in the neighborhood of 7,000 to 10,000 sessions," Harden recalls. "If you figure that a master session is one to two songs and a demo is usually five songs, that's somewhere in the neighborhood of 35,000 songs.



And that's nothing. There are guys who've been doing this way longer than I have!"

As for managing the pace of the sessions at his studio, Tommy often takes care of writing out the charts for the other musicians. "I chart so that the other musicians will be able to read the song correctly the first time around," he says. "I also number each line so that when they're punching in it's easy to get to a particular spot. These are all timesaving tricks. We work wickedly fast. That's what the Nashville session scene is all about."

With six kids, Harden says he's learned how to make do with the gear he had. "I would love to have

a pair of Coles ribbon mics," he says. "But the family has to eat! I have sE 3500 mics on the toms, and they're great. I have clients all over the world tell me that my toms are some of the best they've ever heard. It's really all about what you do with what you have. First and foremost, I wanted a great-sounding room. When you get a great drumkit in a great room, it's yours to mess up. Just put in the best mics you can afford."

Another part of the equation, of course, is knowing how to hit the drums. "You're not sitting behind one instrument," Harden suggests, "you're sitting behind nine to twelve instruments. So you're going to hit the ride differently from the snare and the toms. My drum teacher Jim DeLong would tell me to pull the tone out of the toms. That can make all the difference in the world. As a recording drummer, you must learn how to play consistently, to make the kick sound great, and to not play the hi-hats too loudly. If you do, they'll bleed into every mic, which will make the mix engineer's life difficult. That engineer will talk to the producer, and then you won't be called again."

Gear Box

Drumsets: Yamaha Absolute Maple (home studio) with a 16x24 bass drum and 10", 12", and 14" toms; Yamaha Absolute Birch (in cartage for outside sessions) with an 18x24 bass drum, and 12", 14", and 16" toms

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“Rhythm Basics” Expanded

Part 2: How to Build Drumset Vocabulary Based on Simple Patterns

by Andy Shoniker

This is the second lesson in a three-part series that is to be used in conjunction with the Rhythm Basics educational pack we produced for the SYNKD customizable rhythm sequencer app, which is available for iOS devices. This app allows you to create and edit chains of rhythms comprising subdivisions from quarter notes to 32nd notes in any time signature, from 1/4 to 21/16. The Rhythm Basics pack contains nearly 600 fundamental patterns covering every note position of quarter notes, 8th notes, triplets, and 16th notes. This first article showed you several ways in which Rhythm Basics can be expanded to develop more advanced hand technique. Here we’re going to use the basic rhythms from the pack to build facility and vocabulary on the drumset.

Exercise 1 outlines the phrase from Rhythm Basics (Rhythm Chain 16.15) as accents within 16th notes.



1.

r | R L r L R |

In Exercise 2, simply move the accents to the toms. The right hand plays the floor tom while the left hand plays the rack tom. (For all you lefties out there, simply reverse the sticking.)

2.

r | R L r L R |

In Exercise 3, we move the right hand from the floor tom to the ride cymbal and bass drum.

3.

r | R L r L R |

Exercises 4 is a combination of Exercises 2 and 3. Notice the melodic flow between the various sound sources.

4.

r | R L r L R | r | R L r L R |

Exercises 5–7 incorporate some 32nd-note fill-ins. These types of figures create some very cool density.

5.

r | r | R L r L R r |

r | r | R L r L R |

6.

r | r | R L r r L R r |

r | r | R L r r L R |

7.

r | r | R L r r L R r | r | r | R L r L R r |

r | r | R L r r L R | r | r | R L r L R |

In Exercise 8 we’re playing the rhythm chain with the bass drum beneath a basic 8th-note backbeat groove.

8.

Exercise 9 is a variation with some ghost notes added on the snare.

9.

Exercise 10 is a four-bar pattern. The bass drum notated on the downbeat of bar 1 is optional. Notice how the measures of groove connect smoothly with the fill in bar 4.

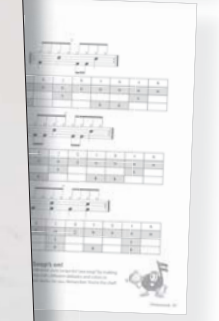
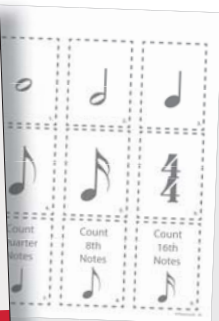
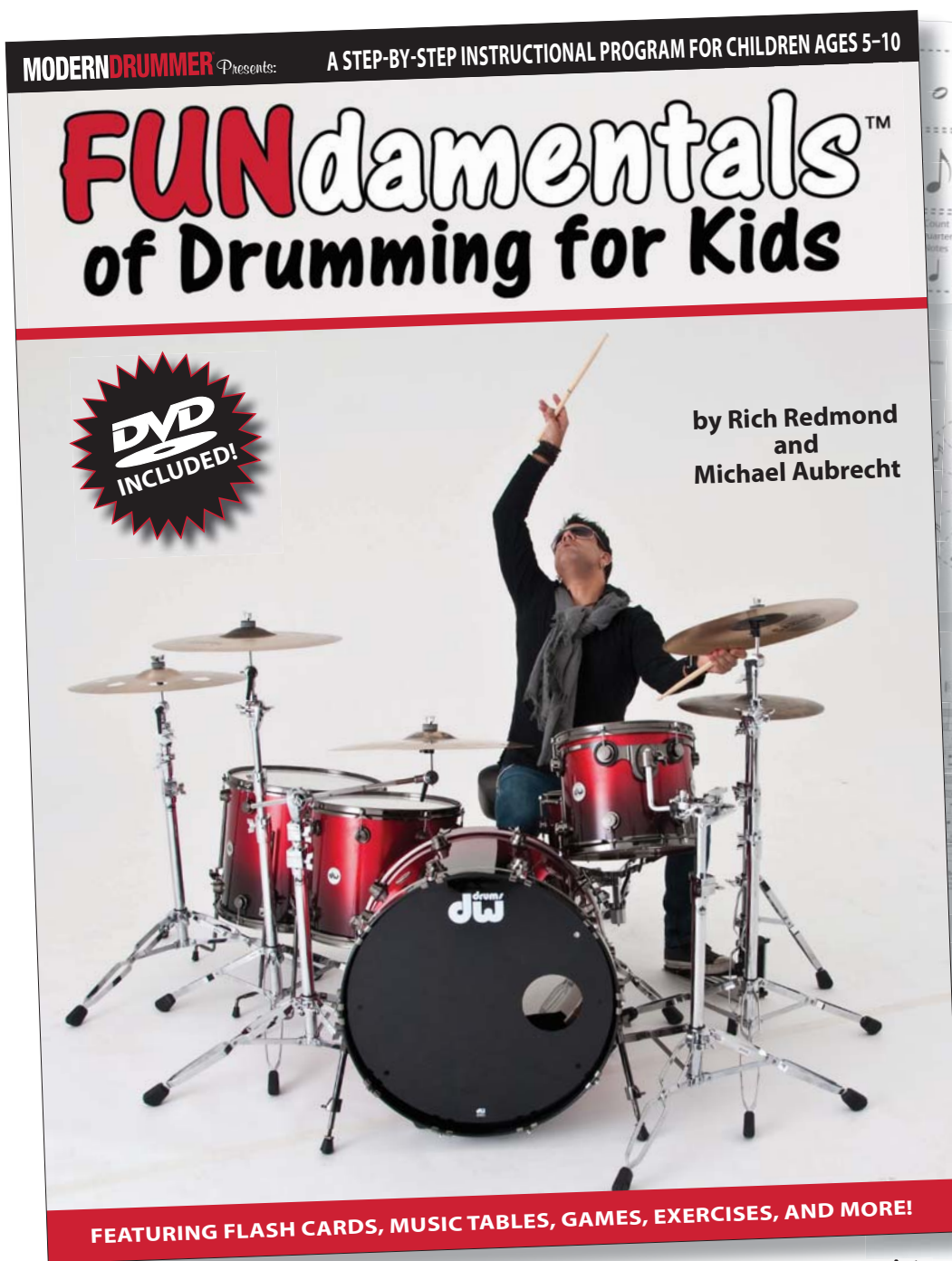
10.



