CHAD SMITH LEGENDS • SEE PAGE 79

# MODERN DRUMMER®



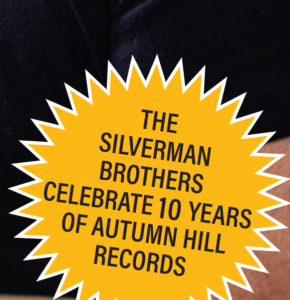
## DAVE WECKL
ON INNOVATION, EVOLUTION, AND CHICK COREA

## BROOKE COLUCCI
POWERS PLUSH

## DIRTY HONEY'S COREY COVERSTONE

## DENNY SEIWELL
REVISITS PAUL McCARTNEY'S *RAM*

## THOMMY PRICE
ROCKING THE HITS

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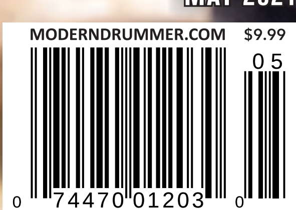

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## THE NEW ALBUM, "LIVE IN ST. LOUIS AT THE CHESTERFIELD JAZZ FESTIVAL 2019" AVAILABLE NOW ON ALL DIGITAL PLATFORMS!

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

# How a Dave Weckl Performance Changed My Life

I'll never forget the first time I saw Dave Weckl play the drums. At the time, I had heard Dave on records, but had never seen him play live or on TV. One fateful day, I happened to have the TV tuned to PBS, and there was Dave playing with the Chick Corea Elektric Band. During the song "Rumble," Dave did a drum solo, and in the middle of the solo, he triggered electronic drums from his acoustic kit. To say I was inspired would be a gross understatement. I was hooked, and that moment of how drums, electronics, technology, and music could all converge so powerfully—and in such an awesome and innovative manner—changed my life forever. In fact, it had a huge impact in forming what would become my life's work in music technology.

Not every story about experiencing Dave's playing will result in life-changing events, but you'd be surprised at how many do. He is a true, modern-day innovator, and he continues to evolve his own playing, as well as the art of drumming and education.

I'm really excited that Dave is making his sixth appearance on the cover of *Modern Drummer*, and sharing some very powerful insights on how to take one's craft—in this case, drumming, but it applies to any art form—and continually grow. Dave's online school—of which I've been a member since its inception—is a great learning platform for drummers at all levels.

The last year has been challenging for all of us—certainly for *Modern Drummer* and the community we serve—but things are improving every day. We remain committed to inspiring, educating, and informing our vast world of like-minded, passionate drummers and percussionists of all styles.

Keep going and never, ever give up!

**David Frangioni**
**Publisher/CEO**

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**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:** Donn Bennett, Michael Dawson, Bob Girouard, Mike Haid, Will Romano, Rich Scannella, Ilya Stemkovsky.

**MODERN DRUMMER** magazine (**ISSN** 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Fairfield, NJ 07004 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2021 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**


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**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: MODERN DRUMMER Publications**, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427. Tel: 973-239-4140.

**Email:** info@moderndrummer.com.



**MODERN DRUMMER** welcomes manuscripts and photos but cannot assume responsibility for them.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:** Modern Drummer, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call 973-239-4140 Phone hours, 9–5 EST Monday–Friday, or visit www.moderndrummer.com.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427.

**Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017** Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

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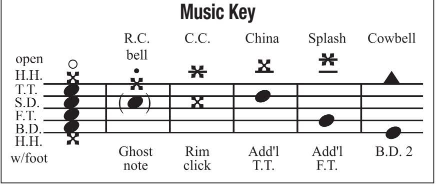
**PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES**

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# Who Is Your Favorite Post-Beatles Drummer on Any Former Beatle's Solo Albums?

Apparently, the *Modern Drummer* community loves their post-Beatles drummers. When we reached out on our Facebook page to query you about your favorite drummers on the solo albums of Paul, John, George, and Ringo, we received quite a flurry of comments—even one from drumming icon Mike Portnoy. As always, thanks for sharing your views, and please look out for future Readers' Platform questions on Facebook. Fab!

Alan White for being on both *All Things Must Pass* and *Imagine*—as well as "Instant Karma" and *Live Peace in Toronto*. A Bonus mention for Paul McCartney's drum solos on "Kreen Akrore."
— Mike Portnoy

Pete Best on his 2008 album, *Haymans Green*. — Bill McCue.

Paul McCartney on his first solo album. — Zak Eburne Stoodley

Buster Sidebury (Jim Keltner) with the Traveling Wilburys.
— John Keith

Joe English on *Wings over America*. Best drummer McCartney ever had. — Timothy Eberenz

Every time I would hear "Instant Karma," I'd think, "The drums were perfect. I wonder who plays them?" So one day I looked it up, and I found out it was Alan White.
— Tim Shumway

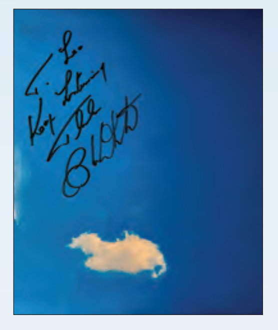
Jim Gordon on *All Things Must Pass* may be my favorite.
— Giacomo Fiocchi

Ringo Starr on *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*.
— Nick McDonald

Alan White on John Lennon's *Imagine*. He played to the songs, and he didn't try to play like he does with Yes. Alan is a very tasteful player. — Mitch Shaivitz

Joe English for his tasty playing in Wings and McCartney himself—the most "Ringo" sounding drummer during and after the Beatles. — Jason Apostoleris

Steve Gadd aside, without question the greatest full-time ex-Beatle drummer is Joe English. The drumming on the live version of "Maybe I'm Amazed" takes the prize. English wasn't just a studio drummer, he became a true member of a band. Abe Laboriel Jr. is okay, but English had a style that really sticks out. — William L Duffy



One of my prized possessions, signed by Alan White.
— Leo R. Dumas

Abe Laboriel Jr. on McCartney's live albums *Back in the U.S.* and *Good Evening New York City*. He not only captures the original essence of the tunes, but he adds his own personality and groove to the songs in an incredibly musical way. — Daniel Heier

Jim Keltner—the original fun machine! — Gregory Condemi

I am going to go out on a limb here and say that, apart from Steve Gadd on *Tug of War*, as a drummer the performance I still love the most was Steve Holley on *Back to the Egg*.
—Eric Lowenhar

Jim Gordon. He was the best.
— Scott Broadhurst

In the spirit of this being all about the former Beatles, Paul McCartney not only plays bass, piano, and guitar on both the Beatles and his solo albums, but he also plays the drums.
— Chris Turchetti

John Bonham on "Rockestra Theme" by Wings. — Tony Steel

I'd have to go with Jim Keltner, Alan White, or Andy Newmark.
— Rod Coleman

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*- Bill Ludwig III, Founder*

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KIT OF THE MONTH

# True Colors

## Kenny Kuzniar Designs Kit to Celebrate His 30th Anniversary of Drumming

Kenny Kuzniar did a bit more than throw a party to mark his 30th year of playing drums. Instead, the Saskatchewan, Canada, drummer worked with Dustin Drummond of Drummond Custom Drums to design a kit with the shells finished to represent the colors of the drums he has played over the past three decades.

"I've toured across Canada with many rock groups, and I've been a drum instructor and educator for more than 20 years," says Kuzniar. "I've played Yamaha Custom Maple, Tama Rockstar, and Sonor models in the past, and I wanted to honor those kits with the Drummond."

Kuzniar's 30th anniversary kit is handcrafted from maple and includes a 24x8 bass drum; 8x8, 10x10, and 12x6 rack toms; and 16x16 and 18x18 floor toms. The snare is a 6 1/2x14 DW Collector's series in polished brass. Cymbals are Sabian AAX, HH, and AA series models, and the hardware is a mixture of the DW 5000 series (hi-hat stand and double-bass pedal) and Yamaha (cymbal stands and tom rack). Kuzniar uses Vic Firth SD2 drumsticks and sits on a Pork Pie drum throne.

"Dustin is always searching for the perfect drum sound, and he experiments with different shell recipes to custom-build kits for the needs of specific drummers," says Kuzniar. "My shells are stave construction, because they produce a low fundamental note with a wide tuning range, and a good mix of attack and sustain. The bearing edges are dual 45, but progressively more rounded over as the size increases to achieve the thunderous sound I wanted. The drums are finished with nitrocellulose lacquer outside, oiled and waxed on the interior, and fitted with brass tube lugs and 2.3 mm hoops."

**Michael Molenda**

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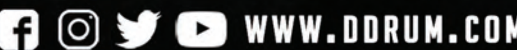


# 10 Pieces of Wisdom from the *MD* Archives

In its 45 years of publication, *Modern Drummer* has collected essential data from thousands of remarkable drummers, percussionists, and educators. Throughout our 45th anniversary in 2021, we will offer some features that celebrate the musicians, editors, writers, and photographers who have served the drumming community in these pages. So, sit back and absorb ten snippets of advice from some heroes of the kit.

### Ginger Baker on Channeling the Music

"As a drummer, you have such a wide selection of sounds, and the trick is to find the right sound for the music. That's much more of a skill than being able to play lots of different beats nobody else can play. If you can make the right sound for the music so that it sounds right, then you're a drummer—no matter how little technique you have." — May 1993

### Buddy Rich on Practicing

"I think it's a fallacy that the harder you practice, the better you get. You only get better by playing. You could sit around in a basement with a set of drums all day long, practice rudiments, and try to develop speed. But until you start playing with a band, you can't learn technique, you can't learn taste, and you can't learn how to play with a band until you actually do it. So practice—particularly after you've attained a job [as a drummer], because that's an opportunity to develop. Any practice, besides that, is boring. I know teachers who tell their students to practice eight hours a day. If you can't accomplish what you want in an hour, you're not gonna get it in four days." — January 1977

### Harvey Mason on Doing Sessions

"A good studio player is someone who goes on the date and feels at ease playing anything called for to make the artist happy, and who is fully capable of doing just that. A negative session is one in which you have an attitude where you really don't want to play what the people who hired you want you to play. That's really a negative situation, because if they've hired you, they either want you to play like you, or they want you to do something they hear—something they think you'll be able to do for them. If you don't want to do it, then you are not being cooperative, you're not being interested, and you're not doing the best job you can."
— July 1981

### Art Blakey on Discipline and Feel

"Freedom without discipline is chaos. You have to have some discipline. Everything you do takes discipline. Discipline means to relax. That's what it takes to play the drums. Chick Webb—the only teacher I ever had who taught me anything—Sid Catlett taught me that. Sid would always tell me, 'Art, when you're in trouble, roll. Just relax. You know what I mean?' It takes a long time to learn how to just relax.
I lectured some young drummers in Chicago the other day, and they all sound like they came off of a conveyer belt, because they don't identify themselves. There's no originality, and this is blocking the advancement of the instrument. People don't give a sh*t how many paradiddles you can play. People only know what they feel. The drum is the second human instrument, the voice being the first. You can take a drum and move the earth. Chick Webb told me that if you're playing before an audience, you're supposed to wash away the dust of everyday life. That's all music is supposed to do."
— September 1984

### Vinnie Paul on Double Bass Technique

"There are so many cool things you can do with your feet that are cooler than doing them with any other drums on the kit. For example, a lot of my playing is power playing, and if I can't do something with a lot of power, I'll find a way to develop that power. The way I went about getting that power into my playing was to use my feet more. When I played single bass drum, to make the timing right and to get all of the off-beats on my right foot, I would keep time with my left foot—just straight 8th notes. When I started playing double bass, I just moved my left foot

to the second drum, and I continued to play the 8ths with my left foot and the other notes with my right. I would sit down and play 16th notes for hours, starting off slowly until it started hurting. That's how you develop stamina. I found my left foot was a lot weaker than my right, and I had to really work on bringing it up. So while I was developing my left foot, I was also working on new stuff with my right foot, which helped lead to the patterns I play now."
— August 1994

### Anika Nilles on Solos

"When it comes to doing a drum solo, I can't play anymore. I feel totally empty. I have no ideas, no flow—nothing. I always need music to get inspired. I need melodies in order to feel something. I don't listen to other drum solos, and I don't like watching them. I don't find them interesting. They're just rhythms. People always want me to play drum solos, but I'm completely happy when I can play straight 4/4 without any fills."
— June 2017

### Travis Barker on Marching Band Exercises

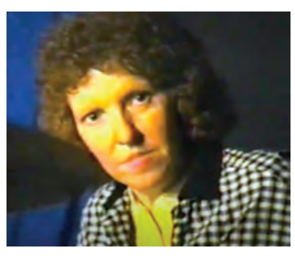
"I do a bunch of rudimental marching exercises—stuff I learned when I was in drum line. I'm still super into that stuff. I love working on the rudiments—the crazy flams, drags, rolls, single strokes. I studied jazz for years when I was young, but when I got into marching band, that's when my chops really got better. I took all of the knowledge I got from marching band and applied it to the drumset. Now, I make up my own exercises and crazy chops builders. When we're on the road, I practice every day, and right before I go on, I run through all of my marching stuff to make sure my hands are loose." — August 2001

### Bernard Purdie on Ergonomics

"A bad habit for drummers is sitting wrong. Drummers should sit up, with their backs positioned as if they had braces behind them and with their feet flat on the floor. If you learn how to play flat footed, it's easy to come up on your toes when necessary. If you learn to play on your toes, there's no place else for you to go. And if you always play on your toes, you'll end up with nerves, so that when you want to hit something light and easy, you can't do it. You lose the subtlety—the beauty. You get 'thump' instead of 'ting.' It can't be helped. Also, when you play with your fingers and you don't use the

wrists, you can get all the speed in the world, but you're not going to be able to sustain it, because the tendons will stretch. If your tendons stretch, sticks are going to drop out of your hands. You need the wrists to help you with power, longevity, and discipline. It takes years to find that out."
—November 1985

### Moe Tucker on Cymbals



"I don't know who invented the foot pedal [Tucker famously played standing up with her bass drum turned on its side while playing with the Velvet Underground]. I guess it allows you to play a crash at every moment, and I don't know who started that either. I guess a cymbal company! If you listen to old music—the kind I like—you don't hear a cymbal from one end of the day to the next. My son plays in a band, and I advised him to take all the cymbals away from his drummer. Maybe things got out of hand when it became about groups as opposed to studio musicians. Band members started thinking, 'We're stars!' and tried to draw attention to themselves. It became all about seven drums and all these cymbals, and two bass drums—which in my opinion is not only unnecessary but horrifying." — July 2005 (website only)

### Prince on Envisioning Everything

"One of the misconceptions about modern music is that a funky beat alone constitutes a song. Being a multi-instrumentalist, I tend not to be greedy on the drums. I don't want to overshadow the other colors on the track. One of the things I'm trying to teach John [Blackwell, New Power Generation drummer] is to hear the finished production in his head while he's recording it. This technique allows him to play the right thing at the right time." — October 2001

ENCORE

# *Fanny Hill*, Fanny 1972

By Michael Molenda

Fanny became the first all-female rock band to release an album on a major label when mega-producer Richard Perry signed the act to Reprise in 1969. Often missed is the other culture-changing element of Fanny—that, with Philippines-born sisters June (guitar) and Jean (bass) Millington, it also brought Asian rockers to the mainstream American music scene.

Although, at the time, the band had to endure unfair comparisons to topless casino novelty acts and unfounded criticism of their musicianship, the Millingtons, keyboardist Nickey Barclay, and drummer Alice de Buhr were incredibly passionate, focused, and hard-working. They rehearsed like demons, and, as live television and concert footage prove, they were a tight and powerful band that could negotiate various musical styles. Many popular artists of the 1970s came to appreciate that Fanny was exceptionally professional and had its own audience—especially in the U.K. and Europe—and the band was invited to tour with the Kinks, Humble Pie, Jethro Tull, Slade, and others. They performed on *American Bandstand, The Sonny and Cher Show*, and myriad national and international variety-TV shows, and even did session work for Barbra Streisand (*Barbra Joan Streisand*, 1971). Among their celebrity supporters were Beatles George Harrison and Ringo Starr, Deep Purple, Rod Stewart, and David Bowie, who famously name-checked Fanny as "one of the finest f**king rock bands of their time."

In 1971, Fanny reached the commercial pinnacle of a top-40 song on the *Billboard* charts with the title song of their album *Charity Ball*. As a result, expectations were likely high for the follow-up release, and Perry brought the band to London to record at Apple Studios with renowned Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick. The mojo must have been tremendous—a Beatle would drop by here and there to check out the sessions, so there's that—but the project was squeezed into a two-week window between concert performances. Happily, the band was tighter than Super Glue from its incessant touring.

While a significant number of fans and journalists consider *Fanny Hill* as the band's finest hour, the release barely singed the *Billboard* 200 album charts, coming to rest at #135.

"There are some stunning tracks on *Fanny Hill*," Barclay once stated to *Technodyke*, "but perhaps people let themselves be fooled by the cachet of Apple Studios—the idea that our recording an album at the 'Beatles' studio' was a badge of arrival."

Taken track by track, *Fanny Hill* is almost like an extravagant feast at Marie Antoinette's court. The songs are stylistically varied, zooming between '70s boogie ("Ain't that Peculiar," "Borrowed Time," "Rock Bottom Blues"), a soaring power ballad that could have been co-written by ABBA ("Knock on My Door"), up-tempo ravers ("Blind Alley," "Hey Bulldog," "The First Time"), echoes of Beatle-y fairy dust (You've Got a Home"), singer/songwriter themes ("Think About the Children," "Wonderful Feeling"), and even country ("Sound and the Fury"). Through it all, de Buhr drives the band's musical scenography with beautifully constructed and harmonious drum parts, nimble dynamics, and enough aggro bash to always be HEARD, while not overpowering the emotion of the song.

For a while now, de Buhr has been revisiting Fanny's musical legacy for the marvelous *Get Behind Fanny* podcast she co-hosts with Fanny historian Dr. Kristen Hillaire Glasgow (who is also Fanny manager Roy Silver's daughter) and super-fan and fannyrocks.com webmaster Byron Wilkins. So, it seemed like the stars had aligned to dig into the *Fanny Hill* sessions with a fresh perspective. There are plenty of session notes from the drummer's chair, as well as insights into working with a top-drawer production team at a celebrated studio, and all at a time when Fanny was gaining commercial notoriety, and seemingly on the cusp of delivering a breakout album.

"Overall, recording at Apple Studios was a great experience," says de Buhr. "At one point, George and Ringo came downstairs. 'Oh, what's going on here?' Yeah. It was a *big* deal."

**MD:** Can you set the scene for the band coming off of *Charity Ball* and preparing to record *Fanny Hill*?

**de Buhr:** Well, Richard had gotten us this four-record deal. That was rare for any band at the time, and it was a good thing for us, because the way our album sales went, the label probably would have dropped us after one-and-a-half albums. We never did sell many records, and we were never able to break through. I don't want to use the term "glass ceiling," because it's overused, so I'll simply say that I think we were ahead of our time. But we had some radio success with "Charity Ball," so here we were going into Apple Studios with Geoff Emerick. I remember walking in feeling this kind of awe, and thinking, "This is really cool. This could be it." Then, we just got down to work.

**MD:** Now, this was the era when some recording budgets were inflated and a few lucky bands would spend weeks or months in the studio "finding" the record. But you had just two weeks to deliver *Fanny Hill*.

**de Buhr:** Obviously, if you're going to cut an album in two weeks, you have to be ready, and we were well prepared. We had been touring a lot, and we'd always rehearsed a great deal as a band. I mean, Jean and I were psychically tight as a rhythm section. If we were not touring or recording, we were rehearsing—seven days a week and seven to ten hours a day. We were completely immersed in making and perfecting our sound, and that's what made us so tight.

But I also want to say that Reprise had very little money to spend on promotion. *Every* album Fanny did was on a shoestring budget. We were always breaking in new studios, recording during non-peak hours, and so on.
**MD:** As you were over in London, did you have to rent a kit for the sessions?
**de Buhr:** Oh, no. We were on tour over there, so I had my own. I used my go-to Camco drums for all of the Fanny albums I played on. I had two Camco kits, and I still have my natural-wood set. The rack toms were 12" and 14", and the floors were 16" and 18"—all tuned low. The bass drum was 22". I had a large, no-name ride and a crash cymbal on each side. My sticks were Regal Tip 5A.
**MD:** How did the *Fanny Hill* sessions start off for you?
**de Buhr:** We wasted two days trying to get a drum sound. Richard was a drummer himself, and he has said the drum sound was very important to him on the records he produced. He struggled with Geoff—and with me—trying to get whatever sound he was hearing. We did everything we could, and then Geoff vanished into this little hidey-hole and pulled out his special "Ringo mic" and used it as an overhead. [*Editor's note: This was likely a BBC STC 4038 ribbon microphone.*] He told me he'd kill me if I told anyone [laughs]. But we got our drum sound.
**MD:** It's astounding to me that Geoff Emerick couldn't put up mics in, like, an hour or two and make everyone happy. He was a phenomenal recording engineer.
**de Buhr:** Well, maybe it was one dick trying to show the other dick that his was bigger. I don't know how much of it was Richard. I know that Geoff was extremely patient. I remember Richard wanted to turn down June's guitar for something, and June asked Geoff, "What volume level did George Harrison set his guitar for this type of sound?" And Geoff said, "11." So, there might have been a struggle between Geoff and Richard that I was unaware of. I didn't think there was anything different about my drums than any other time I had taken them into a studio. But for the *Fanny Hill* sessions, maybe Richard had a particular sound he was trying to capture, and it was too elusive.
**MD:** During the two days they were dialing in drum sounds, were you hitting each drum individually for hours upon hours, or playing songs?
**de Buhr:** Partially that, and partially "hurry up and wait." It was, "Let's try this. Let's move that. Let's figure out something else," and then we'd play. The girls were hanging around going, "Alice..." [Laughs.] It was a struggle, it took forever, and I never understood why everything took so long. Whatever sound it was that Richard wanted, he either got it, or he decided to take what he got. I'm not sure.
**MD:** What drum sound were *you* going for?
**de Buhr:** Richard says in his book [*Cloud Nine: Memoirs of a Record Producer*] that he always tuned the drums himself, no matter who the drummer was. But I don't remember him ever touching my drums, as far as tuning them. I liked a beefy sound. For example, when we played live, I wanted you to feel the bass drum in your crotch—so much so that you'd have to close your legs. I'm happy with the drums on the album.
**MD:** Did you use the same tuning in the studio that you used live?
**de Buhr:** I never tuned my drums. I didn't even know until years later that you could tune toms to a note. Back in the day, you just tuned them until you got the sound you wanted. It wasn't a particular key or anything. It was simply how you liked to hear them, and I liked my drums big, fat, and deep.

**MD:** As Richard was a drummer himself, did he suggest parts to you, or give you free rein to develop your own?
**de Buhr:** Richard never suggested parts to me. In fact, I didn't know until today—after someone read me a passage from his book—that he had been drumming since he was ten years old. But, no, he would simply say that he liked a take, or that he didn't.
The whole magic of Fanny for me as a drummer was that I got to create the drum parts for our original songs, and I never copied the drum parts for any of the covers we did. I always felt that if you get a chance to record a song, you should make it your own. I wanted it to be Alice de Buhr's drum part on "Hey Bulldog," Alice de Buhr's drum part on "Borrowed Time," and so on. That was the key for me.
**MD:** Did you create your parts by jamming to the songs over and over, or would you envision them in your head before you sat down at the kit?
**de Buhr:** They developed over rehearsals.
**MD:** Were these totally your rhythmic concepts, or would you occasionally get directed to try a part by a band member?
**de Buhr:** There were only two songs where I was given some direction. One was never released, and the other was "Blind Alley," which Nickey and I co-wrote. Nickey said to me, "Imagine Keith Moon being a freight train." She wanted me to be all over the place, and yet still chugging along. I tried to give her what she wanted to hear. For June's and Jean's songs, they never came to me and said, "Okay, Alice, I want you to sound like a rocking chair," or whatever. It was pretty much the four of us coming up with our own parts. We knew our instruments, and we trusted each other to come up with the right parts in the right places for the songs.
**MD:** Some instrumentalists like to say they "play for the song," but few actually specify how that mindset informs the parts they create. Do you have a more definitive approach to crafting drum parts?
**de Buhr:** The philosophy I've had for years about how a song is best put together is with the bass and the drums laying the foundation, but that foundation also has to have some space. It's between the layers of the different instruments where you find it, and the vacuum that creates allows listeners to fill the space in their heads. It's so much more interesting to perceive some air than to hear a track that's so dense it doesn't breathe. Part of the magic of the Rolling Stones to me is that Charlie Watts could be a fraction of a second ahead of the beat, while Bill Wyman was a fraction of a second behind the beat. The fraction of a second of space created by their musical interaction is critically important.
**MD:** How did the band set up in the studio? Was it like a rehearsal—with the players all together—or was everyone in separate booths?
**de Buhr:** We were together. They had some nice sound baffles to set up a little drum cage to manage signal leakage, but we all had line-of-sight to each of us.
**MD:** I assume you were the timekeeper for the sessions, as the *Fanny Hill* project was a bit early for the click-track obsession of the '80s and beyond.

**de Buhr:** [Laughs.] I have a story for you. We were going to play along with the track to "Summer Song" on *The Jonathan Winters Show*. The producer asked, "Is there a click track [on the song]?" I didn't even know what a click track was. I said, "There's no click track. It's just me. Da-da-de-da-da-de-da-da-boom." Then, I saw a camera was trained on me. I looked up at the sound booth, and I said, "If I'm on camera when we start, it's going to look really stupid, because I won't be able to sync with the soundtrack." The producer says, "Don't worry, little lady, we've got that covered." Then, Nickey pipes up and says, "Well, if you knew anything, you'd know she'll look stupid." And he goes, "That's a wrap! You're off the show."

**MD:** Fired by a click track!

**de Buhr:** Yes. Until that time, I didn't even know what a click track did. I just went, "One, two, three, four," and we'd start. We didn't play to a click track, and we didn't record with one.

**MD:** How many basic tracks did you try to cut each day?

**de Buhr:** Once we got sounds, we'd do three to ten run-throughs of each song, depending if Richard heard something he liked or didn't like. We probably tried to get three or four basics down each day. All of us were so ready to go in each day and do what we had to do. If something didn't work, we'd re-record it the next day and fix it. It's interesting. I kept journals from 1971 to 1973, and there's absolutely nothing written down for the two weeks we were recording *Fanny Hill*. That should tell you how crazy busy it was.

**MD:** What about scratch vocals? Did someone sing along while the band recorded the rhythm tracks?

**de Buhr:** No vocals. We never had scratch vocals. We were so well rehearsed that we didn't need vocal cues to know where we were in the song.

**MD:** How were your interactions with the Millington sisters?

**de Buhr:** June and I had a rough relationship at times—we are like oil and vinegar—but I respected her musically. In fact, I didn't want to be in a band that she wasn't in. After *Mother's Pride*, she wasn't there anymore, and that's one of the reasons I quit. June was the best rhythm guitarist I ever played with, and she became the best lead guitarist for Fanny songs. One of the things I love about her solos is that they were always melodic, and they always fit the song perfectly. There was never any of that "Arabian Nights" stuff—the dweedle-y, dweedle-y, woo-woo crap. She was always laser-focused on being the best guitarist she could be for the band. As for Jean, she and I were always in the pocket. I always wanted my bass drum to mimic what Jean was playing. We had that unspoken communication thing that only occurs when a band practices together constantly.

**MD:** When the album was completed, were you more or less happy with the result?

**de Buhr:** Listen, I'm sure Richard was trying to make the best album he could, but I don't feel he ever captured Fanny's live energy. I don't think Todd Rundgren did on *Mother's Pride* [1973], either. You know, they're male producers, so it was, "Oh, I know what sounds best," and they added things that weren't us. I mean, do you like the Mariachi horns on "The First Time"? I would have loved to fill that space with a keyboard or guitar solo. I don't think either of them said, "Hey, this band is a good band. How can I help them sound their best, yet still sound like themselves?"

**MD:** How about your drum parts, specifically?

**de Buhr:** I think a pitfall you can have with a short recording turnaround is that the drum parts can sound the same in a lot of the songs. Overall, my drumming on *Fanny Hill* does not, and I'm really pleased about that.

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# Dave Weckl

## The Sublime Power of Supporting Music with "Special Sauce"

By Mike Haid

What inspires the human spirit to pursue and achieve greatness? In the case of six-time *Modern Drummer* cover artist and *MD* Hall of Famer Dave Weckl, there are many levels of achievement to explore in the evolution of one of drumming's most accomplished ambassadors. From Weckl's youthful aspirations to his hard-earned success in the highly competitive New York studio scene, his dedication to following his passion led him to opportunities beyond his wildest expectations. In fact, what embodies the drumming industry in terms of sound, technique, style, and product innovation was partially influenced by Weckl's unique vision to develop new sonic possibilities, pursue unexplored rhythms, and conceive products that advance the art of drumming.

As a teen growing up in St. Louis, Weckl realized drumming was his passion. At 17, he was already playing six nights a week. At 18, he moved to Connecticut to attend University of Bridgeport with aspirations of becoming a New York City session player. As fate would have it, the bassist in the university's jazz band invited Weckl to join the group that would become Nite Sprite (named for the classic Chick Corea tune)—a mostly jazz-fusion band performing original music, along with contemporary material from Weather Report and Corea. Eventually, Weckl recruited his long-time St. Louis friend, keyboardist Jay Oliver, who had been touring with Maynard Ferguson, and the two roomed together in Westport, Connecticut.

Eventually, Nite Sprite debuted in New York at the Brecker Brothers club, Seventh Avenue South. It was lots of heavy lifting of gear to the upstairs venue for $20 a player. During this time, Weckl had been sending tapes and letters to Peter Erskine, who was drumming with Stan Kenton. While Erskine was hanging out in New York with jazz guitarist Steve Khan, the two went to see Nite Sprite. Erskine was so impressed with Weckl's playing, he recommended him for a gig with a group called French Toast, featuring Santo Domingo pianist Michel Camilo and New York session bassist Anthony Jackson. Ironically, Jackson was the bassist who played on Corea's "Nite Sprite" along with studio-drumming giant Steve Gadd—who Weckl had studied intently in his youth.

And so began Weckl's entry into the big leagues.

"I had finally achieved the level I had always dreamed of reaching," he remembers. "The moral of this story is that it's all about supporting the music, making it feel good, and putting your own special sauce on it so you're not sounding too generic."

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**MD:** Who were the drummers that most inspired you to make drumming a career?

**Weckl:** My "A List" of drumming influences includes Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, David Garibaldi, and Billy Cobham. The thing that attracted me to these players was their emotional input. There can be an awesome technical display, but the emotion is what grabs you.

**MD:** Your style seems to be an amalgam of the funky, linear approach of Garibaldi, the melodic orchestrations of Gadd, the technical prowess of Colaiuta, and the fluent, effortless facility of Rich.

**Weckl:** Thank you for those kind words. David Garibaldi's drumming with Tower of Power was in heavy rotation in my auto cassette player. David was a heavy influence on me from the late 1970s when I was a teen, and on into college. And, of course, Steve Gadd. Honestly, there was a time when I had to stop studying Gadd, because I was obsessed with sounding like him. I was heavily into transcribing him, and tuning my drums like his, because Nite Sprite was performing a lot of the music he was playing on. Looking back, it actually got me a lot of gigs. For instance, when I started playing with Anthony Jackson—who had worked a lot with Gadd—we hit it off immediately, because I played a lot like the drummers he liked to play with. Anthony told me Gadd was responsible for teaching him a lot about rhythmic precision. Anthony was also in Buddy Rich's band, so we had that musical connection, as well.

**MD:** What attracted you most to Gadd's rhythmic concepts?

**Weckl:** A lot of it had to do with the duration of the notes he played, along with his touch and sound. I don't feel that a lot of drummers—especially younger players—think about the duration of the notes they're playing. Do many drummers think of cymbals, for example, in terms of short and long notes? Also, consider which voices on your kit best serve the music based on the duration of notes the other instruments are playing. It's about creating the proper tonality, vibrations, and accents with the appropriate sound sources. That seems to be often forgotten or overlooked. Gadd is such a master at beautifully articulating his musical orchestrations around the kit with the perfect sound, touch, and feel.

**MD:** When did your influences start to morph into your own sound?

**Weckl:** It was in the early to mid '80s. My good friend, bassist Tom Kennedy, and

I wrote and recorded with guitarist Bill Connors, and that's when I really started coming into my own sound and style. Chick Corea heard me play at The Bottom Line in New York City with that band.

**MD:** What did you do to create your sound?

**Weckl:** I started thinking a lot about what I could physically change on the kit to do things differently. I put a closed hi-hat on the right side of my kit, and I added a floor tom on the left side. About that time, I also started studying with Gary Chester—well before his *The New Breed* instructional book. Gary really turned my head around.

**MD:** How so?

**Weckl:** Gary was already utilizing several hi-hats around the kit, as well as experimenting with unique voices to create musical and rhythmic ideas—all based off independent exercises. It was his concepts that really started taking my style and thought process into new directions—away from my original Gadd and Garibaldi influences, and into my own style and sound.

**MD:** What other teachers had a significant impact on your style?

**Weckl:** Freddie Gruber made me aware of incorporating mind, body, heart, and soul into my playing, as well as creating a comfortable relationship with the sticks, then the instrument, and how it can all work in harmony. He also got me focused on developing the Moeller technique, which motivated me to change my setup for a more fluent and ergonomic approach. [*Editor's Note: Developed by Sanford A. Moeller (1878–1960), the Moeller method combines a variety of strokes and wrist-whipping techniques to improve hand speed, power, and control.*] I've studied with some amazing teachers my entire life. All of these influences have helped shape my playing, and they continue to shape my playing. I'm a perpetual student, and I'm still learning.

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**MD:** How did you end up playing with Simon and Garfunkel?

**Weckl:** After Nite Sprite, I was in another band, Called, with some great players about the same time I was playing in French Toast with Michel Camilo and Anthony Jackson. Anthony and I really hit it off, and he started recommending me for lots of sessions in New York. This was also at a time when Gadd took a break from the scene for a short period, and Simon and Garfunkel were doing a lot of reunion shows. Anthony recommended me to replace Gadd on their tour. Meanwhile, I was working a lot at Seventh Avenue South doing jazz gigs. One night, I was playing there with a fusion-jazz group, and in walks a small posse. They sit this guy down and walk away. I look up and it's Paul Simon. He had come to the gig to check me out, and he left before we were finished. The next day, I got the call to do the Simon and Garfunkel tour.

**MD:** What led to your meeting with Chick Corea?

**Weckl:** The 1983 Simon and Garfunkel tour lasted about eight weeks. It was a real awakening going from playing weddings and small clubs to stadiums and giant arenas. After that tour, I went back to New York and started doing a lot of sessions. That was when Chick was putting together a more modern-sounding electric-jazz group—a departure from the Return to Forever music of the 1970s. I was still playing with Michel and Anthony, and I was also working with Who It Is, which was an R&B project with the Stuff guys—Richard Tee, Will Lee, and Cornell Dupree. It was a busy time. I believe I did 60 or 70 records between 1983–1985.

Anyway, I was gigging with Bill Connors at The Bottom Line, and the stage was set up so you could see all the people. We're in the middle of the set, and I look up and here comes Chick Corea and his wife Gayle

walking down the aisle. He had already found [bassist] John Patitucci, and he was looking for a drummer for his new band. He had spoken with Michael Brecker, and Michael had recommended me. Earlier that day, he was hanging with Brazilian pianist Tania Maria, and she played him the Michel Camilo recording. He immediately asked about the drummer. All the stars had aligned for our meeting that night when Gayle saw I was playing at The Bottom Line. We met after the show, and he asked if I'd like to come out to Los Angeles and play with him and John—whom I hadn't met yet. This was in late 1984, so spring 1985 is when we really started our longtime relationship.

**MD:** What's your first recollection of working with Chick?

**Weckl:** We rehearsed for maybe a week, and then did our first gig as a trio—which was recorded at Elario's in La Jolla, California. You can hear my playing was a bit timid, and the drums sounded very muffled. But the band was gelling. I had spent so much time playing to Chick's records that I knew his style, comping, and phrasing. But it was still a pinch-me moment to be playing with someone I had grown up listening to as a fan.

John and I would record ourselves, and analyze what we needed to do to better support Chick. I recall playing the Queen Mary Jazz Festival, and I got a board recording right after the show. When I put it in my car's cassette player, John and I both felt Chick was burning, but we were dragging. At that moment, we realized we were approaching the gig more like an R&B rhythm section, allowing the soloist to burn while we held down the groove. We knew we couldn't play that way any longer. We had to push the tempo and support Chick and the music. I was partially to blame, because I didn't understand how to "own it" enough yet, and still give Chick what he was looking for. But he was cool enough to let us do our thing until we figured it out.

**MD:** When did you introduce your electronics, and how did the Elektric Band evolve?

**Weckl:** We only did one tour as an acoustic trio, and I was adding electronic triggering along the way. We recorded *The Chick Corea Elektric Band* [GRP] in 1986 with Carlos Rios and Scott Henderson on guitars. We toured with Scott for a few dates, and then we decided to expand the group. We hired guitarist Frank Gambale, and added Eric Marienthal on sax. By the time we released *Light Years* [GRP] in 1987, we had realized our direction. It was a struggle to be a fusion band and get on the radio, because smooth jazz was big at the time. Chick wanted to reach more people but stay true to his compositional spirit. He wasn't happy with the overall results from *Light Years*, so he returned to writing in a way that was more comfortable to him. For *Eye of the Beholder* [GRP] in 1988, we went back to a more acoustic production, instead of the heavy triggering of *Light Years*. At that point, I went back to white, single-ply heads, and a more open, acoustic sound.

**MD:** Do you feel Chick helped you find your voice on the instrument?

**Weckl:** Indirectly. A lot of it had to do with Chick, because I had been listening to Gadd on Chick's earlier records as a teenager, and I studied the mix and the drum sounds on those recordings. As a professional, I had the opportunity to do a lot of experimentation with sound—developing the ability to mix and record drums using various tunings, heads, microphones, mic placement, and so on. My love for mixing and engineering grew along with my playing skills. By the time I started recording my own music in the early 1990s, I had a clear vision of my sound. Jay Oliver was also a big part of how I created my sound and style.

**MD:** Can you describe your sound in the 1980s?

**Weckl:** There was way too much compression and reverb on the drums. I was always trying to make up for the lack of

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spatial elements in dead-sounding drums. The natural tendency was to add reverb to make it bigger. Now, I accomplish sonic aspects with my touch and feel on the kit—as well as drum and cymbal choices—to capture the sound I want, instead of manipulating elements with something electronically artificial.