Andy Shoniker is a member of the New York/Paris-based trio SOTL. He is also the creator of the SYNKD app for iOS. For more information, visit www.andyshoniker.com, www.sotl-theband.com, and www.synkdapp.com.



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Percussion Playing for Drummers

Part 1: Congas, Bongos, and Timbales

by Damon Grant and Marcos Torres

As a working drummer, it's likely that you're going to be asked to play some hand percussion instruments at some point. This could range from overdubbing a simple 16th-note shaker part to pulling off more idiosyncratic patterns for congas or timbales. While you don't have to spend years of practice time to become a master percussionist, you should be able to cover some basic grooves. Also, as a drumset player, knowing the percussion parts for a particular style or song can help you better understand the music as a whole. That way you don't step on the percussionist's toes. You'll also more easily draw on the melodies and rhythms of the percussion parts when there's not someone else playing alongside you.

This miniseries is broken into two parts. In Part 1 we're covering the big stuff: congas, bongos, and timbales. Part 2 will address handheld instruments like shakers, tambourines, bells, and blocks. All of the grooves we've included are general suggestions and should be adjusted based on the requirements of your particular situation. Remember that serving the song is paramount.

Congas

When playing congas in pop music, you can get away with knowing just a handful of grooves. The most universal pattern is derived from the Latin tumbao. A pop song that utilizes this groove is "Smooth" by Santana. (O = open tone, P = palm, T = tips, S = slap, M = muted tone)

The verse part is played as follows.

1 O P S T P T O O P T S T P T M O

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

The chorus part, which utilizes three drums, is played like the following.

2 O P S T P T O O P T S O O P O O

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

A more melodic version of this pattern is featured in "Do It Again" by Steely Dan.

3 O P S T P O O O O P S P O O O O O

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

Tumbao grooves can also be interpreted with swung 8th notes, like in "Build Me Up Buttercup" by the Foundations.

Our next conga groove is often called the "soul tumbao." In this pattern, the open tones mimic a kick drum, and the slaps mimic a snare. You can hear the soul tumbao on "Inner City Blues" by Marvin Gaye.

4 O O M S M O O O S M S

R R L R R L L L R R L

Next up is the a caballo (translated as "on horseback"). This groove is similar to a traditional merengue pattern. The a caballo works well in dance-hall reggae or reggaeton tunes. You can hear it in action on "Dile" by Don Omar.

5 O O M S T M P S T M P S T O P

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

The fourth pattern you should know on congas is the calypso. You can hear Ralph MacDonald play this open-toned groove on the classic Grover Washington Jr. song "Just the Two of Us," which features legendary R&B singer Bill Withers.

The verse part is this:

6 T T S O O T T S O O

L L R R R L L R R R

The chorus part is this:

7 O M S O O O O O O O O

R L R L L R L R L L R

Bongos

A bongo pattern that works well in most situations is the martillo (or "hammer"). While it's commonplace for the bongo player to elaborate on the martillo with a fair amount of improvisation, you should be able to play a simple version of it. This figure can be played with sticks or hands. The martillo was featured in the theme song to the hit television show *I Love Lucy*, and you can hear it at the beginning of "Black Magic Woman" by Santana. (O = open tone, T = fingertips, TH = thumb)

8 O T O TH O T O TH

R L R L R L R L

The song "Apache," by the Incredible Bongo Band, starts with a soul tumbao pattern played on bongos.

9

After the classic drum break at 1:46—famously sampled by the Sugar Hill Gang on "Apache (Jump on It)"—the bongos switch to an improvisatory version of the martillo.

10

11

Timbales

The timbalero in a traditional Latin band is responsible for playing a variety of syncopated rhythms on cowbells, blocks, and the sides of the drums. These patterns can be executed on the drumset by adding one or two cowbells to your kit.

The basic cascara pattern that's normally played on the shell of the timbales can also be played on a mambo bell while striking the heads of the drums on beat 4 of each measure (when notated in cut time). You can hear this pattern in the song "Black Magic Woman/Gypsy Queen" by Santana. Example 12 shows this pattern notated in 4/4, while Example 13 is in cut time.



A slower version appears in "Got to Give It Up" by Marvin Gaye.



Another figure used often in pop music is the plena bell pattern. You can hear this rhythm, with some embellishments, in the Robin Thicke hit "Blurred Lines."



Be sure to visit modern drummer.com to check out our video demos of each of these grooves. In Part 2 we'll cover some additional bell patterns, as well as common rhythms for shakers and tambourines.