**MD:** How did the Chick Corea Akoustic Band emerge from the Elektric Band?

**Weckl:** The E-Band was touring to promote *Eye of the Beholder*, and a new record was due. But we had no time to record because we were touring so heavily. Chick was just going to go in and record a trio record with, I think, drummer Roy Haynes and bassist Miroslav Vitouš. But then he said to John and me, "Hey, would you guys be interested in doing an acoustic jazz record?" We went right into the studio and rehearsed and recorded it all at the same time. We finished *Akoustic Band* in a day or two. We didn't put much thought into it. Surprisingly enough, the record won the 1990 Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Performance, Group. Then, everyone wanted the Akoustic Band to tour. All of a sudden, we had two bands on tour, and it got pretty crazy.

**MD:** How crazy?

**Weckl:** Honestly, I was at a point in my career where I was getting pretty burnt out. Between all of the touring and recording with Chick, and doing my own records, I wasn't happy with myself. I had no time to practice and keep growing as a player. I also wanted to do other projects that I was getting called for, but I had to turn them down because of my hectic schedule. I felt that I needed a break. We did a couple of more E-Band records—*Inside Out* [1990] and *Beneath the Mask* [1991]—and then Chick and I came to a friendly and mutual agreement that it was time to go our separate ways. That's when the first generation of the Elektric Band ceased to exist.

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**MD:** What motivated you to develop the *Contemporary Drummer + One* instructional package in 1987?

**Weckl:** GRP offered the entire Elektric Band individual record deals. Initially, I refused because I didn't feel I was ready to release a solo project. But I always had a goal to release an instructional drumming package that I hadn't seen anyone else do yet. So I asked GRP to let me do the educational project first—in order to reach as many drummers as possible, and recreate an audience for the solo album.

*Contemporary Drummer + One* was a childhood dream come true. As I was listening to Gadd, Buddy Rich, and all the great players, I kept wondering where were *their* instructional products? When I was about 13, I loved *Big, Bad & Beautiful* by Roy Burns with the Dick Grove Big Band. It was a vinyl LP with charts, and it was responsible for me learning to read big band music. But I thought, "Wouldn't it be great if there was a version *without* drums?" So the idea to create a top-notch recording, transcriptions, and charts had been on my mind since I was a kid. Jay and I produced *Contemporary Drummer + One*, and I transcribed every single note I played, which I vowed to never do again [laughs]. My concept was to create a package that prepared a drummer to become a studio player—which is why I recorded a variety of musical styles.

I continued my instructional endeavors with *Back to Basics* in 1988 and *The Next Step* in 1989. From there, I released several books and some Latin instructional videos with Walfredo Reyes, Sr. Now, I have my own online school, and I continue to share my discoveries and experiences with my students.

**MD:** How does the "Spur of the Moment" flexi disc you and Jay Oliver produced for the Sound Supplement in the October 1987 issue of *Modern Drummer* factor into your drum-sound evolution?

**Weckl:** The *MD* disc was the first recording

that introduced drummers to "my" sound. It was the punchy, tight sound that Jay and I had been striving for. I learned all of my engineering skills from Jay, as well as from watching the recording engineers in New York. I was studying all the signal paths—EQ, compression, input level, and so on—that create a great drum sound.

**MD:** Then, your first solo album, *Master Plan*, was finally released in 1990.

**Weckl:** That was a special moment in my career. I was pulling in all of my musical friends, such as Tom Kennedy, Jay Oliver, Anthony Jackson, Eric Marienthal, and my all-time favorite sax player, Michael Brecker. Chick played on a track, as well.

**MD:** What was your approach to recording the drum sounds for *Master Plan*?

**Weckl:** Steve Gadd was the first drummer I had ever heard with such clarity of drum sounds, and a precision and cleanliness of playing that really came across in the recordings. When I listened to the records he played on in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I had assumed he was hitting really hard to get those big, thick sounds. If you watch live videos from that era, he *was* hitting pretty hard. But, in the studio, it was much different. He was actually playing with beautiful control. His kit was close-miked, and he knew not to play over a certain volume level to allow the mics to capture the richness of the drums. I wanted to discover how to create that sound in the studio. Jay and I experimented with drum sounds, using smaller drum sizes and thicker heads. When we tuned the heavier heads down, they didn't sound that great acoustically, but when you put a good mic on them in the studio, the tone was amazing—punchy, thick, and rich. We used a little duct tape on the edge of the heads to help reduce harmonic ringing and add to the punch.

**MD:** Talk about the title track, which features your incredible drum duet with Steve Gadd.

**Weckl:** I wanted to recreate Chick's *The Leprechaun* [1976] and *The Mad Hatter* [1978] recordings—with Chick and Steve—and then insert myself in the middle of it all. So I asked Chick to compose a drum duet for Steve and me.

**MD:** How did you approach Gadd to do the track?

**Weckl:** I met Steve during the Buddy Rich Memorial Concert in 1989, and I asked him about doing the track with me. He was into it. We put together the chart and knocked it out. It was a one-day event. We rehearsed it, and then we tracked it. There were no fixes or overdubs. Overall, it was a really beautiful experience. We were checking out each other's kits and talking shop like drummers do. I also remember being sick as a dog with a bad cold. But it was one of the best days of my life.

**MD:** There was also a historic drum-trio performance at the Buddy Rich Memorial with you, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Gadd.

**Weckl:** Buddy was a huge influence on my drumming from a very early age. I even have what is believed to be one of his drumkits with signed heads and all. I'll never forget the day he passed on April 2, 1987. It was devastating. Buddy and I were scheduled to perform later that year at PASIC, so his

# Autumn Hill Records

## Always in Season for Instrumental Music

By Michael Molenda

Autumn Hill Records recently released Dave Weckl's *Live in St. Louis at the Chesterfield Jazz Festival 2019*. You can deploy the much-overused term "a labor of love" for the project, as the concert was a hometown celebration of a hometown boy by a hometown label. The album also marks Weckl's first release with his band—featuring original members Jay Oliver (keyboards), Buzz Feiten (guitar), and Tom Kennedy (bass), along with sax player Gary Meek—in 16 years.

The Silvermans are active, ambitious, and supportive players and composers—Michael is a keyboardist and Rob plays drums—which makes Autumn Hill a "musician's label" at its very core, and a very successful one at that. In a decade of operation, Autumn Hill has logged 14 number-one albums on Apple Music, more than six billion streams, and a catalog of music that has been heard on television (HBO, NBC, CBS, etc.), in films by directors such as Martin Scorese and Ken Burns, and on tracks by label artists that include John Patitucci, Jeff Lorber, Jennifer Batten, Gregg Bissonette, Vinnie Colaiuta, Dweezil Zappa, and the brothers themselves.

"It has been an amazing ride," says Rob. "And we have big hopes for 2021. We plan to release a bunch of albums this year, as well as try to kick off a national tour for the classical/jazz fusion group that Michael and I have, Bach to the Future. Overall, it has been wonderful having the opportunity to work with so many great musicians through the label. It's really true—thanks to the internet, everyone can pursue their dreams."

**MD:** What prompted you to start a label focusing on instrumental music?

**Rob:** We grew up in a household with classical-musician parents. Our mother was a cellist and pianist, and our father played cello in the St. Louis Symphony for 42 years. As we got older, we became big fans of the instrumental music on the Windham Hill label and the cutting-edge jazz/fusion artists on GRP Records. All of those jazz, world music, and new-age artists influenced us, and it has been a dream come true to start this label and get to work with many of the musicians we've admired all these years.

**MD:** What entices you to sign an artist? What creative elements make you go, "Wow, this musician has *got* to be on Autumn Hill"?

**Michael:** We have been lucky that so many great artists have a St. Louis connection, and the relationships have grown organically over time. We organize a number of music festivals in and around the St. Louis area, and this has allowed us to meet—and often perform with—many of our heroes. This year, we are releasing music with Dave Weckl, Eric Marienthal, Tom Kennedy, and Gary Meek, among others. Recent releases with John Patitucci and Jeff Lorber have been very rewarding, as well.

**MD:** In general, what are the major challenges to running a record label these days, and what additional challenges may have been dumped onto the pile during the pandemic?

**Rob:** As we are an almost entirely digital label, the changes in the industry have actually been very positive for our business model. Distribution is obviously much easier than it was 20 years ago, and we also do all of our marketing online, as well. The streaming age is a huge benefit for instrumental music, because instrumental albums are often played all the way through, as opposed to pop singles. So the small payouts per song add up quite a bit better for instrumental artists.

**MD:** That said, the streaming revenue share

daughter Cathy asked me to be part of the memorial show. There were actually two shows—one in New York, and the other in Los Angeles. We briefly rehearsed the show in New York, but we didn't really talk about what we were going to play for the trio thing. We just discussed the form—each of us would start individually, Steve would establish the groove, then we'd all come back in and trade eights, and end with the clave thing. Boom. That was it!

**MD:** What was it like being the freshman of the trio, and starting off the performance by yourself?

**Weckl:** Playing with two guys you highly admire is humbling. With Steve being the elder statesman, we asked him to set the groove and the tempo. The whole event was very special, because it was all about remembering Buddy. For me, it was all about the joy of sharing the stage with these great players. It certainly was not about trying to outdo the other guys—which would be ridiculous anyway. We all had the same level of respect for each other to do our thing in a musical exchange of spontaneous drumming ideas. By starting it off, I had a blank slate to build a musical theme. When I solo, I think from a musical place—not about pulling off licks. If you think musically, it becomes a composition, and you draw from the emotions in the moment.

**MD:** What are you thinking when you're composing a solo?

**Weckl:** I'm pulling from the entire history of what I've listened to, how it makes me react when I hear certain melodies in my head, and how I can convey them emotionally onto the drumkit. I'm composing a musical statement based on everything I've studied, learned, and absorbed from pop music, Dixieland jazz, big bands, Latin, fusion, and beyond. It's not about creating a solo from rudimental drum chops. I never think about strokes or rudiments. I may interject some techniques I've developed, but they aren't the basis of my performance—they're tools to execute musical ideas. My soloing concept has always been spontaneous, and the Buddy Rich Memorial performance was no different.

**MD:** When did you start to incorporate mixing technology into your live performances?

**Weckl:** In the early 1980s, I would set up a mixer and mix the band from behind my kit. This progressed into creating my own portable system that I could carry around, which was a major hassle, but well worth it. When I showed up to play live with French Toast, I had mics, a mixer, and a rack with noise gates, reverb, and an 18" monitor cabinet. The band looked at me like I was nuts [laughs]. But I had the best live drum sound in New York at the time. Anthony was an audiophile, and he was blown away by the sound quality!

**MD:** How did triggering electronic sounds become such a major part of your early sound?

**Weckl:** When I started in the New York session scene in the 1980s, electronics—especially the LinnDrum drum machine—were all the rage with producers, because the drum sounds were clean, punchy, and in perfect time. Back then, in order to get studio

for artists remains controversial. How can artists and labels derive acceptable returns for digital distribution?

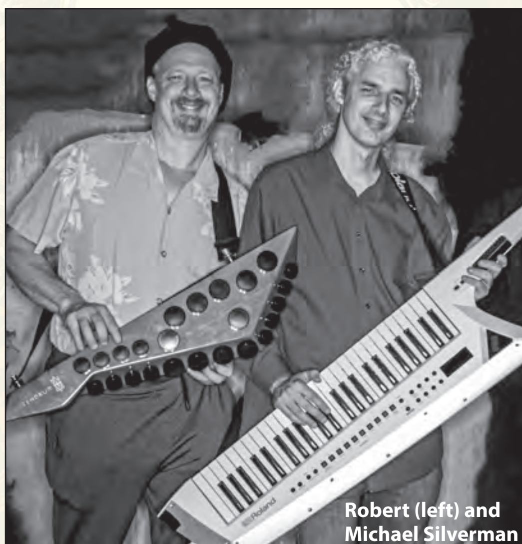
**Michael:** We really like the new model. While a new album doesn't generate much in the first year from sales, we continue to see revenue from the same listeners over time, because we get paid for every listen. The key is to have a great catalog and a solid following.

**MD:** What was it about Dave Weckl and his *Live in St. Louis at the Chesterfield Jazz Festival 2019* project that attracted you to taking it on?

**Michael:** Rob asked Dave to play the concert, as Dave has been his primary inspiration for decades. Also, keyboardist Jay Oliver moved back to St. Louis a few years ago, and we all became good friends. Jay and Dave have been musical partners for a long time, but both of them became very busy with a variety of separate projects. Music at the level they deliver requires a lot of effort to put together for a performance, and we wanted to help facilitate the rehearsal process for the homecoming concert that would help the guys orchestrate this large undertaking. We all knew this would be an important concert for the band, and Dave had the idea to film and record the show. He even recorded the audio himself with two mixers and some hard drives while he was onstage. Strangely, we didn't have an album in mind. But the concert went so well, and the recording was magical. It was obvious this should be Dave's next live album.

**MD:** What are the highlights of *Live in St. Louis at the Chesterfield Jazz Festival 2019*?

**Rob:** Self-servingly, we have to mention the concert's encore with both Silvermans and saxophonist Eric Marienthal joining the band to cover "The Chicken." That was a true highlight of our careers. Dave and I did a spontaneous drum battle between his acoustic playing and my electronic Zendrum. What a blast! This is included as a bonus track at the end of the album.



Robert (left) and Michael Silverman

**MD:** What is it like running a label as brothers? Do you have specific duties, or do you jump into everything together?

**Michael:** We feel very fortunate to work on all of our ventures together. It's very helpful to push each other to get things done. We each maintain lists of priorities, and we divide up the work to get things done faster. Our friend [Michael Jackson and Jeff Beck guitarist] Jennifer Batten taught us a valuable trick to achieving our goals. She said, "If you had a list of things to do, and eating a frog was on that list, eat the frog before you do anything else." So, every day, we begin by eating a frog, so to speak. After the hard work is done, the rest is usually a lot of musical fun.

**MD:** What are some misconceptions musicians may have about creating instrumental music that is commercial enough to find audiences?

**Michael:** Our catalog contains a wide variety of instrumental styles. Some are more appropriate for really focused listening, such as Rob's *Drumology* albums. It's highly virtuosic music, with many great guest musicians playing their hearts out. But not all music is for focused listening. We love music for film, television, and relaxation that requires space and often slower tempos. John Patitucci and I recently recorded an album called *Film Music in Search of a Film*, which is a perfect example of very open and tranquil playing that could be used as a movie underscore. We both have done a number of pieces featuring piano or ethnic drums that have been placed in TV shows and films, and I think the most spacious recordings tend to get the most licensing opportunities. It's also important to have an agent or agency to shop and negotiate deals for you. Don't just wait for someone to call. Be proactive with your music!

work for TV, movies, and even recordings, you had to be as close to a machine as possible. Otherwise, the machine got the gig. That forced me to emulate that sound and rhythmic precision. In fact, the LinnDrum was one of the first machines I triggered in the Elektric Band—for "Rumble," with all the hand claps, tambourines, and bass-drum sounds. So it started there, and eventually evolved into the more advanced sampler stuff.

**MD:** When did you move away from triggering electronic sounds?

**Weckl:** In the mid 1990s, I ditched the two refrigerators full of electronic gear, and I moved to larger toms, thinner heads, and a more open tone. All of this culminated at the same time, which was after I left the Elektric Band and started to mix, produce, and tour my own music. The quest was how to get the most natural acoustic sounds, and part of the transition was switching from heavier Remo Emperor heads to single-ply Ambassadors. That made a huge difference in tone and feel.

**MD:** How did your partnerships with drum-gear manufacturers to develop signature products begin?

**Weckl:** I was fortunate enough to work with several high-profile artists, which allowed me to develop relationships with several drumming manufacturers. Everything started with my Vic Firth signature drumsticks in the late '80s. Vic saw me play with Michel in New York, and he invited me to join the family. My original signature stick was red to match my cherrywood Yamaha Recording series kit. It was basically a 5A, but longer and with a different bead. It was designed for my playing style at the time, because I held the sticks back farther and played harder than I do now.

Several years later, Freddie Gruber helped me discover a more balanced way to hold the stick for an equal and easier action/reaction rebound. So I developed a new stick in the late 1990s, that took three years to perfect. I had Vic send me every stick the company made so I could feel the weight, length, bead, and diameter. I always returned to a 5A, but the front end was a little light, and I didn't like the tip. Eventually, we developed a standard 5A with a more balanced weight and a different bead, and that became the Evolution stick. I was playing a Yamaha natural-finish maple kit at the time, so we made the new stick the same stain as the kit. I can't even play the red stick now. The new stick is lighter, and it allows me to play with more dynamics without fatiguing my hands.

My hand technique involves a five-finger grip on the stick at all times, so the varnished finish had to be thick enough to maintain a loose grip without dropping the stick. Ergonomics and natural body movement play a huge role in playing comfortably. Never having to stress your body in order to hit a drum or cymbal is the basis of what I learned from Freddie Gruber, and it has become a big part of what I teach in my online course.

By the way, creating signature products is not about the money. It's about creating something I truly believe in—something I want to use for developing my own sound. I aspire to design products for the drumming community that don't already exist and that may expand the sonic possibilities and opportunities for drummers and drumming.

**MD:** Your current setup brings the cymbals in close to the toms.

**Weckl:** I'm hypersensitive to the positioning of my kit, because I don't want to reach too far for anything. The positioning of the ride cymbal does create some issues at times. When I use a 22" ride, in order to reach the bell, the body of the cymbal does extend over the toms a bit more than I would like. Even the splash cymbal may get in the way if my stick slides back too far in my hands.

**MD:** Could you talk about the invention of your Sabian Evolution and Legacy series cymbals?

**Weckl:** First, I'd like to mention a new Sabian flat ride that's coming out soon. It's called the Serenity ride, and it was conceived from some of the quieter, more recent Akoustic Band gigs I did with Chick. I was never a fan of flat rides, because I thought they were too high-pitched with not enough meat. But we've created a flat ride that's really dark with a super-cool vibe. It's great for lighter playing situations.

I created the Sabian Evolution crash cymbals, because I couldn't find a crash cymbal I liked. I wanted a high-fidelity sound that feels like butter when you hit it, and really invites you into the tonality of the cymbal composition. For example, the Evolution ride needed a big bell with a body that was dry, but it also needed a lot of wash with solid stick definition. I also wanted to ensure every Evolution cymbal of each particular size sounded the same, so that a drummer who bought one got the exact same sound I was getting. We also created the O-Zone series cymbals with holes in the body.

**MD:** Where did the O-Zone idea come from?

**Weckl:** When I saw Steve Gadd play in the early '80s, he almost always had a few cracked cymbals on his kit. They were so much a part of his sound that I thought, "If only a cymbal company could design a cymbal that sounded like this." Sabian was very open to trying new ideas, so when I was at the Sabian Vault, they had a tree of splashes that had little holes in them. I hit one, and it had the same dry sound and decay that reminded me of Gadd's cracked cymbals. I asked if they had ever tried doing these holes in a crash cymbal. They had not. So I asked them to take an Evolution crash, drill holes all over the cymbal, and, overnight, the O-Zone crash cymbal was created.

**MD:** How did the Legacy cymbals develop?

**Weckl:** I got stuck at the Sabian plant over 9/11, so we worked on creating a trashy, dirty sound with lots of wash. The Legacy rides have become very popular as crash cymbals with some of the rock guys, but the line works well in most musical situations.

**MD:** Another of your innovations was the

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**Weckl:** Yes. We couldn't design exactly what I was after, because it cost too much to manufacture, but we ended up with a great alternative. The idea was to create a physical noise gate—a small, felt-covered plunger that would rest on the snare head with a tension adjustment. When you strike the drum, the plunger releases from the head, allowing the drum to ring. Then, it drops back down to mute the decay and overtones. What I never liked about duct tape or Moongel on a snare is that the sound never changes, and they also drastically change the feel. The system allows the drum to speak, breathe, and rest between strokes. We also created two bass drum muffling devices—one internal, the other external—to create the bass-drum sound I was looking for.
**MD:** What was the concept for your Yamaha signature snare drum?
**Weckl:** When Yamaha asked me to create a signature snare drum in the early 1990s, I had to think about what I wanted to help define my sound. What I never liked about a snare was the inconsistency of the strainer. So I designed a drum with two strainers to give me the precision and definition for tight staccato playing, and then quickly give me the loose, fat sound I liked. The first snare was a 5x13 designed after an old Slingerland Radio King I absolutely loved, which had six lugs instead of eight. When we designed the 14" version, I used eight lugs instead of ten. I still feel an eight-lug snare feels better and resonates better than a ten-lug snare.
**MD:** How did you develop your style of Latin-jazz drumming?
**Weckl:** My love for Latin music happened when I was exposed to the great Latin players in New York. The music is very folkloric and steeped in cultural tradition. The beauty of playing fusion music is that you are fusing various styles together without really mastering any particular style. Instead, you are creating your own hybrid of styles to explore in the hopes of inventing something new and hopefully original.

I didn't know much about Latin drumming until I got the gig with French Toast. Michel sat me down and explained the basic concept of each rhythm, what each percussion part focused on, and how it all fit together to create the rhythms. He would sing the rhythms, and I'd write them down. Then, I'd practice incorporating the rhythms onto the drumset in a contemporary way that fused groove and jazz, while maintaining the foundation of the authentic rhythms.
**MD:** What is it like to start your own band?
**Weckl:** There's a lot of risk and responsibility in leading your own band. You control the tour schedule, collect the performance fees, pay travel expenses, and make sure the fine details of each show are handled correctly. The positive side is that you have the opportunity to play the music you love, with players you enjoy, and with control over the musical presentation you want to share with your audience. I also allow the players the same creative freedom and spontaneity that I experienced with Chick. He really taught me how important that was, and I make it a priority on my gigs.
**MD:** What advice would you give to those who aspire to make drumming a career?
**Weckl:** I teach my students that you have to practice a lot and really learn your instrument. Listen to the history. You have to advance your playing to a very high level and serve the music. Be humble. Let your talent do the talking. Just shut up and play. I've seen more guys not get gigs and ruin their reputation by talking too much about how good they are, or how bad someone else is. Be excited, be passionate, and be willing to put in the work. Show up on time, and put your heart and soul into your playing.

You also need to make sure you love what you're doing. If you don't absolutely love playing, don't do it. There's a lot of hard work involved when your passion becomes your business. Another important thing that Chick taught me about the business is to do what you can to create something to make money while you sleep. You don't want to be trapped in trading time for money as your only means of income. For example, write music, invent a product, and create educational materials so that when you're not playing, you're still making money. Today, you can do this all by yourself. You can monetize YouTube videos of your own material, for example.

Finally, if you want to write, record, create, and perform, do not keep your passions and aspirations to yourself. Share them with like-minded people, and boldly create your vision until it becomes a reality.
**MD:** How has the past year of no live performances affected your livelihood? Have you been able to generate income during the pandemic?
**Weckl:** At this point, my residual income is pretty steady, and that helps. But as almost half of my income was from touring, I had to figure something out quickly. I've had my Dave Weckl Online School for a while now, and I have been promoting the school a lot over the past few years. But I really ramped up my online private teaching last year, and that saved me financially. I had to get established quickly, of course, so I reached out to Dom Famularo, who put me in touch with Jim Toscano. Jim really helped me figure out my gear for teaching online. I started advertising on my social-media platforms, and Steve Orkin, my business partner, helps me organize a lot of this stuff, as well. I really enjoy teaching through my online school, because I get to share everything my teachers shared with me that helped me find my voice.
**MD:** Why did you move back to St. Louis?
**Weckl:** The biggest reason was financial. The move to St. Louis was to have a bigger house and more space for my studio, which was financially impossible in Los Angeles. With more work coming from my home studio, I won't be touring as often as I have in the past. I'll be picking and choosing tour dates very carefully with limited travel. Also, Jay Oliver is here and my record label is here. I didn't have much of a reason to stay in L.A. other than my soon-to-be 24-year-old daughter, who was the toughest part of leaving.
**MD:** Do you have a favorite Dave Weckl recording?
**Weckl:** I don't like the term "favorite," because everything I've done has its own merits in one way or another. Each recording I've done is a special moment in time for me, and each reveals a snapshot of my musical influences and drumming styles. I will say that I like the live recordings, because they are a bit more spontaneous. *Live (And Very Plugged In)* [2003] and *Live in St. Louis at the Chesterfield Jazz Festival 2019* [2021] are examples.
**MD:** Can you discuss the importance of musicality, listening, improvisation, and communication?

**"My drum solos are not created from rudimental drum chops. I'm composing a musical statement based on everything I've studied, learned, and absorbed."**

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**Weckl:** One of the biggest lessons I learned from Chick was about communication. This was something that made our time with Chick so special. He really wanted us to look at him when we played, so we could establish a musical dialogue. He was adamant about seeing each other all the time. But it's amazing what can happen when you reach that level of communication. It makes the performance more meaningful, and it allows a deeper connection to the players and the performance.

I've always had a tendency to close my eyes when I play in order to concentrate deeper into the music. But that also becomes a more introverted way of playing. I would catch myself doing it all the time, because we spend so much time in the practice room alone. We get accustomed to focusing on the inner self to develop time, feel, and sound. But in a live performance, you're onstage with other human beings, and it's important to look at each other's expressions and body language. Chick, John, and I reached a super-high level of visual communication, and the goal was to be present in the moment with the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of complementing those around us to create something special.

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**MD:** Were you aware of Chick's health issues prior to his passing?

**Weckl:** None of us knew. They kept it private until the very end. The whole thing has been so sad, heavy, and devastating for me, because I was speaking with Chick almost every other day in November to choose songs and help mix a new, live Elektric Band recording. He was so excited, and he was looking forward to taking the Elektric Band back out for another tour.

**MD:** What's the status of that project?

**Weckl:** We were about three quarters of the way done. We were also recording a new song, which was a little jazzier than a typical E-Band tune. Chick had basically put me in charge of the project, with everyone recording their parts remotely, and then sending me the tracks to mix. We recorded videos, as well, because we were going to use a video to promote the new tour. Chick played his part on a demo, but he never got to record the video. We don't know exactly what's going to happen with that music. I'm guessing it will come out as a bonus track on the live recording. It's the last piece of music we wrote and recorded together with Chick.

**MD:** What is your daily routine for health, nutrition, and exercise to stay in shape for drumming?

**Weckl:** Staying healthy is such an important aspect of playing drums, because it's a physical instrument. But, as I get older, it gets harder to stay as healthy as I would like. I try and get out for a brisk 30- to 40-minute walk each day. Anything you can do to push the cardio is good for your drumming. I used to do weightlifting when I was younger, but it doesn't really help the body as far as drumming is concerned. So I started doing more CrossFit training to keep my core strong and maintain leg strength. On the days that I can't work out, I get on the drums and do calisthenic-type exercises on the kit for about 30 minutes with the feet and hands. My Apple Watch tells me I'm getting a great workout [laughs].

I stopped eating red meat or any meat protein—except for fish—about seven years ago. I eat lots of green veggies and fruit. I try and maintain a certain weight and body fat content with less food intake and a balanced diet. I love Beyond Burgers, which is a meat-type product made from plants. That satisfies my Italian sausage, meatballs, and hamburger cravings. Sugar is hard to avoid, because it's in everything, but I never add sugar to anything. I take a lot of plant-based supplements from Italy, where my wife and I see a doctor who deals in a plant-based dietetic approach. We use a lot of essential oils and creams where body aches are concerned—including extra vitamin D and plant-based cholesterol supplements. I'm not a big fan of Western medicine.

Then, I try to touch the drumset every day to keep the physical and mental faculties in shape. I also do a livestream every week to keep the chops up and force myself to practice on a regular basis while we're all stuck at home.

**MD:** What does the future hold for you as a player?

**Weckl:** With the passing of our dear friend, Chick Corea, I realize we're not here forever. John Patitucci and I are talking about doing some stuff together to keep moving forward from the music Chick helped us create as younger players. We are now the elder statesmen, and it's up to us to keep that music alive and move it forward for the younger generation—or anyone who is willing to listen. We're not so interested in lighting up the world with something new. My goal is to inspire someone to pick up the drumsticks and create something special of their own.

**MD:** Do you ever think about retirement?

**Weckl:** It's not something I'm looking to do anytime soon, or something I'm looking forward to. I'll definitely ratchet back the touring a bit over the next few years, but I don't plan on stepping off the drum throne anytime soon. I'm having fun, but this is no joke. I want to perform to the best of my abilities every time I play. I want to give 150 percent. I feel like I'm 20 years old when I sit at the kit, but I recently told my wife and daughter, "If I ever get to the point where I think I'm burning, and I'm really not, then yank my butt off the drum chair." I'm going to continue to play music for as long as my body will allow, and this is what was so devastating about losing Chick—he always had such amazing energy. We all thought we'd be playing gigs with the Elektric Band when Chick was 90, and we'd be hoping we could still keep up with him.

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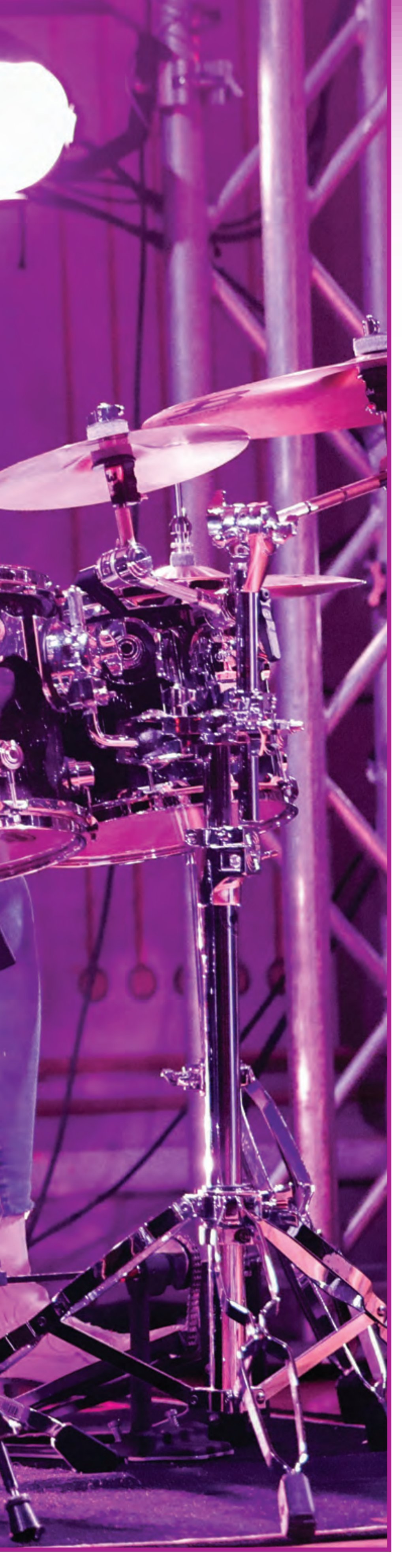
# Brooke Colucci

## The Drumming Prodigy Powers Plush

By Michael Molenda



Who cares? That's my attitude about Plush. Who cares that it's an all-female band? Who cares that none of the band members are even 21 years old yet? Who cares that they have become social-media darlings, and who cares the band's hype-y promo demands us to "Get ready for Plush," because they are on a "mission to bring rock back to the forefront of the music industry."

I don't care, because none of that stuff is anything the band has much power over at all. But the music—now that's a different story. It's all anyone should care about when they hear Plush.

Produced by Johnny Karkazis (Disturbed, Megadeth), the band's debut single, "Hate," is ferocious and melodic, and it unleashes a soaring chorus that's hard to erase from your memory. The group onslaught is fearsome, because each band member not only has an impassioned command of their instrument, but they all write compelling parts. Plush's frontperson Moriah Formica is a tough and versatile singer, and she already possesses a battle-tested charisma from her appearances on *The Voice*. Lead guitarist Bella Perron is a student at Berklee College of Music, and her caterwauling wah swells that kick off "Hate" establish a near-cinematic prologue for the song's narrative. Later on, her short solo starts off with horn-like punctuations, and then she deploys some careening licks to deftly set up a chorus breakdown. Bassist Ashley Suppa already owns a studio credit with former Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley, and she propels the groove for "Hate" as if she were driving a turbo-charged tank down the Autobahn at 120 mph.

But drummer Brooke Colucci—the youngest member of the band—is a force all her own. She has close to 300,000 loyal subscribers to her YouTube channel, and her series of drum covers have reaped millions of views. (Her 2016 play-through to Tool's "Forty Six and 2" alone has been watched 15 million times.) The YouTube videos document Colucci evolving from an inspired young teen in 2015, to a confident late-teen with an energetic foot, a robust tone, and the moxie to play along with an extensive lineup of remarkable metal, prog, and hard-rock drummers. It's difficult to track exactly how many young drummers she has motivated with her videos, but the numbers speak for themselves, so she may be responsible for a sizeable throng of followers who picked up sticks because of her.

So while it may be presumptuous and rash for some publicist to depict Plush as having the voodoo to restore rock music to its former glories, it also might be foolish to bet *against* Colucci and company.

**MD:** I read that you attended a School of Rock, and even met Plush bassist Ashley Suppa while you were both there. How valuable was that experience to your development?

**Colucci:** It definitely helped me with playing with other people. Before School of Rock, I had never performed with other people. I just played along to songs all alone in my basement. School of Rock helped me experience what it meant to be a drummer in a band.

**MD:** Any woo-hoo moments regarding playing with people as opposed to records?

**Colucci:** It was a lot more enjoyable!

**MD:** Did Plush form organically, or was it a strategic move to assemble an all-girl rock band?

**Colucci:** We definitely came together pretty organically. We didn't say, "Oh, we're an all-girl band." We just happened to be all female, and we wanted to write songs together and share some kick-ass music.

**MD:** To that end, what do you see as the band's musical imprint?

**Colucci:** It's the vibe that the four of us together put out there. I think we're unique.

**MD:** Of course, from the inside, most bands think they're unique—that's probably one of the driving forces behind why we form bands—but to listeners on the outside, the perception may be different. Do you worry that Plush's music might be seen as having echoes of other rock bands?

**Colucci:** Personally, I don't worry about it. Even if we do sound like the musicians who influence us, I don't see what's so bad about that.

**MD:** Who are some of the bands that influenced Plush, then?

**Colucci:** Moriah is a huge Aerosmith fan. She loves Joe Perry. For her vocal approach,

I know she likes Amy Lee from Evanescence, Lzzy Hale of Halestorm, and Lady Gaga. Bella's influences are Joe Satriani, Randy Rhoads, Nuno Bettencourt, Joe Perry, and Eddie Van Halen. Ashley listens to everything. She has a wide range of influences. But we don't tend to reference any other bands or musicians when we are writing our parts. We come in to write what will sound good.

**MD:** What drummers have informed your personal style?

**Colucci:** Shannon Larkin of Godsmack and Tool's Danny Carey got me started playing.

**MD:** What was it about them that inspired you?

**Colucci:** Shannon's drumming is so powerful, and it perfectly complements Godsmack's songs without always resorting to a straight-rock beat. I love everything about Danny's style—how creative he is, and how intricate his parts are.

**MD:** What about female drummers?

**Colucci:** Anika Nilles is an amazing drummer. I love her style and her creativity behind the kit. Her fills and grooves are inspiring. When I listen to her, it's like I wouldn't have thought of doing what she does, but what she does is really cool.

**MD:** What is Plush's songwriting process like for you as a drummer?

**Colucci:** When I'm writing with the band, I feel very free to come up with any weird groove or beat. They always appreciate when I do something that's not the typical boom-snap-boom-snap. Sometimes, I'll come up with something that's a little too much, and someone will say, "Oh, that's really cool. But for this part, please dumb it down a little bit." But I'm happy just being able to come up with my own parts. That's what really excites me.

**MD:** Does everyone write together, or does a main songwriter bring in demos for the band to work with?

**Colucci:** For the songs we've already recorded, it was mainly Moriah doing the writing. But she handed us her songs and told us to add whatever we liked. For the new songs, it has become a collective effort, and we write while we are rehearsing. I honestly prefer when it's a group thing—where we aren't reacting to someone's demo. I love helping to develop song arrangements, and that's a bit harder to do if someone feels they have the parts already worked out.

**MD:** Typically, how do you devise your drum parts for a new song?

**Colucci:** I'd rather not play a single groove throughout an entire song. I like to emphasize each part of a song by doing something different and interesting. I always try to do parts that complement the guitar. I'll mainly follow the rhythm guitar and recreate the guitar riffs on the drums.

**MD:** You don't tend to work out parts between yourself and the bassist?

**Colucci:** Normally, we don't. Ashley is super easy to work with. We kind of just click together, and everything tends to work out the way it's supposed to.

**MD:** So, it's not so much accenting bass lines with your kick drum?

**Colucci:** That's not something I worry about. I do what I think will sound good and drive the song. I don't often think about what the bass player is doing, or whether they should follow exactly what I am doing with my kick drum. It all ties back to following what the guitar player is doing and locking in with them.

**MD:** Do you ever get thrown if a song simply isn't all that inspiring?

**Colucci:** I can usually put a groove to anything. Even if I think the song isn't going somewhere, I'll try to make it work. I always like to give everything a shot.

**MD:** What's your current setup?

**Colucci:** I have a DW Performance series kit with a 22" kick drum, a

12" rack tom, and 14" and 16" floor toms. My cymbals are all Meinl—three crashes, a ride, a China, a stack, one splash, and hi-hats. My sticks are Vater Universal—which are kind of similar to a 5B. I like them because they are a perfect weight, they're durable, and they give me a really good rebound.
**MD:** Why DW?