Marcos Torres and **Damon Grant** are the hosts of the "Discussions in Percussion" podcast. A graduate of Berklee College of Music, Torres won a Grammy in 2014 for his work with the Pacific Mambo Orchestra. Grant has performed with Charlie Hunter, Morgan James, Horacio Hernandez, and Stefon Harris, and he leads his own group, the Damon Grant Project. Damon was an original cast member of the Emmy and Tony award-winning show *Blast!*, and he currently teaches at his alma mater, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.



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The Ancient European Rudimental Codex

Part 4: The Inverted Flam Tap and Flam Accent

by Claus Hessler

Welcome to the fourth and final column of this series that focuses on a collection of rudiments from the ancient European legacy of drumming. I hope the input on the authentic double drag interpretation from last month helped clarify your perception of that old rudiment. The grid of quintuplets, with an open interpretation of the double strokes inside the phrase, can be an eye-opener.

This time we're looking at two more Swiss/French patterns: the inverted flam tap ("doublé" or "coup anglais") and the flam accent ("batafla"). The inverted flam tap is widespread in traditional Swiss rudimental/Basel drumming, but in most traditional American texts (Wilcoxon, Pratt, etc.) it's hard to find. When interpreting the inverted flam tap, utilize some Basel swing, which has an almost quintuplet-like feel.

The Inverted Flam Tap Notation



Interpretation



Practice Pointers

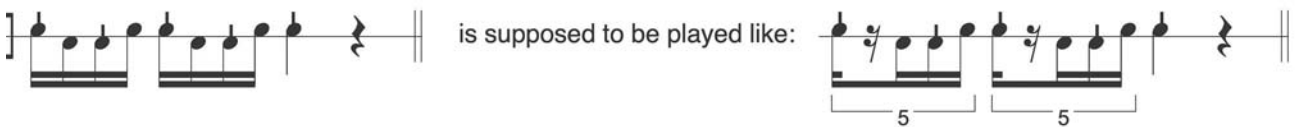
The following exercise teaches you some alternative variations of the inverted flam tap, while also presenting some traditional applications borrowed from old-school Basel drumming pieces. Basically, play inverted flam taps all the way through while adding accents at places indicated by the notation above the staff.

At first, just play the exercise as written, using straight 16th notes. Make sure to take care of the different dynamic ranges for the flam. Some are accented, while others are not. Also, make sure the flams have consistent spacing from stroke to stroke.

Once you master this exercise, apply any other basic reading materials, like Ted Reed's *Syncopation* or Gary Chester's *New Breed*. You should also practice improvising your own phrases in the style of the exercise.

Once you're fluent with the inverted flam tap with a straight feel, apply the Basel swing interpretation, as indicated below.

Interpretation Guide for the Inverted Flam Taps



1. Exercise on the Doublé | Coup Anglais | Inverted Flam Tap:



Similar concepts can be applied to the flam accent. A typical way of adding Basel swing to the flam accent follows a slightly different organization of strokes on a quintuplet grid. In this case, the strokes fall on the first, second, and fourth partials of the quintuplet.

Again, play flam accents all the way through while reading the slash notation as accents. The stickings should not change. The flams stay in the same place but aren't always accented. To make things a bit easier at first, you might want to start by playing the exercise with a straight triplet interpretation.

2. Exercise on the "Schlepptriole" | Flam Accent | Batafla

A free download of the complete Rudimental Codex poster is available at <https://www.percussion-creativ.de>.



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The new Strike Pro Special Edition drumset utilizes all-new dual-zone mesh heads for the snare and toms. The 16" ride cymbal, 14" crash, and 14" movable hi-hat are covered with a new thick rubber that creates an ideal blend of feel, control, bounce, and volume. The cymbals offer a large bell for enhanced playability. The birch snare and tom shells come in standard acoustic drum sizes, and the lugs are attached directly to the shell. Additional features include a performance module with a color LED screen, more than 1,800 drum and percussion sounds, 136 kits, and 45,000 samples. List price is \$2,499.

alesis.com

Tama Sizzle Touch Hi-Hat Drop Clutch

This drop clutch's variable setting controls the amount of sizzle of the partially open sound. Setting the clutch to a more closed position creates a tighter sound. The lever can be quickly engaged or disengaged as needed. List price is \$74.

tama.com



Gretsch Black Copper Snares

Available in 5x14 and 6.5x14 sizes, these new copper snares have a thin layer of black powder coating applied to a 1 mm shell. They're said to deliver a combination of warmth and punch. A laser-engraved round-badge logo exposes the copper underneath. Additional features include forty-two-strand wires, 45-degree bearing edges, die-cast hoops, and a Snap-In drum key holder.

gretschdrums.com

Innovative Percussion Drew Tucker Signature Mallets

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innovativepercussion.com





Repercussion Technologies SpeakerHeads Resonant Head Kit

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speakerheads.com

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drums.schagerl.com



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jblpro.com



RETAILER PROFILE

Drumbite Music Jerusalem, Israel

Being a drum retailer anywhere in the world is tough. But given the divergent religions and political instability of the region, the challenges of operating a drum shop on the border of East and West Jerusalem are a bit more complex than average.

Assaf Kraus, a professional drummer and the author of *101 Breaks* (Alfred Music), opened Drumbite in the heart of his native Jerusalem ten years ago as a full-service music store that's about 60 percent focused on drums. The business has expanded since he opened and now features lessons, a recording studio, and a performance space, along with a program that helps musicians market their skills and secure endorsements, run by Assaf's wife, Monika Borzikova. Monika took the time to share her thoughts on what goes into running a successful music retail business in the holy city of Jerusalem.



In addition to Drumbite's strong customer base in Jerusalem, Monika Borzikova says that drummers and other musicians frequently travel from all over Israel to visit the shop. "Customers are often from very northern or southern parts of Israel, distances more than 300 km [a little under 200 miles], from Eilat or Golan Heights, etc. We do appreciate it, and if the customer asks us for special hours that are not normal working hours, we are keen to provide them with this extra service."

Running a music store in a city with so much diversity is at once challenging and magical. We see the challenge in several aspects. The first is the availability of equipment that satisfies the East Jerusalem population, which is mostly Arabic culture. We're speaking about instruments like darbuka, djembe, and other Arabic instruments. Western Jerusalem is more represented by Western culture, so you will find the same portfolio of products as in the U.S. market. Another aspect is musical education. Lessons in our store need to be flexible to the needs of secular people and religious people of all beliefs. Our teachers need to be experienced with all those groups.