**Colucci:** I've had this kit for quite a few years. It was my first really nice drumset. I guess I chose it because I had seen other people using DW, and I really loved how they sounded.
**MD:** What do you look for in a drum sound?
**Colucci:** I definitely like a deeper tone, and I don't use any dampeners on my drums. I like them to have their natural sound—to sing and ring out. I see so many people load up their drums with tape and everything, and, most of the time, they sound pretty good, but that's not what I prefer.
**MD:** How do you like to tune your toms?
**Colucci:** I tune my drums for low to midrange tones. In the studio, I made a couple of tuning adjustments with our producer, but there wasn't anything too crazy. Mostly, he messed with the tuning of my two floor toms, because he didn't want them to ring out as much. I think he may have loosened up the bottom head a little more than I normally do.
**MD:** Do you use your two floor toms mostly for patterns, or for the ends of rolls?
**Colucci:** Mainly for ends of rolls, but I also love playing tom grooves.
**MD:** What was your drum-education journey like?
**Colucci:** I started taking lessons right away, and I took them for five years. What's crazy is that for three of those years, I didn't play any songs. It was strictly theory and rudiments. My teacher was really into theory, reading music, and stuff like that. I would sometimes come in with a song, and he'd be like, "No." Teaching songs was not his thing at all.
**MD:** Did he teach you mostly using practice pads or on the kit?
**Colucci:** He taught me on the drumset, but more for mobility exercises to help me get around on the kit and enhance my chops.
**MD:** What was an important thing you learned from him that carries on to this day?
**Colucci:** I can notate parts, thanks to him, and he taught me the rudiments—which I still think about when I write drum parts.
**MD:** Do you record and/or practice using a click track?
**Colucci:** If you asked me a year ago, I would have said I hated clicks. I avoided using clicks, because I wasn't very good at following them. You know, no one wants to realize they aren't good at something. But I understood that if I want to do this at a professional level, I'd better get used to playing with a click. Now, I love playing to them, because I want to be as perfectly in time as possible. I also practice rudiments to a click, and I'll even compose grooves along with a click track to see what I can come up with. I use this metronome app with different sounds, and my favorite is kind of like a soft, dampened snare. A cowbell or wood block sound is too piercing for me. I know I still have room for improving my timing, so I may use a click track live, as well.
**MD:** Your foot is pretty fierce, and you also work your cymbals pretty hard.
**Colucci:** I love using the bell on the ride—along with all of the splashes and other cymbals I have. I like to add a high-end shimmer above the guitars. Also, I grew up listening to metal, and a lot of the drummers I liked used double-bass drums. Initially, I tried to do that stuff with a single pedal, which helped me with my foot work and stamina. It was quite a few years before I got a double-kick pedal. I love feeling the bass drum in my chest, and I really enjoy how a lot of low end can keep a groove going. That's probably why I tend to be busy with my foot. But I went overboard on one of the songs we recorded. Even I realized the kick pattern was way too much for the song [laughs].
**MD:** What's it like being a young band during the pandemic?
**Colucci:** Not being able to play live has definitely impacted everybody, and we can't rehearse or write together as much as we'd like.
**MD:** How do you keep the energy and sharpness primed for when gigs open up again?
**Colucci:** Well, it's an issue, because this band has never played out live yet. I've always felt comfortable onstage, but as a band, Plush still needs to work out how we will react to each other and an audience.
**MD:** Even being denied the ability to tour and build an audience through gigging, it's impressive how strong the band's socials and YouTube views are tracking. What is Plush's community-building strategy?
**Colucci:** We're all pretty savvy about socials. I've built an audience doing drum covers on YouTube, for example. So when we announced the band was forming, each of us posted about it on our channels to bring all of our fans together. Moriah already had some notoriety form being on *The Voice*, so that helped. But there are always some crazy things you can't really plan for. Like Lzzy Hale posting that Moriah and I were looking to form a band. Or when Moriah and I did a cover of "Barracuda" last April. I'm sure we never dreamed we'd get more than 1.6 million YouTube views, or have Surface Management sign us because they saw the video and realized what we could do together. Also, I have to admit that having a good management team has been crucial to getting our songs played and generating press about the band. I'm not sure that socials alone would have made that happen for us—certainly not as quickly.
**MD:** Has there been a crazy moment when you just knew this band has what it takes to break out?
**Colucci:** It was after we released "Hate," and we heard it playing on Octane radio for the very first time. I couldn't believe it was real.

# Denny Seiwell

## Revisiting a Classic

By Bob Girouard

Photos by Alex Solca

Denny Seiwell became Paul McCartney's first post-Beatles choice as his drummer when he was brought into the sessions for Paul and Linda McCartney's *Ram* album in 1970 and '71. Soon thereafter, Seiwell was invited to join the McCartney's new project, Wings, where he played on *Wild Life* and *Red Rose Speedway*, as well as singles such as "Hi, Hi, Hi."

Fifty years onward from those heady days, Seiwell continues to be not just a creative player, but also someone who seems to have innovative projects ingrained in his DNA. Among them are the instructional book *What Not to Play!* [2015, Alfred Music], the critically acclaimed *Boomerang* by his Denny Seiwell Trio [2018, Quarto Valley Records], and his latest effort, *RAM ON* [Cherry Red Records]—a loving and respectful reinterpretation of *Ram*.

*RAM ON* is the brainchild of guitarist/producer Fernando Perdomo to celebrate the original album's 50th anniversary. In addition to Seiwell—who acted as co-producer with Perdomo—*RAM ON* features guitarist David Spinozza and flugelhorn player Marvin Stamm, who were also participants in the 1971 *Ram* sessions in New York at Columbia Recording and A&R Recording Studios. More than 100 musicians contributed to *RAM ON* via the "COVID collaboration" process of sending digital tracks to Perdomo at his Reseda Ranch Studios in Los Angeles. Featured performers include Joey Santiago (Pixies), Davey Johnstone (Elton John), Will Lee, Eric Dover (Jellyfish), and Carnie Wilson.

"How can an album have so many styles and yet be a perfectly crafted statement?" said Perdomo of the McCartney classic.

Seiwell's drumming shines throughout *RAM ON*—just as it did on the original—and he took some time with *MD* to chat about his *Ram* re-entry.

**MD:** How did the idea to do a remake of *Ram* come about?
**Seiwell:** I met Fernando at different events I was attending, and he is a huge Beatles fan. McCartney's *Ram* is his favorite album, and he told me he knew many people who felt the same way. [*Editor's note: In the April 2021 MD, Fred Armisen expressed the same sentiment*.] He suggested we try to pay tribute to the 50th anniversary of the album. I thought it was a good idea, but I kind of fluffed it off. About a year ago, he said he and a buddy had put down tracks for "Too Many People" from *Ram*, and "Some People Never Know" from the Wings album *Wild Life*. Then, he asked, "Would you mind playing drums on them? I'll pay you for your time." I thought, "What the hell? Let me check it out."

So I went to his studio, and it was fun. I recorded two tracks in a half hour. Of course, I knew the drum parts—I had 50 years to think about them [laughs]. About four months back, Fernando said he might consider doing the whole *Ram* album. I responded, "That sounds like a lot of work." He

## Fernando Perdomo on his *Ram* Obsession

By Billy Amendola

I first became aware of Fernando Perdomo from *Echo in the Canyon*—the 2018 documentary on the mid-'60s Laurel Canyon music scene in Los Angeles directed by Andrew Slater (a record producer, industry icon, and former head of Capitol Records). Perdomo was a guitarist in the house band with Jakob Dylan, who performed many of the classic songs for the film.

"I moved to L.A. in 2012, and a year later, I met Andy Slater at an unpaid jam at Canter's Deli," says Perdomo. "I had no idea what I was getting into when he insisted on me playing on a record he was producing. That record put me on tape with Eric Clapton, Neil Young, Stephen Stills, Fiona Apple, Beck, Cat Power, Norah Jones, and others. The record became the *Echo in the Canyon* movie, and I still cannot believe it exists. I still get emails daily from people I have not talked to since high school who see me in it and lose their minds."

If you haven't seen the film, it's worth watching a few times. It features the music and history of the Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, the Beach Boys, and other artists, and it includes appearances from Ringo Starr, Tom Petty (his last film interview), Eric Clapton,

Roger McGuinn, Jackson Browne, and Graham Nash.

Perdomo is a popular singer/songwriter, producer, and multi-instrumentalist who is originally from Miami Beach, Florida. His mom was one of the founders of *El Nuevo Herald*—the *Miami Herald*'s Spanish language newspaper. He had an early interest in making music and started playing guitar at seven years old.

"When I attended Miami Beach High School, I was in the rock ensemble program under teacher Doug Burris. I went pro at 18, and I had played on three number-one records by the age of 23 with Cristian Castro, Paulina Rubio, and Tego Calderón. I started making my own records and producing artists shortly after. I'm also known in the prog-rock world as the guitar player for Dave Kerzner, and I recently completed a duo record with the legendary Carmine Appice."

**MD:** What made you think of doing *RAM ON*?
**Perdomo:** My initial idea was to start a "Ram band" to play the album live in Los Angeles with Denny. COVID turned this live-concert idea into an album project—which was a blessing in disguise. Making the album was an incredible process, with more than 100 musicians emailing their contributions from all over the world. All the musicians and engineers on this record love *Ram* with all their hearts, and I hope it shows.
**MD:** What age were you when you first heard *Ram*?
**Perdomo:** I was eight years old. My love for

replied, "Don't worry. I've got these younger indie artists who all feel like I feel about the album, and they all want to sing and play on it. It will be a piece of cake."

**MD:** How were you able to have so many different musicians contribute to the album, and make it sound as cohesive as it did?

**Seiwell:** We could have had even more! It seems everybody wanted to be a part of the album because of its history. As co-producer, I also served as the bad guy. I accepted the parts I felt were in the right spaces for the album's re-imaging, and I rejected the ones that didn't fit the vibe. For instance, we had some singers that weren't right for certain songs, so I gracefully thanked them for their time. But it was difficult, because you don't want to hurt anyone's feelings.

**MD:** It sounds like there was a tremendous amount of file sharing to make it happen?

**Seiwell:** Absolutely. Fernando farmed out parts all over the country, and then pieced everything together in his studio. I've never seen anybody as good with Pro Tools as he is.

**MD:** What did the experience of reliving these classics do for you?

**Seiwell:** It always feels good

to go back and show people—myself included—that while some of these drum tracks sound easy to play, they are complicated, thought-out parts. On the original recordings, the tracks were very sparse, and I recorded my drums without hearing the bass. So, the drum parts I played when Paul was teaching the songs to us were crucial, because when he overdubbed his bass later on, he created his bass parts to my drum parts. In fact, I never heard his bass lines until they sent me the finished record.

It's interesting, because I kind of did much the same thing for *RAM ON*. Songs like "The Back Seat of My Car" and "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" have all these tempo changes, and we realized we couldn't record them using a click track. The original recording didn't have one, either. So, I played along with the *Ram* CD to put down a good drum track, and we built out the other instruments from there. In this case, I was the "click."

**MD:** Did you try any different approaches that you didn't do in the original recording?

**Seiwell:** Not really. But over the years whenever I'd do clinics, I might play something a little different than I played it then.

**MD:** Did you chart out your parts for the original sessions?

**Seiwell:** No charts, no clicks, and never taking more than a few hours on a tune. That's my session pace.

**MD:** After a half century, I still can't get classics like "Too Many People," "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey," "Monkberry Moon Delight," and "Another Day" out of my head. The songs have an innate ability to embrace the universality of both past and present. What do you feel the secret is?

**Seiwell:** Paul McCartney knows how to craft a tune better than anybody. He's the modern-day Beethoven. Two-hundred years from now, you're still going to be hearing music that he and John Lennon wrote. Paul has an incredible gift.

**MD:** When putting together a

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*Ram* has outlasted all of my friendships and relationships [laughs]. It still fascinates me as much as it did back then. It is absolutely thrilling to me that I am part of the album's history 50 years later.

**MD:** When did you meet Denny?

**Perdomo:** I met Denny in 2015 at the NAMM show in Anaheim. As you know, he is one of the nicest guys you will ever meet, and we hit it off immediately. We bumped into each other many times since then, and we finally worked together for the first time in 2019.

**MD:** What is it you dig about Denny's drumming?

**Perdomo:** The three albums Denny made with Paul McCartney are a huge part of my DNA. The Beatles were my first love, and Wings was my second. Wings was all I listened to for years, and I cherished every second of those records. In many ways, Denny had the most pressure of all the Wings drummers, because he was Paul's first drummer since Ringo. I was amazed when Denny told me that he came up with all of his drum parts on those records. Those parts are what I love most about his drumming. They are perfect—so musical, grooving, creative, and perfectly placed. Denny never over plays, and, more importantly, he never under plays. His ears are impeccable, and he is also a master of the dramatic fill. How can you not air drum during the drum break before the coda of "The Back Seat of My Car"? I think he is one of the most tasteful drummers in rock history.

Perdomo and Seiwell

**MD:** You play drums, as well. When did you start?

**Perdomo:** I have drummed since I was 12 years old. My studio is designed from the ground up to produce the best drum sound possible, and it has been an absolute joy recording Denny there. I made sure the drums had the power and warmth of the original *Ram*. Denny used the snare he used on the original *Ram* recording, and it sounds incredible. He played my house kit—a '70s maple Slingerland kit—and we kept things organic and vibey. There was no drum replacement or quantization. It was fascinating to be within a few feet of Denny playing his iconic parts in the studio. His passion for the drums was breathtaking, and he was so easy to work with. I am a very lucky guy!

tribute like this, what did you keep in mind?

**Seiwell:** We wanted the vibe. All the tracks had to have that vibe. But we allowed the *RAM ON* artists to be true to themselves. For example, a vocalist didn't have to sound like Paul, or even phrase like he did.

**MD:** You have a lot of fresh, young talent breathing new life into the songs.

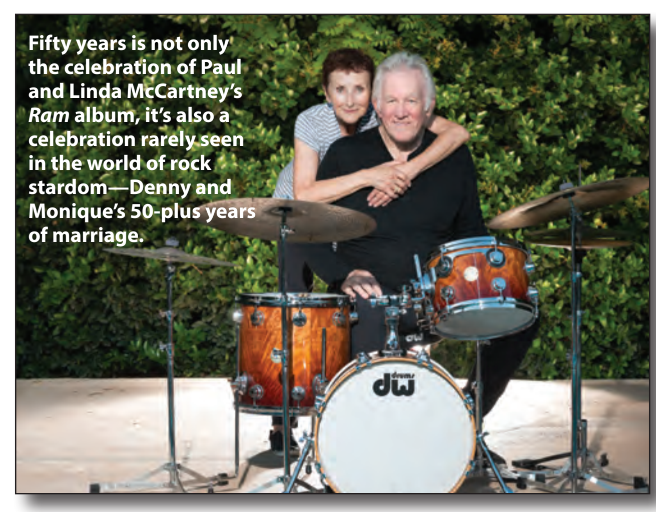
**Seiwell:** You're stepping into some big shoes when you try to do anything Paul McCartney sang and played on. For example, on "Monkberry Moon Delight," we had several guys try to cop the vibe Paul had on the record. You could blow your voice out just in one take!

**MD:** *MD*'s Editor at Large, Billy Amendola, guests on "Another Day."

**Seiwell:** Billy is one of my dearest friends—even though he has never put me on the cover of *Modern Drummer* [laughs]—and he's a very fine drummer. I wanted to find a spot for him on the project. When we were cutting "Another Day," I realized that the telephone-book overdub I did on the song back in '71 might be right for Billy. We sent his engineer, Butch Jones, the track, and Billy laid it down at his place.

**MD:** Could you fill our readers in on your father's Leedy 7 1/2x14 snare drum that you used on the original recording?

**Seiwell:** That drum was played on both the original *Ram* and *RAM ON*. My dad was a drummer who played with Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. He had this old Leedy Broadway model with thin hoops. One day, he painted it black. Why, I don't know. But he let me use it when I became a session drummer in New York City. I went to see my buddy Frank Ippolito, who owned Professional Percussion Center in Manhattan. I asked if he could remove the black paint and replace it with a natural wood stain, and they did a beautiful job of restoring the drum to its original condition. It was perfect for the *Ram* album, and it remains one of my prized possessions.




**Fifty years is not only the celebration of Paul and Linda McCartney's *Ram* album, it's also a celebration rarely seen in the world of rock stardom—Denny and Monique's 50-plus years of marriage.**

**MD:** It still has a punchy sound?

**Seiwell:** You can do anything with it—tune it up or down. Put a good microphone on it, and it's killer!

**MD:** What studio did you record your drum tracks at?

**Seiwell:** We used one studio, which was Fernando's Reseda Ranch. It's a couple of miles north of L.A. in the San Fernando Valley.

**MD:** What were the inherent challenges concerning this tribute?

**Seiwell:** The biggest question was, "Why would anybody attempt to make another version of a masterpiece?" I

must say the premise was a little daunting. But the way we looked at it was, "We're not trying to replicate *Ram*, but instead pay tribute to the younger generation, and how they feel about this timeless music." Also, it's so much more music than anybody else was putting on a record back then, and it stands the test of time. A lot of people say *Ram* is their favorite McCartney solo album.

**Denny Seiwell uses DW drums, Zildjian cymbals, Remo drumheads, Innovative Percussion sticks, and Beato drum bags.**

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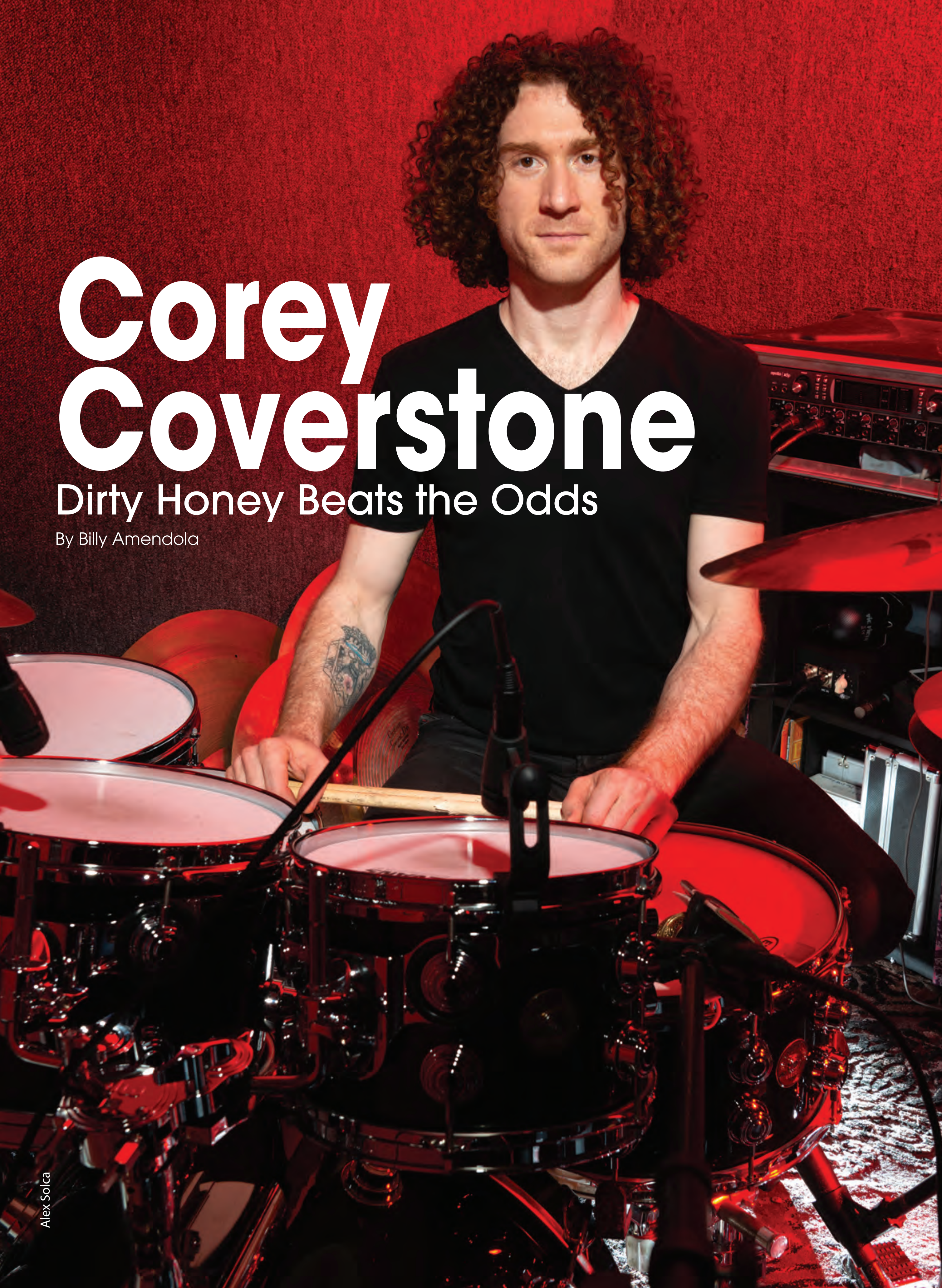

# Corey Coverstone

## Dirty Honey Beats the Odds

By Billy Amendola

Alex Solca

So-called media pundits can blather on and on about rock music being dead, but all a true believer needs to do to put the lie to such talk is bring up Dirty Honey. This is a rock band that didn't even need a record deal to score a number-one hit on the *Billboard* Mainstream Rock chart. In 2019, "When I'm Gone," which appeared on Dirty Honey's self-titled debut EP, became the first song in history by an unsigned artist to reach the top spot.