What is beautiful about music is that this is an island of one language in the sea of different religions, political opinions, and cultural differences. Something about music always reduces stress from those issues. We hardly face difficulties from a religious

perspective. Our teachers do not involve their religious or any other orientation in the classes. They are professionals who fully adjust to the needs of a student. People are learning from each other. Sometimes at the end of the day, you can see a good, quality friendship develop, discussing each point of view after the lessons while having a cup of coffee in our store.

There is a thriving community of drummers and bands in Jerusalem. They are our ambassadors, representing our store, school, and products all over Israel, not only in Jerusalem. In one day, you will see artists endorsed through Drumbite doing amazing product reviews in Hebrew for the Israeli market on social media, then on a show in Tel Aviv backlined with equipment from Drumbite. At the same time another Drumbite artist is visiting Istanbul Mehmet cymbals, choosing his own line, and spending time with the local crew, while a talented drum student shoots video of a lesson and



Drumbite opened its online store in 2018, but according to Monika Borzikova, most drum and cymbal sales happen in the physical store. "Drums and cymbals need to be tested, need to be heard on the spot," she says. "Customers want to come in, see, hear, compare, and choose the best. Online sales are happening mostly with accessories, hardware, and other drum equipment."



Shopper's Tip

"Choose a sound, not a brand," says Monika Borzikova. "Try to listen for the best sounds, and choose whatever you like. Switch between brands or combine your equipment. It is absolutely okay to have Zildjian, Istanbul Mehmet, and Sabian in your cymbal setup and Gretsch and Premier drums in the same kit."

streams it live in high quality all around the social networks, and then a nice band performs in our store at night. These people are our treasure.

In general, it is not difficult to import product.

Most of the challenges involve shipments, customs clearances, and pricing the products so that you are comparable to the international market, especially online. In these days of Amazon, Alibaba, eBay, [German-based music retailer] Thomann, and other big online sellers, it

can be sometimes uneasy, but their philosophy is totally different from ours, and we are not trying to compete with them.

Importing gear from the U.S. and Taiwan is much better for us than working with the E.U. market or China.

The U.S. dollar-to-Israeli shekel exchange rate is still better than the Euro, and shipping costs from the U.S. are sometimes even cheaper than from the E.U. Over the years we've established many brand and distributor relationships in the U.S., and it's really a strong part of our importing. Over the last year, Taiwan-based companies have proved that quality and accuracy are what matter to them, and we do not mind that goods imported from Taiwan are a bit more expensive than Chinese products. We know we have reliable and trustworthy partners there, which does not always happen with Chinese imports.

We definitely have big sellers. People here are inclined to Indian and Eastern music and instruments, and loads of different percussion. That's a big part of our sales. Istanbul Agop, Istanbul Mehmet, and Zildjian are the dominant cymbal brands on the Israeli market. Regarding drums, the leading brands are still Yamaha, Gretsch, and Pearl. And I would say that we have really influenced the Israeli market with Premier drums.

Interview by Patrick Berkery



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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS



Charles Lloyd Quartet *Montreux Jazz Festival 1967 Live*

JACK DEJOHNETTE at a career crossroads.

By the time master drummer Jack DeJohnette joined the Charles Lloyd Quartet in 1966, he'd earned sporadic cred with notable jazz leaders. But it was his two-year stint with tenor saxophonist/flutist Lloyd that truly put him on the map. Lloyd granted his young sidemen—DeJohnette, pianist Keith Jarrett, and bassist Ron McClure, recently replacing Cecil McBee—full freedom, and they soared with it.

Recorded in fine fidelity by Swiss Radio, the two-disc set captures the style-hybridizing quartet headlining the first Montreux Jazz Festival at the height of their popularity—Lloyd's *Forest Flower* was one of the best-selling jazz LPs of the decade. In addition, the unit attracted rock

crossover audiences, becoming equally at home playing international jazz festivals and sharing the bill with the Jefferson Airplane at the Fillmore West.

On this set's twenty-seven-plus-minute version of "Forest Flower," DeJohnette injects rock-energy backbeats adorned with untamed improvisation. During this period, Miles Davis had been scoping out the rising drummer, and DeJohnette would later escalate that energy when Miles recruited him to inherit Tony Williams's chair. The game-changing outcome was *Bitches Brew*.

While the quartet's lyrical side is present here, the most captivating moments are avant-garde excursions where the quartet explores with open abandon while

maintaining astonishingly connected interplay and attention to form—a very "in" approach to "out." Especially intriguing is the cat-and-mouse play between DeJohnette and Jarrett during the pianist's solos. They're young, fearless, and sure-footed. That bond—already strongly evident here—would spawn a five-decade association that continues today.

A drumming highlight is DeJohnette's must-hear extended solo on "Sweet Georgia Bright." His wildly creative spotlight moment explores unorthodox drum and cymbal textures—eliciting audible glee from the audience—climaxed with a blazing tempest. An overdue and welcome addition to the DeJohnette trophy shelf. (TCB) **Jeff Potter**



Antoine Fafard *Borrromean Odyssey*

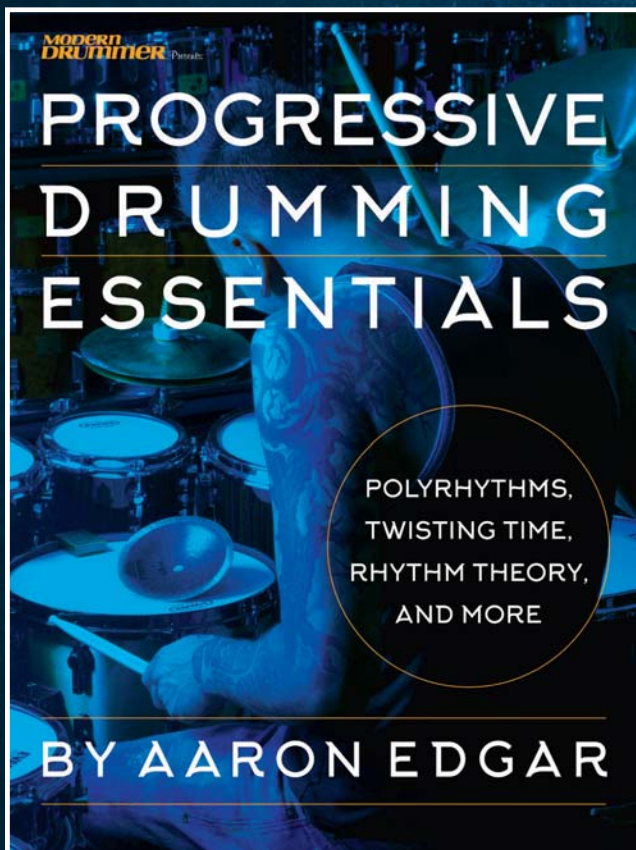
TODD SUCHERMAN's chops and pocket add thrills to this fusion date.

Fans of Todd Sucherman get to hear him infuse live Styx music with excitement and precision playing, but those looking for the drummer free of constraints will find much to enjoy on a new fusion disc from guitarist/bassist Antoine Fafard. Along with Gary Husband on keyboards, the musicians are laying down so much rhythmic information on this set of intricately arranged instrumentals, it's difficult to choose who to listen to. Sucherman's combo of snare ghosting and delayed

backbeats over seven in "The Seventh Extinction" drives the track with assurance, before ending with a quick barrage of fill combos that are over way too soon. Check out the lightning-fast singles and perfect flams during his breaks in "Time Lapse" and his grooving sidestick comping under the bass solo in "Inspired Mechanics." Classic rock might pay the bills, but Sucherman's developed voice on more note-centric material clearly inspires him—and gets our blood flowing. (antoinenefafard.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Play More PROG



SECTION 1: FUNDAMENTALS

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ODD TIME SIGNATURES

QUARTER-NOTE METERS

8th-NOTE METERS

12/8 TIME

16th-NOTE METERS

SECTION 6: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON POLYRHYTHMS

PART 1: TWO OVER THREE

The image shows two pages of a book with musical notation and text. The left page is titled 'SECTION 1: FUNDAMENTALS' and contains 'PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ODD TIME SIGNATURES'. It includes sections for 'QUARTER-NOTE METERS', '8th-NOTE METERS', and '12/8 TIME'. The right page is titled 'SECTION 6: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON POLYRHYTHMS' and contains 'PART 1: TWO OVER THREE'. Both pages feature musical notation on staves and accompanying text explaining the concepts.

Progressive Drumming Essentials is an expanded collection of articles originally written for *Modern Drummer* magazine. The book progresses from the fundamentals of odd time signatures all the way up to super-advanced concepts like implied metric modulation and displaced polyrhythms. For the most adventurous modern drummers out there, this is a must-have!

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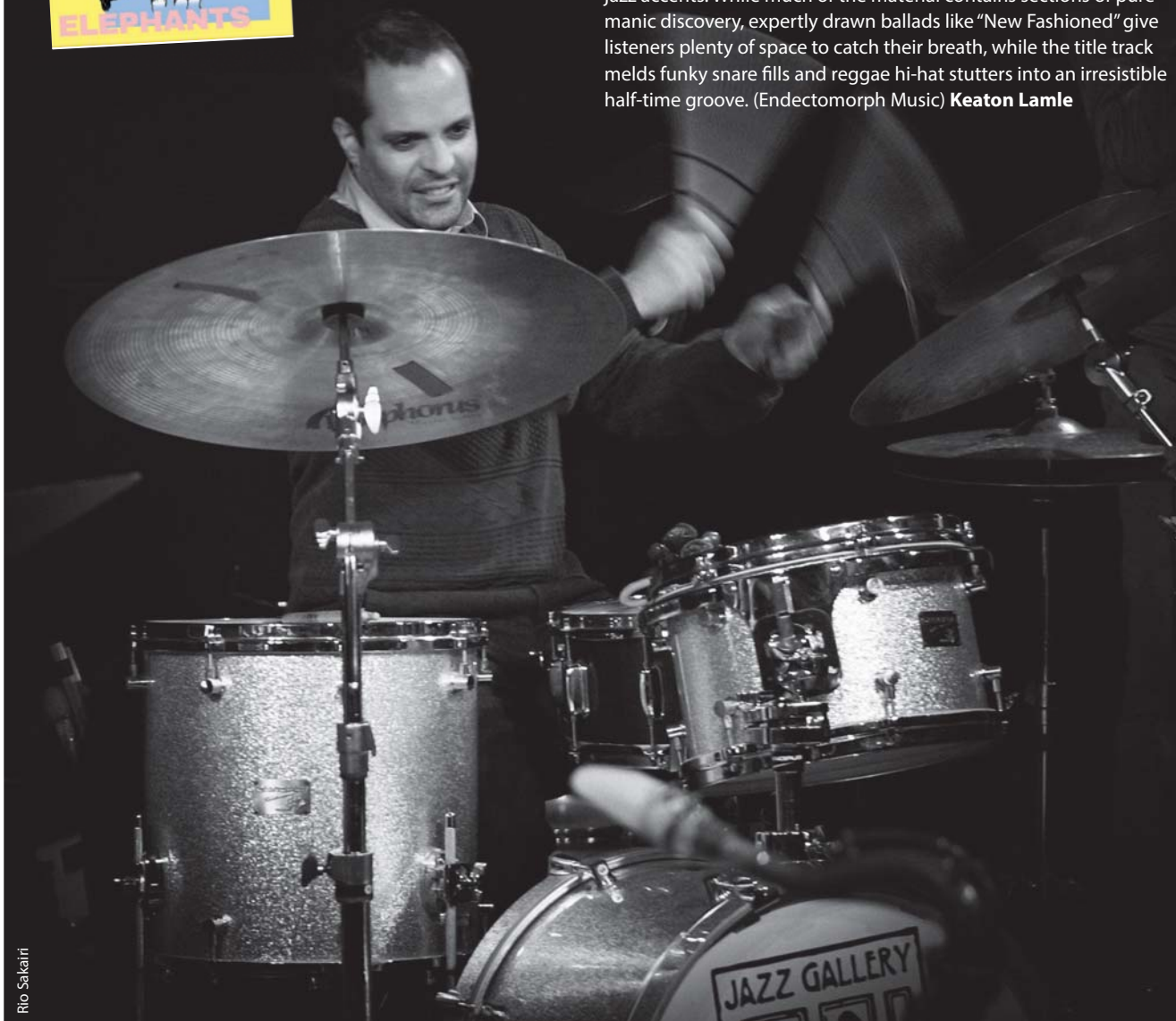
TAKING THE REINS

Dor Herskovits *Flying Elephants*

The Israeli drummer and bandleader twists jazz into a variety of strange shapes.