The follow-up single, "Rolling 7s," didn't do too bad, either. It landed into the top five. Soon, Dirty Honey was opening concerts for the Who, Guns N' Roses, and Slash, and the band's own headline tour was a complete sellout during the first two months of 2020 BL (before lockdown).

That's a pretty mammoth eruption of popular acclaim and achievement for a band whose music of choice should be facing commercial extinction. Furthermore, not even COVID could do much to slow Dirty Honey's roll.

While "Rolling 7s" was continuing to rack up YouTube views—hitting more than 5 million eyeballs to date—the pandemic was messing with the band's plans to record a full-length album to follow the success of their smash singles. Everyone wanted to work with producer Nick DiDia again—especially as he had done an undeniably successful job on "When I'm Gone" and "Rolling 7s"—but flying to DiDia's basecamp in Australia during a worldwide health crisis wasn't going to happen. However, Zoom and other collaborative technologies came to the rescue, allowing Dirty Honey to record tracks at Henson Studios in Los Angeles with engineer Tom Syrowski, while DiDia beamed into the sessions virtually from La Cueva Recording in Australia.

The result of these labors, *Dirty Honey* [Dirt Records], reveals some clues as to why vocalist Marc LaBelle, guitarist John Notto, bassist Justin Smolian, and drummer Corey Coverstone are hard to stop. The music has swagger, depth, and commitment, and the drum performances are artfully constructed—sparse and grooving when they need to be, and boldy intense with some nice surprises tossed into the mix when it's time to crank up the rock and roll emotion.

Coverstone, born on September 12, 1988, in Oregon, began somewhat of a rock lifestyle early on, spending a lot of time on his grandparents' farm riding dirt bikes and motorcycles at just five years old. His commitment to expanding his music chops motivated him to relocate to the entertainment mecca of Southern California in 2009, where he still resides.

**MD:** It must have been strange to record the new album during a global pandemic with your producer in a studio two oceans and a couple of continents away.

**Coverstone:** Honestly, it worked pretty seamlessly. Being in the same place with Nick would have been ideal, but we worked out the technology with Zoom, some laptops, and our phones. He could see each of us, and he also had views of the control room and the studio. Finally, an audio feed was routed into the recording console's talkback mic so we could hear Nick in our headphones.

**MD:** What was the recording setup at Henson Studios?

**Coverstone:** We tracked all of the songs to Pro Tools through an SSL console. We used a click track for everything. The drum miking was pretty straightforward. My toms were miked top and bottom with Sennheiser MD 421s, and there was an AKG C414 set to an omni polar pattern and placed between the kick batter side and the bottom of the snare. One thing I thought was interesting was that they used Shure SM58s on the hi-hat and ride cymbal. [*Editor's Note: SM58s are renowned as vocal microphones.*] Another interesting choice was using a stereo pair of Shure SM57s as room mics. I think the drums sound awesome, nonetheless, but there are usually other mics you see in those roles. It just goes to show that it's not always about using the fanciest, craziest, most-expensive boutique mics. It's about knowing what you're going for and capturing the right vibe.

Alex Solca

**MD:** What kit did you choose for the album sessions?

**Coverstone:** The core of the drumset on the entire record was my maple DW Jazz series kit, which consists of a 22" kick, 10", 12", 14", and 16" toms, and a 7x14 snare. The cymbals were assorted Zildjians, including a 23" K Prototype ride I borrowed from a friend. On the first single, "California Dreamin'," I used Zildjian New Beat hi-hats from the 1970s that were in the studio.

**MD:** How did you and the band first get together?

**Coverstone:** It all started, randomly enough, with Justin and I doing a country gig about eight years ago in front of no people. We were both session musicians

at the time, and we met through a country artist for whom we were both doing this one-off show in Hollywood. Five years later, Justin called me out of the blue to sub for what would later become Dirty Honey. At the time, it was mostly a cover band. This was the first time I'd ever played with Marc. Shortly after that gig, Marc reached out to me about doing another gig with them. The band was called the Shags at the time, and it included John. Weirdly enough, we played on the street, in front of a weed shop in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles. That was the birth of the current band.

**MD:** Who were some of your early influences?

**Coverstone:** My influences growing up were the drummers who played in the bands my parents listened to. My mom really liked Aerosmith, and my dad was obsessed with Van Halen, so it was Joey Kramer and Alex Van Halen. It was my dad who first got me thinking about music and drumming. He's not a musician, but he knew Eddie and Alex were special. I remember being in the car with him, and he pointed out the drums on "Hot for Teacher." I think what stood out to me was they had a voice of their own within the music they were playing—it wasn't just drumming in the background. I listened to Joey's playing on *A Little South of Sanity* a lot, Alex on pretty much every Van Halen record, and also Neil Peart on *2112*. I also used to love watching their music videos to see their kits, and I would try to set up my drums the same way.

**MD:** Any newer influences?

**Coverstone:** I'm always cycling through different drummers I love. I'll spend some time digging deep on their playing for a while, and then move on to the next one. Lately, it has been Tony Williams—in particular, his playing on Herbie Hancock's *Empyrean Isles*. That's a great record, and a big source of inspiration for me. Also, Roy Haynes on Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*—especially the song "Matrix."

But there are so many drummers I love. Zach Danziger has been a huge influence on me, as well as Matt Garstka. Matt and I actually have practice rooms across the hall from one another, so I'm always hearing him, and it pushes me to practice. He is devastatingly sick at the drums.

If I wanted to draw some lines between guys like Alex Van Halen, Neil Peart, Keith Moon, Mitch Mitchell, and the other drummers I love, it would be the nuances in the music they play. There's a richness to it all. You can hear exactly how they're hitting the drums. You can hear the ghost notes, and the little flams and slight imperfections, as well as the way they feel the time. I like paying attention to the choices they all make. That stuff is really beautiful.

**MD:** When you moved to California from Oregon in 2009, you sought out some excellent drum teachers.

**Coverstone:** I studied with Nate Morton, who is the drummer in the house band for *The Voice*, and he also played with Cher and Paul Stanley. There was also Mark Stevens, who played with Ry Cooder and Rickie Lee Jones, and Kevin Kanner who was with Michael Bublé. I took a course with bassist/keyboardist Jamie Faunt, as well.

Nate was my first serious drum teacher. Studying with him was eye-opening. I met him when I was 18 years old, and I had already been playing in different bands in Portland, and doing a little bit of recording. But studying with Nate was humbling. He was the one who exposed me to a lot of new music—jazz, fusion, Latin, and all of the great session drummers.

I would fly or drive down to Los Angeles—sometimes, my dad would take me in his 18-wheeler—and do these jam-packed, six-hour marathon lessons with Nate. Then, I'd go back home to Portland, practice for a few weeks, and come back down to L.A. for another lesson. Eventually,

Alex Solca

Nate saw I was serious about drumming, and he would take me to his gigs around town. He'd take me to the TV shows he was playing on, his big-studio sessions, or his home-studio gigs, and I learned so much

## Grasshopper, Master, and Brother

**By Nate Morton**

I am a big fan of martial-arts movies. After a contest, the victor might say to a defeated opponent, "Thank you for letting me win, master." It's a phrase I also hear used in chess and tennis as a show of respect—often for an elder. It strikes me similarly when Corey Coverstone refers to me as his "teacher."

I met Corey in 2007, at a drum clinic at the Seattle Drum School. He lived in Portland at the time, and six months later, he moved to Los Angeles and was knocking on my door for drum lessons. Corey absorbed everything I threw at him—technique workouts, independence challenges, groove exercises, Latin patterns, and jazz patterns. We even discussed stage presence and showmanship. Very quickly our lessons became less about patterns and exercises, and more about life—how to approach an audition, what to expect from certain musical situations, or deciding between gig A or gig B.

Since then, it has been a joy and a privilege watching Corey put into action the information he has gained from me and others to get a point where I now call *him* and ask, "Hey man, break down that fill you played."

Corey is a drummer who is as comfortable playing odd-meter fusion at the Baked Potato as he is bashing out high-energy rock music on an arena stage. The range of his musicianship goes from a profound understanding of subtle nuance to melt-your-face-off power. On top of it all, he couldn't be a more self-aware and humble dude. He *still* refers to me as his "teacher." Getting to write this piece in *Modern Drummer* about him is yet another experience I am proud and honored to be a part of. Grasshopper, turned master, turned brother.

from seeing him play in all these vastly different scenarios. He was not just a drum teacher, but almost like a life coach. He taught me how to navigate and prioritize the various aspects of being a professional musician in Los Angeles. He and I are still close, and I always reach out to him for advice. I will always consider myself his student.

As for Jamie, his was the most transformative and amazing course I have ever taken. Without him, I would never have had a chance at a career playing drums.

**MD:** What was your practice routine when you first started playing?

**Coverstone:** It was playing along to records the best I could. Later, Nate helped me out with a lot of coordination stuff. I had never played a samba groove until I met him, for example. Jamie taught me things that were seriously next level—not in terms of

## Yoga and Drumming

**By Corey Coverstone**

One of the benefits of yoga is that the physical practice of it is an extension of meditation. When I'd practice yoga regularly, I would notice that I was just sitting and being—I wasn't *thinking*. Now, this is a good thing if you're playing and not thinking. You are just being present in the moment. However, the catch-22 is once you become aware that yoga or meditation practice can make this spontaneous presence of being in the moment happen, you may start searching for it. That means you're basically thinking again, and you've lost it.

Aside from slightly better posture and occasionally finding myself to be more present, doing yoga and moving your body are healthy. If you're sitting at the drums constantly, it's good to move out of that "shape" of sitting at the drums.

For example, I play with two floor toms, so I'm finding myself always twisting to the right. But when I do my yoga practice, I emphasize twisting to the left to balance things out. Any stretching I do to loosen up after rehearsing or working on the practice pad comes from my background in yoga, as well.

These days, I don't do the intense level of yoga that I used to. I'd sometimes do four-and-a-half hours of yoga a day—plus martial arts. I was obsessed. In fact, I was going to quit music and become a yoga teacher. But I had really great teachers, and I still hear their instructions in my head.

complicated drum sh*t, but in developing a thorough and deep understanding of time, rhythm, and music. I studied with him for three years before he passed, and it was absolutely life-changing.

**MD:** What about your practice routine now?

**Coverstone:** I'll hit my pad to keep my hand-technique fresh. When I'm on the road, I bring a complete practice pad kit in a separate hardware case.

**MD:** What type of exercises would you do on the pad?

**Coverstone:** I try to loosen up, and make sure I'm feeling connected with the sticks. I go slow at the start—wrist strokes with control, and then finger strokes, each finger at a time. I do a bit of the Moeller technique, as well, combining groupings in either hand simultaneously to add a coordination element. Once I feel warmed up, I start to crank up the tempo, change subdivisions, and improvise. I try to come up with little themes. For example, maybe I'll start out with 16th-note singles, add flams as I choose, and improvise with that for a bit before adding doubles in sextuplets. Then, it will evolve into something else. Maybe I'll add rests here and there. Throughout, I make sure everything is locked to a click.

Alex Solca

**MD:** What about on the kit?

**Coverstone:** There are tons of things I work on. One is coordination. I think about coordination as top/bottom, side/side, and diagonal, and I flip all of those to get every combination. I always make sure my limbs are in sync, and, hopefully, playing with a good feel—even while working on tricky stuff. One simple but very effective drill is something I got from combining two Dan Weiss ideas. You start out playing a shuffle in the hands, then go through groupings of 1,2,3,4, and add paradiddles with the feet. It's shuffle in the hands and singles in the feet—then doubles, triple strokes, four notes per foot, and paradiddles all against the shuffle. I move the patterns to every other possible combo between the limbs. I love how simple it is, and yet it uncovers some sticky spots in my coordination. The flip side is to work on linear stuff. I have also been experimenting with contrasts. Namely, pitch at high/low, dynamics at loud/quiet, and rhythm either resolved or syncopated. It's pretty "un-drumistic," which I love, because it gets straight to the point—music.

**MD:** What is your approach when you're practicing alone, as opposed to rehearsing with the band?

**Coverstone:** When I'm practicing with Dirty Honey, it's about turning off the analytical, perfectionist side of my brain and just playing the music. I listen to what John and Justin are doing, and I try to make something cool happen with them, as opposed to thinking, "Did I rush that fill?" When I practice by myself, I can totally nerd out and spend hours on whatever I want.

**MD:** Do you have any advice for how a musician should work for success within a band?

**Coverstone:** I think you have to treat it like being in a relationship. You have to learn to make compromises, and to be flexible. Dirty Honey is definitely four very different people, but everyone works together to create music that we all like. My personal motto is that

## Dirty Honey Track by Track

**By Corey Coverstone, as told to Billy Amendola**

### "California Dreamin'"

This was one of the last songs—if not *the* last song—to come together, so the drum parts were more "winging it" than with the other tracks. When you've played a new song on the road 50 times, you know it so well that you can get into the studio and just kill it. I would have found all the nooks and crannies to put nuances in. When you don't know a song that well, it's more of a broad strokes approach when you're recording it. The intro and breakdown before the solo are very Gadd inspired with the cymbals and hi-hat splash. The ending is exaggerated, but influenced by the stutter kick that Alex Van Halen played live and on 1984.

### "The Wire"

This was the first song we tracked at Henson Studios, and I was familiar with it, because we had been playing it live. I think it was the first new song to come together for the new album. There are some fast fills that Nick [DiDia, producer] really liked. One thing that's kind of interesting, is as we were getting comfortable in the studio—dialing in sounds and headphone mixes and so on—I grabbed a pair of Vic Firth Modern Jazz Collection 1 sticks for some reason. I didn't use them on any other song because they're too light. Normally, I play with 2Bs, which are pretty much the biggest, heaviest drumsticks you can get.

### "Tied Up"

I used those '70s Zildjian New Beat hi-hats on the song. The ride cymbal reminds me of a "Love in an Elevator" vibe, because Joey [Kramer, Aerosmith drummer] goes to a shuffle thing before the guitar solo, and the bell of the ride is very pronounced. "Tied Up" reminded me of that part, so I used the Zildjian 23" K Prototype ride, because it's pretty beefy. Marc [LaBelle, vocalist] said this was his favorite drum performance of mine—simple and tasteful. We'd played the song a bunch, so I found little spaces to add things. For example, in the second verse, I play a fill into a hit with Justin

Owen Cox

[Smolian, bassist] on beat two. Each of us looks for little moments where we can add our own flare to a track, or make it a bit hipper. Also, this track was fun because it's the only triple-feel song of ours.

### "Take My Hand"

I used a 6.5x14 Ludwig Copperphonic snare drum,

I've always believed my craft as a drummer—my musicianship—should be the guiding force that leads me to wherever I'm going to wind up. I always focus on trying to be the best musician I can be.

**MD:** Are you involved in the songwriting process for Dirty Honey?

**Coverstone:** Yes. Pretty much everything is co-written. Marc writes most of the lyrics, although I've taken a few stabs at it. Our writing process is usually one of two ways. The first is that something will come out of a jam, whether it's at a rehearsal or a soundcheck. That's how "Take My Hand" started—as a spontaneous jam. Then, we sculpt the riffs and the structure. Basically, we're all throwing out ideas, and we're kind of self-producing in the moment while we're jamming. The second way is that someone will come up with a riff—usually John or Justin—and we'll jam on it in the band room. The lyrics usually happen last.

Mis Greyland

**MD:** Interestingly, your solo projects are often not informed by classic rock.

**Coverstone:** I cut a jazz-quartet album, *A Human Experience*, in 2014. It's not the most profound playing on my part, but there's some decent moments here and there. It was dedicated to Jamie, who passed away unexpectedly in 2013. I followed up that release in 2020 with my EP, *Punch the Shaman*, which displays a bit of my metal and angst-ridden teen influences. It's an ode to some personal challenges I was going through at the time.

**MD:** Another of your outside interests is yoga, and you were so into it that you thought about giving up playing drums professionally to become a yoga teacher.

**Coverstone:** Yeah, but I stuck with drums. My yoga practice over the last couple of years isn't anywhere near the level it once was, but it still helps me with my posture. I have horrible posture when I play, and when I practice a lot of yoga, I really focus on alignment—which I think sometimes gets overlooked—and I definitely feel myself sitting up straighter at the drums.

**MD:** Did you miss touring in 2020?

**Coverstone:** I'm a total homebody, but I did miss it. When a tour is six weeks on, one week off, and then another six weeks on, it can make for a very grueling schedule. But it's all worth it when there's a dad and his son in the front row, and the kid is air drumming the entire time. Then, I'll go down after the show and hand him my drumsticks. It totally makes that kid's day. It's awesome, because I remember when I used to be that kid, and to be part of that full-circle moment is surreal. I also missed being in different cities and having experiences you would normally never get if you weren't traveling.

**MD:** What advice can you offer *MD* readers about the music business?

**Coverstone:** The business side is not always about music or playing, so I'd say, "Just focus on the craft." Starting out as a 20-year-old kid in Los Angeles, and learning from all these great players and teachers, my view is that their constant efforts to be great musicians is what led them to have success. I've always believed musicianship is still the most important thing.

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because this is an aggressive song, and I thought the metal snare would be more fitting. That's also my main snare on tour. Weirdly, during the mixing process, this drum didn't cut as much as I'd hoped.

### "Gypsy"

I used the Ludwig Copperphonic snare again, as well as a very broken 22" Zildjian Constantinople ride, because I loved it on the demos we did. It just sounds out of control, and it has a nice spread. This song is probably the hardest for me to play, because it's a quicker tempo than the other songs, and the way I play it can be physically demanding. I'm kind of stealing a move from Tony Williams, keeping my left foot on the hi-hat, and stampeding away with 8th notes throughout the whole thing. At a quick tempo, that approach is kind of challenging. I had to make sure I was warmed up before we tracked it, and John [Notto, guitarist] kept wanting us to play it faster [laughs].

### "No Warning"

I used the broken Constantinople ride again. Once upon a time, that was my most coveted cymbal. But, because I played it all the time—particularly in contexts it wasn't meant for—it broke. But it has a cool sound, and I did a lot of our demos with it. When we worked out the chorus groove, Nick was hearing it differently from how I was feeling it. I was naturally gravitating towards a swampy vibe that you'd hear Levon Helm from the Band play. But Nick wanted the ride cymbal to feel straighter, more rock. You can hear me half-accenting this off-beat 8th-note thing—which is how I was feeling it—and half-trying to get at what Nick was suggesting. Ultimately, I think the compromise turned out interesting.

In the second and third choruses, you can hear John, Justin, and I reference a Steve Miller tune. We did it as a joke once in rehearsal, and we decided it was subtle enough—and it actually fit the tune—so we recorded it for real. Things like that add a lot to the fun of playing. We can all look at each other in those little moments and have a laugh.

### "The Morning"

I was excited about this song, because it's really cool, and it's one we workshopped before going into the studio. I spent some time trying to find places to put in cool fills and things like that. But it's a fine line, too. For example, choosing to play hits with Justin and John, or playing a fill across the hits. I really learned a lot about the arc of a song on this track, and how to keep things building throughout. A lot of times, the sh*t I thought was cool while tracking didn't translate when listening back. On the pre-chorus, I do an exaggerated open hi-hat on the back beats—à la Queen's "Somebody to Love"—just for fun. Everyone seemed to like that. There's also a fake double-kick thing at the end, which is actually the kick and floor tom alternating.

### "Another Last Time"

This song was about trying to be tasteful. I love Steve Gadd's playing, so I tried to approach it with his mindset as best as I could. I used the broken Constantinople again. We had a hard time deciding whether to swing this song or not. When we were demoing the song, certain versions swung unintentionally, and while tracking it at Henson, we had to focus a bit to *not* swing it. I really love how it turned out.

# Thommy Price

## Rock and Roll Hitmaker

By Rich Scannella

Courtesy of Blackheart Records

Brooklyn, New York's Thommy Price has spent the large majority of his career playing and touring with a diverse array of iconic bands and artists. His four-decade career spans countless gigs and recordings from Mink DeVille to Scandal to Billy Idol, and throughout his long-time association with Joan Jett and the Blackhearts.

Price's drumming highlights rock anthems such as Scandal's "The Warrior," Billy Idol's "Rebel Yell" and "Eyes Without a Face," and many Joan Jett and the Blackhearts classics, including "I Hate Myself for Loving You" and "Light of Day." His vast catalog of studio credits lists sessions for Blue Öyster Cult, the Psychedelic Furs, Roger Daltrey, Steve Lukather, Debbie Harry, Peter Wolf, Enrique Iglesias, Ronnie Spector, Ric Ocasek, Ron Wood, Sylvester, the Waterboys, and others. Price even found pockets in his busy schedule to form a band with Kasim Sulton (Price-Sulton), and, more recently, launch an album with Downtown Phantom.

Recently relocated from New York City to San Antonio, Texas, Price's career shows no signs whatsoever of slowing down. In addition to numerous recording projects cutting drum tracks in his home studio, he is working on a coffee table book of his many drum kits through the years, and he is still writing and producing music for himself and others. In addition, he is included in Dan LeRoy's forthcoming book on rock drummers of the 1980s who have played on hits featuring drum machines.

Price's dedication and solid playing show what it means to support a song with an unwavering pocket, and he does this all while maintaining his own unique style, feel, and perspective.

**MD:** What initially drew you to the drums?

**Price:** I started listening to my brother's 45s when I was maybe five or six years old, and he was playing a lot of blue-eyed soul like the Righteous Brothers, the Dave Clark Five, and the Young Rascals. That really got to me. I grew up on Dino Danelli [the Young Rascals]. He was my drummer in those days. I wanted to play like him, and I watched him on *The Ed Sullivan Show* whenever the Young Rascals would play. I actually picked up the guitar first, because one of my cousins taught me to play a little bit. Then, I figured out I had more of a talent for playing drums than guitar. I went for one drum lesson, and they were teaching basic rudiments, so I got bored with that. Playing along with my brother's records was how I really started.

**MD:** Was your family supportive when you decided you wanted to play drums more seriously?

**Price:** They were. I was never discouraged or had the "talk" about getting a real job. By the time I was 16 years old, I was already making money. As soon as I got out of high school, I got my driver's license, and I was in a Top-40 band going across the country. The bass player and I were the only ones who knew how to drive a stick. We would rent a 14-foot truck, and the rest of the band would travel by car. We didn't have a road crew, so we were the drivers, the crew, and the rhythm section. When I was 18 years old, I already had my own apartment, and I was paying my own way.

Mike Jachles

**MD:** How did the Top-40 band experience segue into playing original music?

**Price:** I thought playing other people's music was paying my rock and roll dues. By the time I was finished with that, I was disgusted, and I came off the road thinking the next step for me was to get into an original band. When Studio Instrument Rentals opened up on 54th Street next to Studio 54 in Manhattan, I was there every day hanging out in the lobby, waiting for auditions to happen. This was around the time Meatloaf's *Bat Out of Hell* came out. Kasim Sulton—a good friend of mine who I grew up with—played on that record, and he told me they were auditioning musicians to do the tour. I did my homework, I went to the audition, and they said they would be in touch with me. I was putting on my jacket, and this dude walks over to me and says, "Listen, I have a better band for you." I'll never forget that. He said his name was Jimmy Iovine, and he gives me a cassette and says, "Go home and learn these songs." I didn't know who the hell this guy was.

I called him back, and he introduced me to this band Flame, which he had just signed to RCA. I got hired to do their second record and their first tour. Flame was more of a rock group, and Meatloaf wasn't the kind of music I wanted to do, so I jumped to Flame. That's how I met Iovine, and we became really good friends. He had me play on a couple of different records, and he was a big part of kick-starting my career. When Flame broke up, I joined Mink DeVille, and I stayed with them for three or four years. From there, I went to Scandal to Billy Idol to Joan Jett.

**MD:** What was it like joining Joan Jett and the Blackhearts?

**Price:** That's a whole other story, because Kenny Laguna [Jett's producer/manager] is a friend of of mine from the early days. I met Kenny when I was 16 years old. He was sent by managers Steve Leber and David Krebs to a tiny studio in Staten Island to produce a demo I was working on with some friends. He always remembered me from that.

When he started working with Joan, he called me when he was putting the Blackhearts together. I really wanted to do it, but it was bad timing, because I had just gotten my passport to go to Europe with Mink DeVille. A couple of years later, Joan was co-starring in the movie *Light of Day* with Michael J. Fox. They called me to do the soundtrack with the Blackhearts, and that was the first record I did with Joan. At that time, whenever I was off the road with Billy Idol, I was working in the studio with Joan. I was doing two jobs—kind of like a back-and-forth thing. They kept me busy pretty much all through the 1980s. Then, I would also fit in a record with Tom Verlaine or John Waite. Eventually, there were a bunch of Top-10 records I had played on—"The Warrior" [Scandal], "Rebel Yell" [Idol], and "I Hate Myself for Loving You" [Jett]. You couldn't go into a record store without hearing me the first five minutes you were there [laughs]. All of those records opened up a new bunch of doors, because other producers were hiring me for work, and I'm still getting work because of that time.

**MD:** What about your own band, Downtown Phantom with guitarist Johnny Rao and bassist Joe Vasta?

**Price:** Johnny and I have been constantly writing over the past eight years, and we finally put it all together for an album's worth of material. All three of us have recording facilities in our homes, so we took advantage of it—especially this past year with not being able to do anything else but sit in your house. We are currently looking for a label and a publishing deal. Everything we've done with the album so far has been out of our pockets. It has sort of been our baby, so we decided to put it together and package it. Blackheart Records helped me do the artwork. Maybe if things get back to normal at some point, I'll put a band together with them and promote it. I'd love to play the songs live. It's a great record. You can hear it at downtownphantom.com.

**MD:** Do you have a process for learning songs?

**Price:** I try to understand the lyrics first, then I take the song apart, and see where I can and can't play. That's really important to me, and, of course, to the songwriter. I don't want to step on anybody. I

Ron Akiyama

map out where the parts are and see where the song is sitting, but I don't write anything down. If I run through it once, I pretty much have it in my head. However, if someone tells me to listen to a record and learn every song, I'll probably write some things down—a cheat notes sort of thing.

**MD:** Can you explain what it is like to play in arenas and stadiums?

**Price:** I don't think you can ever really prepare to play a stadium. That's a lot of f**king people, so you go into a little bit of a shock when you first start doing it. It's something you have to get used to. For sound purposes, it's the worst place to play. If you're not using in-ear monitors, the sound is bouncing all over the place, and you can't really hear yourself properly. If you are an opening act in stadiums, you pretty much don't get a soundcheck, so you have to go out there blind. It's pretty scary.

**MD:** What recordings of yours do you feel best represent your playing?

**Price:** The early Blackheart records, 1986–87. I also did a solo record with Kasim Sulton called *Lights On* [1986], and the playing on that is one of the better representations of me. I had Dino Danelli playing along with me on that one.

**MD:** What was that experience like?

**Price:** It was surreal, man. I had my two kits set up, Dino and I did a jam, and it was crazy. I wanted to just sit there, watch him play, and dig on him, but he made me play along with him. We became good friends after that.

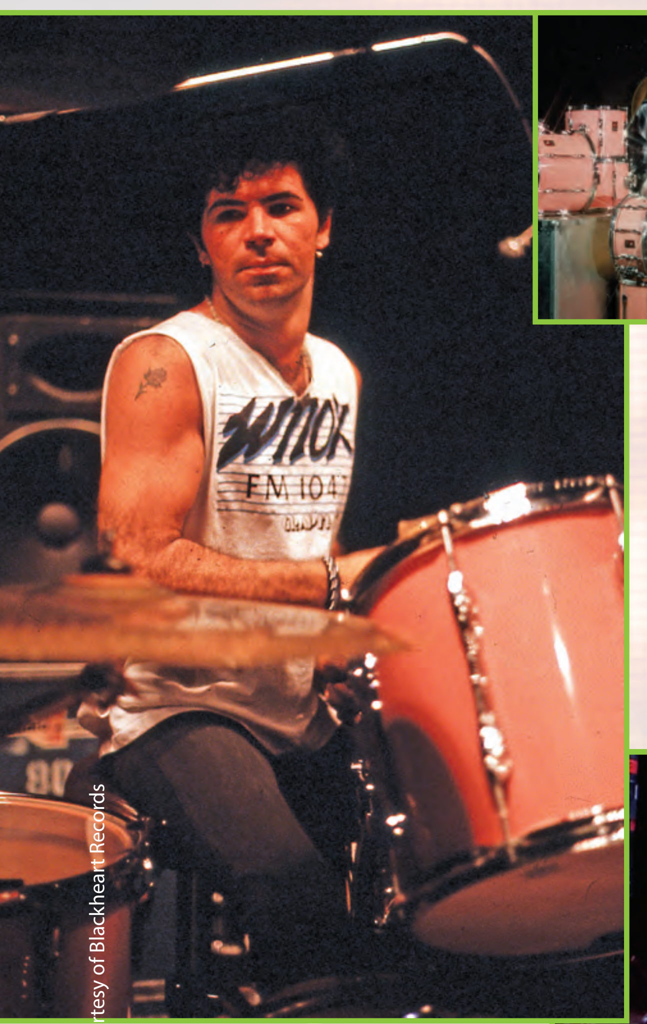
**MD:** Playing with such a vast and diverse array of artists, can you discuss the dynamic it takes to work with different personalities and temperaments?

**Price:** I've learned over the years that you kind of have to be a fly on the wall. Dealing with people is a touchy thing, and it's especially tricky being on the road and living with people on tour buses. Everyone is different, so you have to feel each other out—just like when you're in a relationship or whatever. You can't be too opinionated. You have to learn to keep your distance and know when to be present and when not to be present. You figure it out along the way. There's no handbook for it. Also, you're there to do your job, and you can't say, "I don't want to do my job today." When I get hired for something, my ears are always open, and I'm ready to walk out of there knowing more than I walked in with.

**MD:** What is your current set up?

**Price:** My favorite kit is a maple Slingerland Radio King. It's a great kit and it tunes up nice. I have a 14x24 bass drum, a 9x13 rack tom,

Courtesy of Blackheart Records



Courtesy of Blackheart Records

16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and a mess of snare drums. My lucky charm, though, is a 6 1/2x14 wood Premier snare that was used on every big record I did—"Rebel Yell," "The Warrior," and others. I've carried that around everywhere, and it was back-and-forth so many times, it has been redone with new hoops and throw-offs, but the shell is the same. I still have it, as well as the bubble-gum pink kit it came from. Premier made it for me when I was in Mink DeVille.

I've gone through quite a few companies in my career. I was endorsing Premier for many years, and they made me some really nice kits. I went over to Slingerland for a while—they made me a beautiful Radio King in gold glitter that I still have. For most of the '90s I had a Sonor endorsement, and around 2001, I switched back to Slingerland.

**MD:** What cymbals are you using these days?

**Price:** I'm still with Zildjian—it's the only company I've ever been with. I have 18" and 19" medium-thin crashes. I used to use a Ping ride years ago, but I went over to an 18" medium-crash ride. Most of the stuff I do is crashing out on a ride, so instead of having that heavy ride and trying to make it crash, I just use a crash cymbal and ride on it. For the hi-hats, I use 14" New Beats. I don't use anything too light, because I like to splash on the hi-hats like Alex Van Halen used to do.

Courtesy of Blackheart Records

**MD:** As we hopefully move towards the return of live performances, what does the future hold for you?

**Price:** I don't know what's going to happen once we're on the other side of this. I just turned 64, so I don't know how much touring I can do these days. Actually, I have been off the road now for about five years. I was diagnosed with cancer in 2016—and I've been five years cancer free so far—but I was on the mend for quite a while. I had stopped touring with Joan, but I was still playing on her records.

Now that I'm in Texas, I'd like to do more studio work here—maybe here in Austin. Nashville, too. I'm also writing a lot of new music. I want to try to get a publishing deal, and place some of my music with other bands. I do want to keep myself busy with recording—that's for sure.

**MD:** In an industry that's constantly changing, what advice would you give to an up-and-coming drummer looking to get into the business today?

**Price:** This business is funny. It can take care of you, or it can kick you in the ass. I was one of the lucky ones. I made it through pretty good, and I would do everything the same way if I had the chance to do it all over again. I don't think it's fair that a lot of kids out there who want to play are discouraged somehow. So I would say, "Keep working hard, and don't let anyone discourage you. Be grateful for the people who are behind you. Try to follow whatever you want to do and make it real."

**Rich Scannella** is the drummer for Jon Bon Jovi and the Kings of Suburbia, has performed with Bruce Springsteen, Bon Jovi, and Lady Gaga, and is an adjunct professor at Rider University in New Jersey. He can be reached at richscannella.com.

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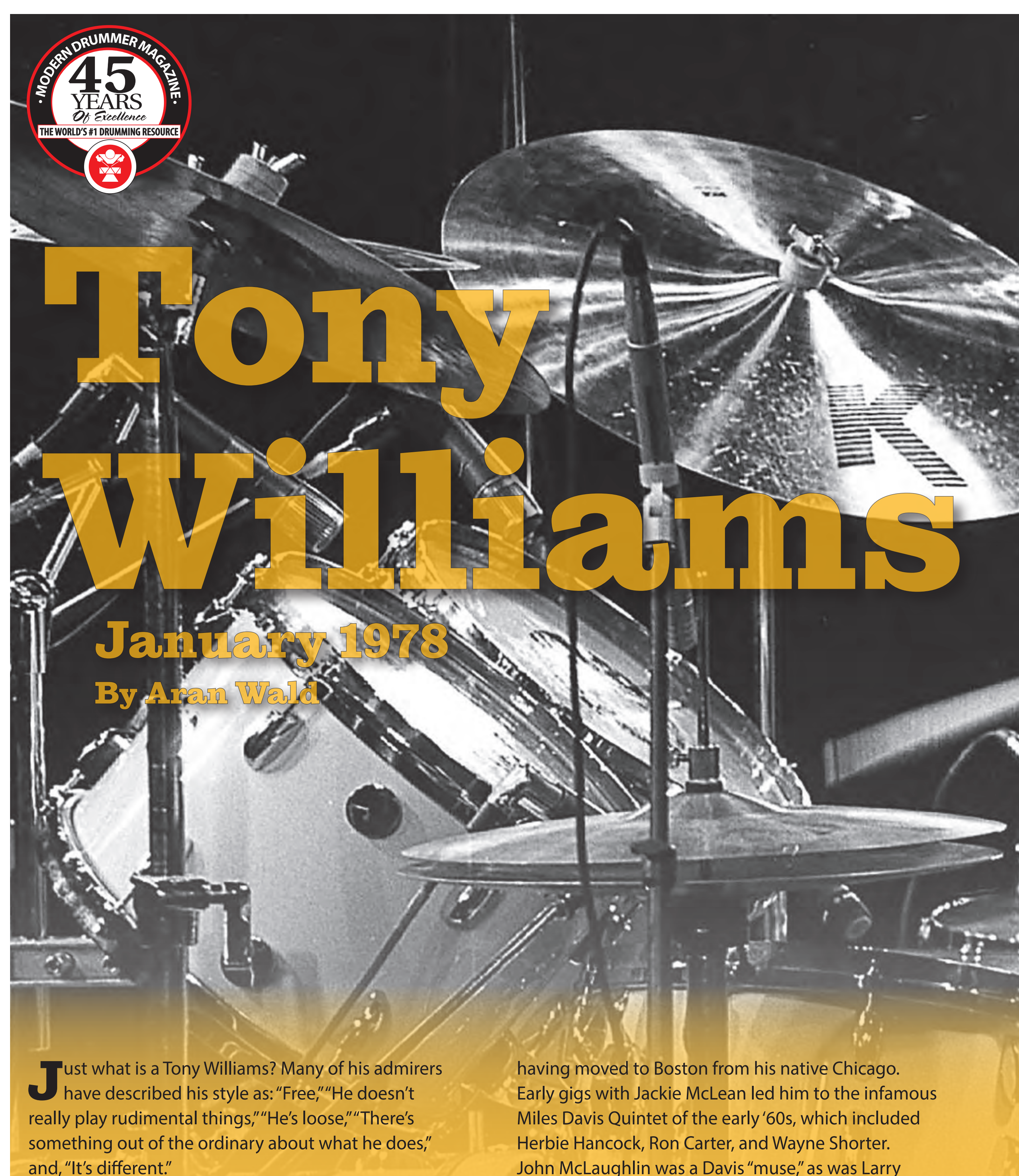