Raised in Israel and based out of Boston, drummer and composer Dor Herskovits takes listeners on an intentionally disorienting journey through various forms of jazz and rock on his quintet's latest release. Despite a tendency to return to Herskovits's sizzling swing work on the ride cymbal, many of the songs in this set take detours through progressive rock ("Magenta") and cinematic score territory. On "Recursion," Herskovits builds a satisfying solo from the ground up by alternating triplet patterns around different parts of the kit, including rims, bells, and a host of found objects, all before leading the quintet back into a series of slick jazz accents. While much of the material contains sections of pure manic discovery, expertly drawn ballads like "New Fashioned" give listeners plenty of space to catch their breath, while the title track melds funky snare fills and reggae hi-hat stutters into an irresistible half-time groove. (Endectomorph Music) **Keaton Lamle**

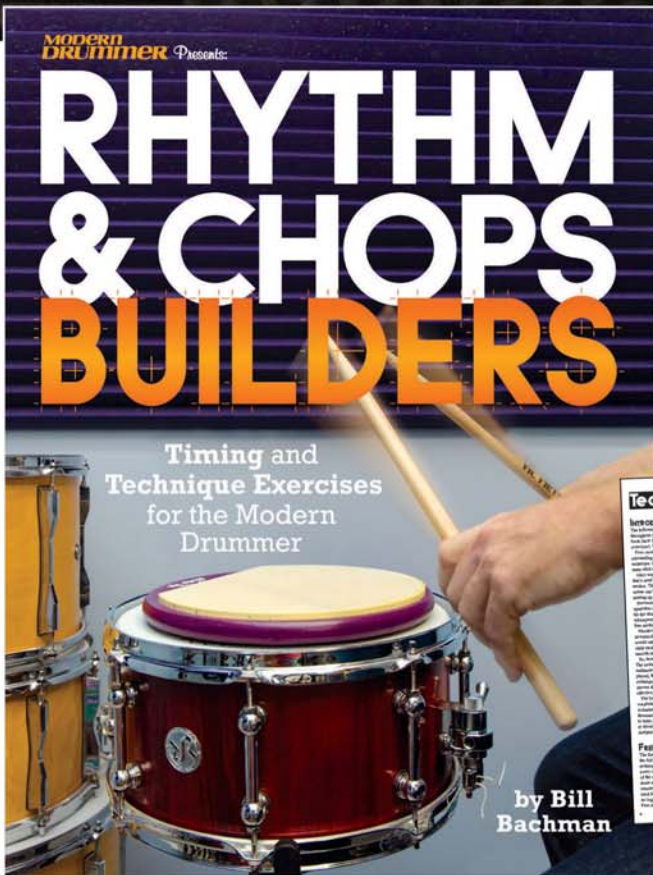


Rio Sakairi

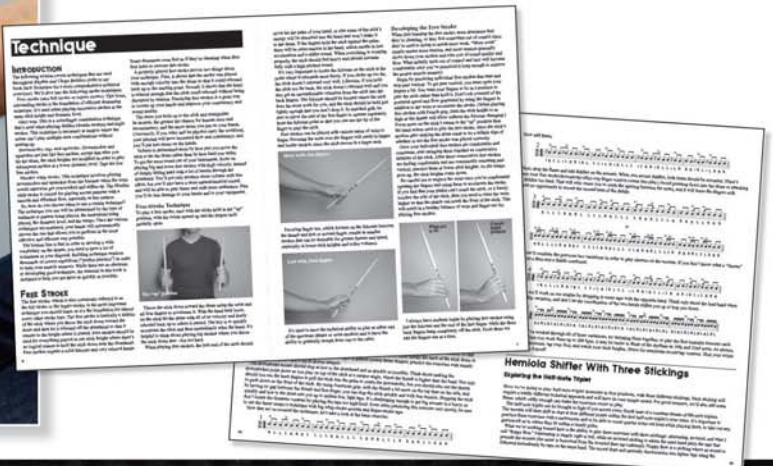
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Buddy Rich Just in Time: The Final Recording /// **Sunny Jain** Wild Wild East /// **Aaron Dolman** Nostalgia and Other Fantasies /// **Greg Essig** Numb /// **Barrett Martin Group** Indwell /// **Sebastian Cornelissen** Bevel Around the Edges /// **Jae Sinnett's Zero to 60 Quartet** Just When You Thought... /// **Ralph Peterson's Gen-Next Big Band** Listen Up!

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TAKING THE REINS



Jacob Hand

Charles Rumback and Ryley Walker *Little Common Twist*

Two veteran Midwestern musicians refract jazz and indie rock into base elements on their second instrumental LP.

Charles Rumback is a drummer who's made the rounds within Chicago's improvisational jazz scene, while Ryley Walker is best known for guitar-driven singer-songwriter work that wanders into experimental jam territory in live settings. On their second collaborative LP, Rumback and Walker explore sparse sonic territory. Rumback's brushwork moves deftly between heavy shuffles and light accents, giving Walker plenty of space to stretch into harmonic discovery. One joy of the album lies in surrendering to what may sound at first like chaos, only to slowly discover an idiosyncratic pulse as Rumback progressively unearths counterintuitive grooves. In other places (notably, "Idiot Parade") propulsive Afro-Cuban rhythms steer the ship confidently from the first beat. While the drumming is not often meant to be the main event here, songs like "Ill-Fitting/No Sickness," with its manic rim-driven percussion, demonstrate the qualities that make Rumback such an inviting collaborator. (Thrill Jockey) **Keaton Lamle**

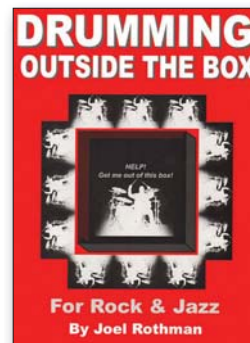


BOOK

Drumming Outside the Box by Joel Rothman

A treasure trove of varying cymbal and snare combos to expand the possibilities within jazz or rock.

For author Joel Rothman, "outside the box" here means changing up the standard ride cymbal beat found in classics like Ted Reed's *Syncopation* and other educational texts from drumming's nascent period. Clearly laid out with easy-to-follow examples of cymbal and snare notation, the material in this book introduces line after line of changing rhythmic ideas, as opposed to the traditional, static spang-a-lang ride pattern and snare "melodies" you're used to seeing. That creates challenges right away, because if you were to play a page from the top down, it would almost sound like what Philly Joe Jones or Art Blakey were doing on your favorite recordings from the 1950s, minus the magic of course. Rothman gets into dropping out parts of the triplet, incorporating sextuplets, and four-bar patterns in 5/4 time, so there's a lot of meat to work with. But students can realistically spend years combining just a few ideas presented here, and then adding dynamics and individual creative spark into the mix. (joelrothman.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**





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Joe Clegg's *You're So Hybrid: Ableton Live for Drummers*

Ellie Goulding's drummer and music director has taken away our excuses for not embracing electronic-drumming technology.

For a dyed-in-the-wool acoustic drum player, it's been difficult to avoid the news that professional drumming has become hybridized. Whether the gig is with a top-of-the-charts pop artist or a small club grind, the incursion of electronics, triggers, pads, Ableton rigs, and backing tracks has not just begun; the battle is over. If you want to remain viable as a professional in the widest range of contexts, a knowledge of the technologies that fuel current trends in pop music is essential.

Enter Joe Clegg, an affable, approachable Northern England-based drummer and music director who's created a warm and home-brewed introductory video course on the creative application of Ableton, pads, MIDI, and triggers to a live performance context. *You're So Hybrid: Ableton Live for Drummers* is a three-and-a-half-hour, fifteen-segment course that demystifies the process one would undertake to recreate extremely complex studio recordings and render them playable live. Clegg has plenty of bona fides, but his highest-profile gig is drummer/music director for U.K. pop star Ellie Goulding. And he passed the audition by applying his creative use of Ableton to Goulding's recordings.

Clegg's method is not about pressing play on a laptop and drumming acoustically along to a click track. It's also not about programming a set of static samples and reassigning them between each song in the set. Clegg's Ableton method honors the original song and intent of the producers, while allowing the drummer to actually play.

According to Clegg, *Ableton Live for Drummers* was created without any sponsorship. "I invested the money myself, edited it myself, and took a massive risk doing this on my own terms," Clegg tells *MD* from his home in Colne, U.K. "I'm not [working for] Ableton—it's not a sales pitch for them. But in this moment it's software that defines live music making."

The series has a bit of a "rough and ready" appeal: the introduction and first few segments lean heavily on defending the author's method and approach. But Clegg is a pure drummer who can more



than hold his own in any acoustic context and clearly loves sound and making music. He's leveraged technology to play the songs in his set dynamically, using Ableton to access the heart of the material while honoring his own creativity.

What is clear from the videos is that Clegg reached his current position in the industry with a painstaking attention to detail. The work that goes into reproducing the two Clegg originals featured here (the short and pithy "Pyramids" and "Arrival") can sometimes feel overwhelming, but Clegg doesn't try to pretend that what he's presenting is easy. His obvious love for process is infectious, and he's made his obsessive attentions a virtue worth cultivating.

For those of us who've written off the efforts of drummers in Clegg's position, there is no mystery anymore. This kind of work "inside the box" is not for the faint of heart. At the same time, Clegg has blazed the path through the wilderness. Watching this video introduces the technology, but also the conceptual underpinnings of this kind of work. Clegg's made the entire process approachable and digestible even for a technology-averse drummer. While there are moments that drag and sections that could have been trimmed, these flaws are far outweighed by the series' success in providing a clear introduction to this technology.

"I'm super passionate about recreating these wonderful drum tracks that have been made in the studios," says Clegg. "There's an art to it. I think we should put the same amount of care and craft into it because you *can* now. It's not a quick solution, but if you want to get into it, it's possible."

To learn more about *You're So Hybrid*, or to purchase the series, go to gumroad.com/l/joeclegg.

John Colpitts



Study Suggestions

"How can we encourage a generation of musicians and drummers with Ableton to become artists?" asks Joe Clegg rhetorically. "How do we make something new? Start with an inquisitive nature with the sounds that you hear on recordings, on videos, and on the radio. What are those sounds, how are they created, and how can I create them and play them myself?"

"If you've got Ableton already or Ableton Lite, it comes with a bunch of drum sample packs—you can get a classic Roland 808 or 909 sample pack from the Ableton website. Load them in, cycle through them, and familiarize yourself with these sounds. For instance, the 808 kick drum is prevalent on the radio; an 808 hi-hat sound slightly manipulated starts to sound a lot like a trap hi-hat. Do your research about songs and what kinds of sounds go into them.

"There's a good community of Ableton users on YouTube. From there you can see how to program these standard drum sounds, draw MIDI beats, and understand the process of how to create your own beats within the program. These sounds that you are taking for granted on popular songs actually have a source, and often these sources are easily accessible."

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Neil Peart

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Neil Peart, drummer and lyricist for the iconic progressive-rock band Rush, passed away on January 7 at the age of sixty-seven, after a battle with brain cancer. Peart first was featured on *Modern Drummer's* cover in 1980. Next month we will present a tribute issue to “the Professor,” marking his tenth appearance there in forty years. We hope you will join us in celebrating the career of one of the most influential players in the history of our instrument.

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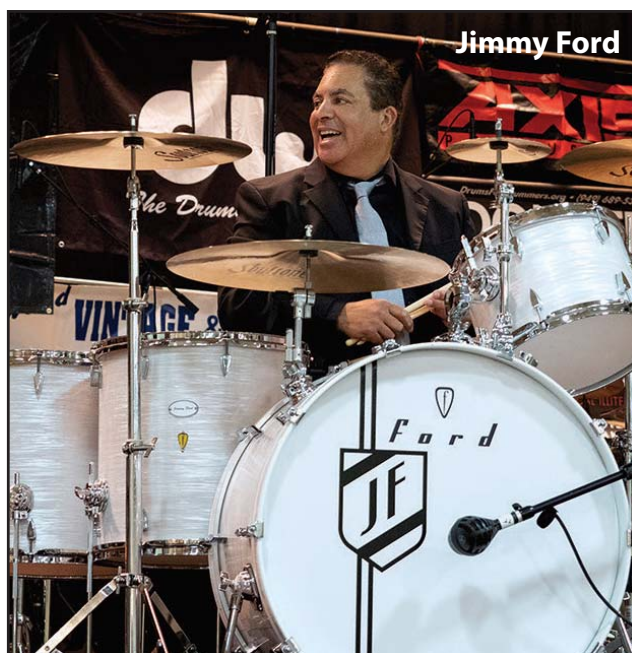
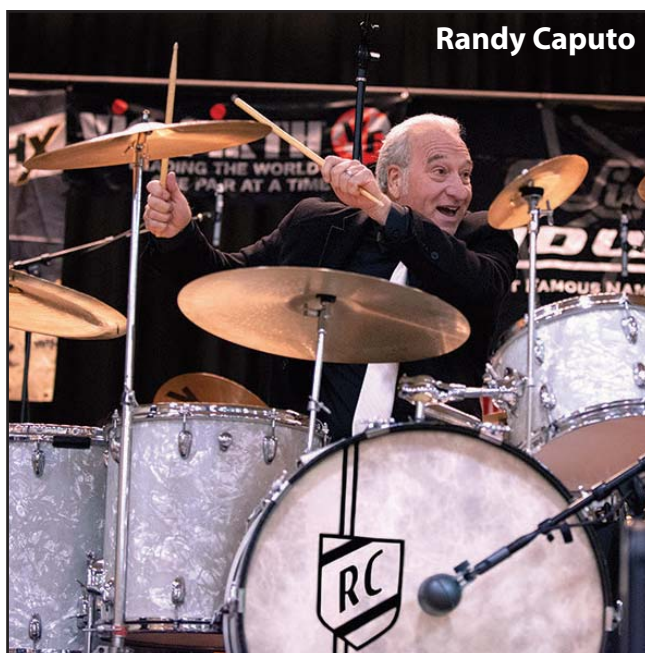
A year shy of twenty, the popular gathering offered its usual mix of classic gear, new offerings from contemporary manufacturers, and thrilling performances.

The nineteenth Hollywood Drum Show was held this past October at the Glendale, California, Civic Center. Packed with booths of vintage and modern drum gear, the show offered a lot for the attendees to check out and purchase. In addition, several great drum clinics were held on the main stage. These included an epic drum battle between Jimmy Ford and Randy Caputo, a special drum trio by the talented Wackerman brothers, a jazz trio performance led by Peter Erskine, and a fusion trio performance led by Gergo Borlai. Spotted in the crowd were celebrity drummers including Abe Laboriel Jr. (Paul McCartney), Bernie Dresel (Brian Setzer, BERN, the BBB), Rick Latham (Juice Newton, Rick Latham and the Groove Doctors), Eric Singer (Kiss), Anthony "Tiny" Biuso (T.S.O.L.), and Jon "Bermuda" Schwartz ("Weird Al" Yankovic).

For attendees looking to check out the latest gear, there were booths from drum companies Acoutin (introducing the first

"Inconel" metal alloy drum shell), Billy Blast, Cogs, Doc Sweeney, Dunnett Classic/George Way, DW, Fever, Gretsch, Jenkins-Martin, Pfeifer, PDP, Pork Pie, RBH, Tama, and Yamaha. Cymbals were displayed by Bosphorus, Istanbul Mehmet, Koide (a new company making cymbals in Japan), Meinl, Paiste, Sabian, and Zildjian. And accessories from Regal Tip, Techra, Vic Firth, Promark, Remo, D'Addario, Cymbolt, Drum Flip, Low Boy, No Nuts Cymbal Sleeves, Rob Cook/Rebeats, Tackle, and Mee Pro were in abundance.

Collectors and vintage drum buffs could get their hands on a number of great vintage drums, cymbals, and spare parts from Camco, Gretsch, Kent, Rogers, Ludwig, WFL, Premier, Slingerland, Zildjian, and Paiste, to name a few. Also in attendance was Carl Stewart's Drums for Drummers, a non-profit organization established to donate drums to underfunded schools.



Randy Caputo and Jimmy Ford are no strangers to the Hollywood Drum Show, having appeared several times. According to Randy, the two met in the mid '80s at an Anaheim music store, where the owner suggested they both try out a snare. Randy and Jimmy each played some rudiments, and Randy thought Jimmy sounded like Buddy Rich while Jimmy thought Randy sounded like Gene Krupa. They had an immediate connection, so Randy suggested they get together to jam.

Over time, these informal sessions sparked the idea of doing reenactments of the famous Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa drum battles. Jimmy said playing with Randy was like "old friends getting together for dinner—a musical conversation." They intentionally perform with little or no rehearsal so as to keep it spontaneous and fresh. It was a truly exceptional experience to watch them channel the spirits of Buddy and Gene.



Peter Erskine Trio

The legendary drummer/author/educator Peter Erskine took the stage next, along with Bob Sheppard on sax and Edwin Livingston on bass. Erskine's trio played a number of jazz tunes, including "How Deep Is the Ocean," "Twelve," "Charcoal Blues," "Cats and Kittens," and "You and the Night and the Music." Peter's drumming on a Tama S.L.P. New-Vintage Hickory drumkit was an exhibition in fluidity of motion, dynamics, style, and grace. For the first time in his many years attending the show, Peter also had a booth at the show, where he was selling some of his private collection.



Gergo Borlai

Gergo Borlai and his fusion trio with bassist Anthony Crawford and guitarist Alex Machacek followed Erskine's set. Borlai sat behind an eye-catching red Gretsch USA Custom drumkit, and his trio performed a handful of Machacek's original compositions. The drummer emphasized two key attributes for all players to master: practice ("Don't play—practice!") and patience.

Last onstage were the incredibly talented Wackerman brothers, Chad, John, and Brooks, each of whom played on a gorgeous DW drumkit. "It's been ten years since we last played together," noted Brooks, as their father, Chuck Wackerman, a renowned music teacher with more than sixty years experience, watched from the audience.

During their performance, John played a short solo on vibraphone while Chad played some melodic ideas on a Roland SPD-SX multipad. All three Wackermans addressed a variety of questions from the audience. In response to an audience member's query about how to improve musically, Chad responded, "Learn other instruments, because it will make you a better drummer."



Brooks Wackerman



Chad Wackerman



John Wackerman

Story and photos by Bob Campbell 

BACK THROUGH THE STACK

A few years ago, Emil Richards took me and my wife to see Buddy Rich play at a musician's night in a restaurant in Glendale.

All the musicians in town were there, especially drummers. So after his set—which was incredible—we all went back to see him in the dressing room. I'm just watching him sitting there and talking, having been buzzed on how he played so incredible. He looked real small and kind of vulnerable. So I went over and I said, "Can I kiss you, man?" I reached down and kissed him on the cheek. Everybody in the room was thinking, "What's Jim doing? He's crazy! Buddy's gonna kill him!" But he was so gracious and beautiful. He understood where I was coming from. He could feel what I felt in my heart.

Jim Keltner
Modern Drummer, November 1981



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