# Tony Williams

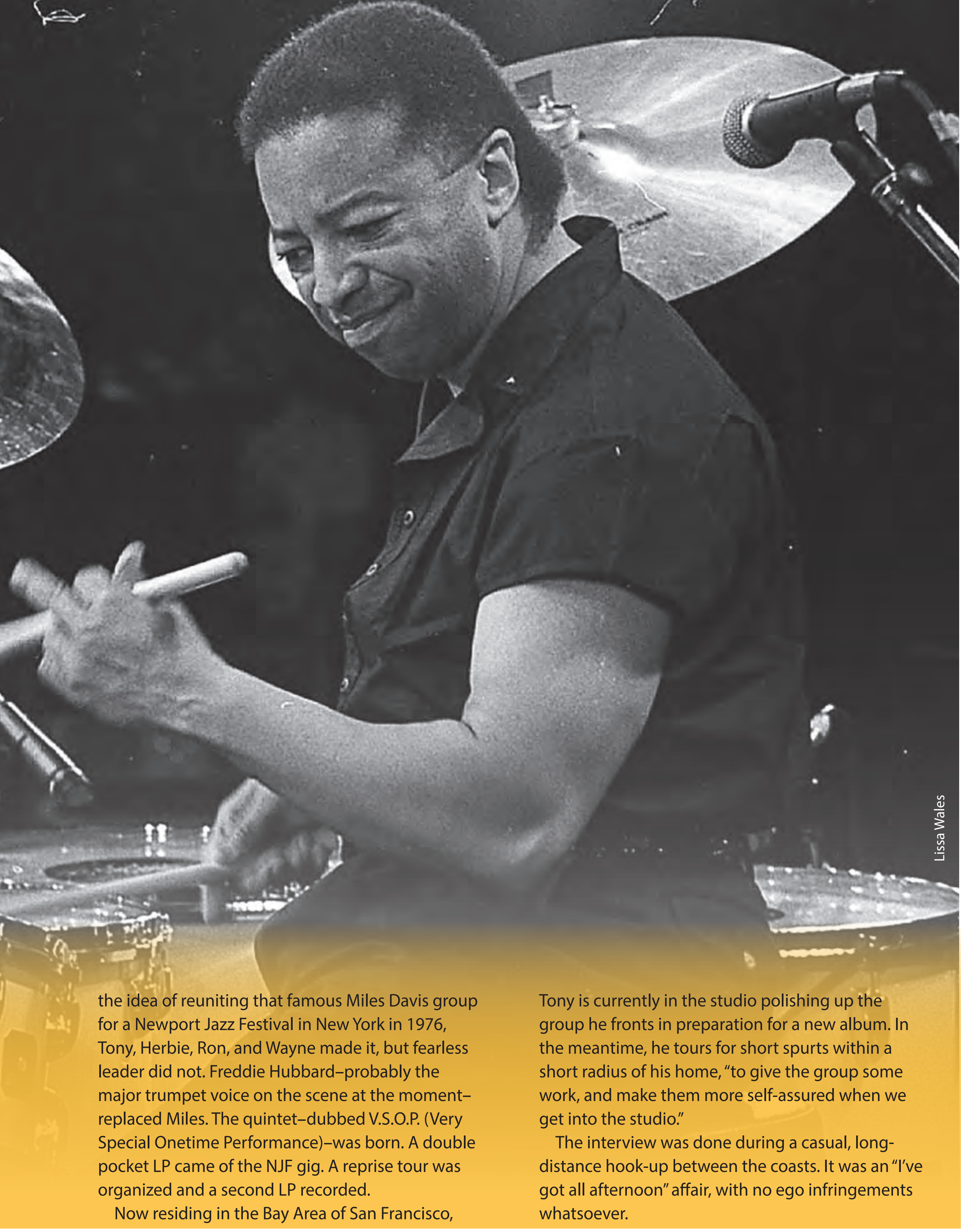
## January 1978

By Aran Wald

Just what is a Tony Williams? Many of his admirers have described his style as: "Free," "He doesn't really play rudimental things," "He's loose," "There's something out of the ordinary about what he does," and, "It's different."

If those descriptions don't tell you what a Tony Williams is, permit me to drop a few names on you: Alan Dawson, Herbie Hancock, Jackie McLean, John McLaughlin, Larry Young, and Miles Davis. Dawson was Anthony Williams' first teacher when he was nine, having moved to Boston from his native Chicago. Early gigs with Jackie McLean led him to the infamous Miles Davis Quintet of the early '60s, which included Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Wayne Shorter. John McLaughlin was a Davis "muse," as was Larry Young. Add Tony, and you had the first Lifetime—the threesome's group name from the title track of an album.

There were other major jazz figures criss-crossing Tony's comet-like tail. When Columbia Records had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the idea of reuniting that famous Miles Davis group for a Newport Jazz Festival in New York in 1976, Tony, Herbie, Ron, and Wayne made it, but fearless leader did not. Freddie Hubbard–probably the major trumpet voice on the scene at the moment–replaced Miles. The quintet–dubbed V.S.O.P. (Very Special Onetime Performance)–was born. A double pocket LP came of the NJF gig. A reprise tour was organized and a second LP recorded.

Now residing in the Bay Area of San Francisco, Tony is currently in the studio polishing up the group he fronts in preparation for a new album. In the meantime, he tours for short spurts within a short radius of his home, "to give the group some work, and make them more self-assured when we get into the studio."

The interview was done during a casual, long-distance hook-up between the coasts. It was an "I've got all afternoon" affair, with no ego infringements whatsoever.

**MD:** Let's start from right now—the new record and the new group.
**Williams:** We haven't gone into the studio yet. We've played some local dates around the coast. At the moment, we have Gerry Mule and Mike Hoffmann on guitars, Paul Potyen on keyboards, and Mike Formanek on bass. We play some of the tunes from *Million Dollar Legs*, some from the *Believe It* album, and we're even playing one song from *Ego*.
**MD:** Why the west coast as home base?
**Williams:** I'm on the west coast to enjoy it. It's a personal move—having lived in New York for 14 years. I've never really lived anywhere else on my own. I lived at home until I was 16. New York was my first and only stop. It's not like I'm running away from New York. I love it. It's just that I thought it was time for a change. I chose San Francisco because it has seasons, and I like the changes. I always like changes.
**MD:** You've been playing drums since you were…
**Williams:** Nine.
**MD:** What was your first set of drums like?
**Williams:** An old Radio King set. It consisted of a very large bass drum—28" or 30"—and a 16" tom that was mounted on the bass. It was a very old type of set—probably made in the early '40s. There was also a snare and a hi-hat. The hi-hat cymbals were almost all bell. The bell used up more space than the flat section. They were only about 12" or 13", with this huge bell that was about 9". I got rid of those pretty quickly.
**MD:** When did you move up to the big-time sets?
**Williams:** I had the Radio Kings for about three years. My father had bought them for me. I got my first job at 11 or 12 years old, and it paid pretty well–for a kid. Thirty dollars for three nights work, and steady work, too. I saved 20 dollars of each week's pay, and with the help of my mother, I bought my first Gretsch set.
**MD:** The start of a long association, right?
**Williams:** Yes. Right from the beginning. I was working at a club in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I bought a silver-sparkle set—the exact same outfit that Max [Roach] played. I haven't played anything other than Gretsch since.
**MD:** Have you ever had formal lessons?
**Williams:** After about four or five years on my own, I took lessons with Alan Dawson. Private lessons. I never did play in school, because there were no musical facilities in my high school. Now, this was Boston in the late '50s. Before the riots. The trouble there now–due to busing–was even heavier then. Consequently, I didn't play in school. I'll tell you though—I played drums outside of school all the time. I left high school to play drums. I started playing around Boston, and I became house drummer with a trio. We'd work with the guest artists coming in from out of town. Famous players. Jackie McLean came through, and he liked the way I played. He asked me to go to New York with him, and, well, you know the rest.
**MD:** That must have been heavy training cutting shows for all those people.
**Williams:** It was rough. But you got to play for a lot of different acts. I guess it's somewhat like studio playing in that regard.
**MD:** Who were you listening to in those years?
**Williams:** I was listening to Miles, the Jazz Messengers, Trane, Rollins.
**MD:** All those Prestige and Blue Notes…
**Williams:** And the Riversides.
**MD:** Did all those horn players have much of an influence on you?
**Williams:** Sure. Of course. Miles was a big influence, years before I went with him. But I was also listening to classical music and living the life of a teenager, and that included the rock and roll of the day. The Clovers, Drifters, Dion and the Belmonts. That was all going on in my regular life.

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**MD:** What about drummers?
**Williams:** There was a lot going on at the time. You still had the bop drummers around—Roach, Blakey, Kenny Clarke—as well as the rock drummers with their heavy-handed beats. I first started listening to drummers around Boston. There was a guy named Baggie–I've forgotten his last name. He didn't have what you'd call technique, but he had such a great feeling. He made anything sound good. Then, of course, there was Alan Dawson. He's so exact. So precise.
**MD:** Where did you get the harmonic training you have to write the tunes you do?
**Williams:** I play piano. I decided I wanted piano lessons around 1965, after I had made two albums, *Life Time* and *Spring*, on Blue Note. I knew what I could do without knowledge of the piano, and I wondered what I could do with some harmony and theory—knowledge of chords, you know. It was a progression I felt I needed, and I studied privately for two years. I don't write on the piano, though. I try to avoid that. Right now, I'm writing out sketches and bringing them to the group. It's not a formal procedure. I'm also doing head charts, developing them until I find a way of writing that suits me. I have a teacher now for orchestration. This way, I can write out whatever I'm asked to. I bring the sketch to rehearsal, work it out with the group, and rewrite it afterwards.
**MD:** Who, of the musicians you've worked with, do you feel you learned the most from?
**Williams:** That's strange, because there are different categories. I've learned from bass players, horn players—probably the most from bass players. Drummers have to work closely with bassists, and I've been trying to understand bass players. Ron Carter, Gary Peacock, Richard Davis, Jack Bruce. I also learned a lot from Wayne Shorter, Sam Rivers, and Cecil Taylor. To work with Cecil and to see what it was I

could do for him—that's what I mean. To be able to apply yourself to other people's trips. It's not just playing your instrument, and getting off on how good you are alone. It's also seeing how well you can apply yourself to other people's music and how you can give them what they want. It's not always what you think is best, but rather what someone else might think is best.

**MD:** Did you play with Miles during his Gil Evans days?

**Williams:** Oh, yeah. We made some recordings that were never released. We played a concert in L.A. with the whole orchestra. I recorded with Gil on his last album, *There Comes a Time*.

**MD:** What kind of a learning experience was that—a large orchestra?

**Williams:** I like big bands. I think I could push a big band on a steady basis. I'd like to try.

**MD:** Do you still practice?

**Williams:** Not as much as I would like to or used to. It's just that I spend so much time doing other things. When I was practicing every day, I was doing nothing else but that. I'd get up in the morning and not even bother getting dressed. I'd just move to the drums in my pajamas. I would be playing on the pad while I watched TV, and I'd go over another drummer's house and play with him. All drumming, all day. I practiced on the pad to develop my hands. I started reading when I began studying with Alan. I feel that my hands are the most important thing. But I also liked to practice for at least an hour on the drums. No routines, no books.

**MD:** How do you position your drums?

**Williams:** I like to place my drums and cymbals a fair distance away from me so that I can get a good healthy swing. If things are too close, it's rather stifling. There is a posture, but it's not necessarily sitting up straight. I try to have everything set up so that there's space to move and keep things evenly apart from each other. Your feet should be directly across from each other, rather than one in front of the other. I believe that whatever is going on around me physically, I'm going to feel emotionally. It's like having a paper cut. It's not something that's going to kill you, but you know it's there. You might be just a little bit irritable and not realize it. I have to be very relaxed and comfortable to play and sound relaxed. Very balanced—that's the key. If my environment is balanced, then I'm going to have a better chance at sounding balanced. I want to give myself as much of an opportunity of sounding that way as possible. So, I really believe in sitting and having my hands in a balanced position. My cymbals and drums are up, so I have to reach for them like the way a baseball player, golfer, or tennis player uses the full force of the arm. Some people feel that bringing things in closer will help you hit easier and therefore faster. That's cheating. And I'm not at all for it if I'm the one who's being cheated.

**MD:** What is your full setup? Does it vary?

**Williams:** It doesn't vary. Three floor toms—14", 16", and 18"—a 6 1/2x14 snare drum, and 13" and 14" toms mounted on a 24" bass drum. My cymbals are all K Zildjian.

**MD:** What about tuning?

**Williams:** I don't want to be conscious of tuning my drums. They're all in sort of a resonant pitch. I tune them so they'll sound good together in a group. I don't vary the pitch for different groups, either. My bass is completely loose, while the other drums are tight. I'm really just interested in a good sound. Now, if we had drums that were made by craftsmen rather than machine, it would be different. I mean, let's face it, drums are not made like acoustic basses or violins. They're made by big machines. I believe I can get a good sound out of any drum. Just give me half an hour, and I'll get a good sound.

**MD:** Any preferences in heads and sticks?

**Williams:** I use Remo heads, and there are two on all my drums. I also prefer wood drums. I'm not especially fond of plastic. I can play them, but I'd rather not. I do like plastic heads, though. Calf is so vulnerable to the weather. Every time I played outdoors, I found myself tuning the things. You put a calf head set on a plane, and it gets cold in those cargo compartments. The heads go up and down, tight and loose. Too many changes with calf.

**MD:** Isn't there a problem in playing with brushes on plastic heads?

**Williams:** That's true. The clear calf heads do have a good grain to them, and that's what you need for brushwork. I use the CS heads with the black dot, and they have no grain. They're less suited to brushwork. But I don't play with brushes as much as I used to, and I prefer the plastic. I don't like plastic-tipped drumsticks, though. As far as sticks are concerned, I like to use a good solid wood-tipped stick, like a Gretsch 2B. No artificial tips. No steel.

**MD:** Have you ever played single-headed drums? What's the difference?

**Williams:** A double-headed drum is combustible. A single-headed drum isn't. When you hit a single-headed drum, the sound just goes out, and that's it. But with double heads, you have the bottom head pushing back against the top. Inside the drum you have what I like to think of as combustion and resonance happening. The sound is more apt to come back at you. You have to work harder on a single-headed drum, too. It takes its toll over a long period of time.

**MD:** Does it matter to you which stick grip you use?

**Williams:** It depends on the situation. I don't think the matched grip is something you can base a whole technique on. You have to work on technique. You have to work on holding the sticks. That's the biggest problem for a drummer. That's what he has to do most—hold

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the sticks. For a trumpet player, it's his embouchure. That's where it all begins. With drums, it's how you pick up the sticks. That's what you have to do best. Those are your chops. It begins where your hand raises up, comes down, and makes a distinctive sound, and you work on it until it becomes right. I still work on it. I'm very conscious of my technique.

**MD:** Where do you teach?

**Williams:** I teach privately wherever I am. And I do clinics where I teach feeling the drums, feeling comfortable, and understanding what it is. Your technique is there, so you can express a feeling. The physical and emotional feeling of playing drums is what I teach—that's all. I don't want to subject myself to describing what it is that I do. I don't want to teach anyone to play like me, but to be as good a drummer as they can.

**MD:** Would you ever consider electronics?

**Williams:** I have no desire to do that. It might have been a natural for me with Miles, but I didn't try it, and I don't know if I wanted to. I wouldn't even think about it right now—even though it's all being perfected. It would have to be the drums that make me do it—not Miles, or Gil Evans, or Joe Gallivan [*electronic drum experimenter*]. It would have to be a good-sounding electronic drum.

**MD:** What's your concept of the drummer's role in a group?

**Williams:** In any group, a drummer's first responsibility is time. Another is to act as a bridge between the other instruments—the bass and piano, the piano and horns, the bass and horns. He should also help them to feel comfortable. When you've got those three things covered, then you can go on to other things.

**MD:** Do you like soloing? Do you think it should be done all the time, every tune, every night?

**Williams:** I love soloing. Some people say I don't solo enough. If the audience wants to see me solo more, I don't mind doing it.

**MD:** Who, in your opinion, has been the most influential force in modern drumming?

**Williams:** I think Max was the most dynamic of his time—the state of the art at that moment. He was the forefront of that type of drumming, more so than say, Buddy [Rich]. Joe Jones has been a big influence on drummers. I got a lot from everybody. Philly Joe, who played differently from Max, and Art Blakey who played differently from everybody. Philly Joe was influenced more by Sid Catlett than Max. The independence of hands and feet, that all came from Catlett and Kenny Clarke. They were the founders of what we all do today. Guys like Dave Tough were doing it way back.

**"I like to place my drums and cymbals a fair distance away from me so that I can get a good healthy swing."**

**MD:** Are you totally fulfilled, or is there still something you want to accomplish in music?

**Williams:** I'd like to write for orchestra. Other than that, I'd like to have a hit record—you know, make a million dollars.

**MD:** Any parting words directed towards fellow drummers?

**Williams:** Sure. Basically, you've really got to love the instrument, and love playing no matter what music it is. The best thing any drummer can do is to really love what he's doing. If you do that, you'll play them well.

Lissa Wales

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# NEW *and* NOTABLE

## DW
## MFG Extended Footboard Models

DW recently added new XF extended footboard options for the entire range of MFG pedals and hi-hat stands. The pedals are machined from aircraft-grade aluminum in California, and are offered as single and double pedals with direct-drive or chain-drive systems. Matching hi-hat stands are available in two- and three-leg options. The 1"-longer XF footboard delivers additional throw and power. The extra length allows more room for players who employ a sliding technique.

The new XF MFG base plate's overall size remains the same as a standard model, due to a modified Mini Contour Heel Plate. The footboard and heel retrofit to existing MFG pedals and hi-hat stands via an XF conversion kit that consists of a preassembled XF footboard, an Interlocking Delta Ball-Bearing Hinge, and a Mini Contour Heel Plate. **$TBA.**
**dwdrums.com**

## WFLIII
## New Lugs and Finishes

WFLIII drums are now available in a range of standard and premium wraps and sparkles for clean and bright finishes. They're also available with standard and premium paint and stain finishes, including fades and bursts. Also new is the Custom Deco lug, which has an imperial look that harkens back to the 1930s. **$TBA.**
**wfliiidrums.com**

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PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

# Yamaha

## DTX6K3-X Electronic Drumset

A simple, powerful, and compact solution to keep you playing when acoustic drums aren't an option.

By Michael Dawson

Yamaha makes great gear. Period. When it comes to drums—specifically electronics—the company always succeeds in delivering high-quality products to keep you inspired to practice and play to your maximum potential.

The DTX6 series of electronic drumsets comprises three different configurations that serve drummers at every level with an easy-to-use, professional-quality instrument for quiet practice, rehearsal, recording, or performance. The kit we received for review—the DTX6K3-X—is the flagship model in this series. Let's take a closer look at what this drumset has to offer.

### The Module

The centerpiece of all three DTX6 drumsets is the DTX-PRO module. This module comes loaded with natural and electronic drum sounds, including acoustic samples recorded by top studio drummers in world-famous studios. These samples include authentic room ambience that provides a more realistic playing experience. There is room to store up to 230 kits, and the module contains 30 presets that range from perfectly mixed acoustic sets to highly processed electronics and ethnic percussion. For me, the natural rock sounds of the first preset and the bop kit's ambient jazz tones are all I need for daily practice, while the electronic kits provided a great starting point for building live loops based on classic drum-machine samples.

The DTX-PRO module has a simplified control panel with dedicated knobs for three Kit Modifiers: Ambience, Comp, and Effects. The Ambience knob controls reverb. The Comp knob applies compression to the entire kit, and the Effects knob dials in whatever special effects (delay, modulation, distortion, etc.) are assigned to that particular kit.

Below the Kit Modifiers sit three volume controls. One is for the master output, one is for auxiliary audio (backing tracks, loops, etc.), and one is for the metronome. Next to the volume controls sit all of the editing buttons for adjusting pad settings, changing instruments, adjusting the mix and effects levels, enabling the internal recorder, and entering the training mode. The control panel's far-right side includes the on/off power button and the metronome controls, which have a twist knob for tempo and a start/stop button.

I found the layout of the DTX-PRO module to be intuitive and easy to navigate for essential functions. If you prefer an e-kit that you can just turn on, scroll through a few presets, and start jamming right away, you'll love this thing. If you're very particular about setting the perfect headphone mix, trigger sensitivities, and so on (like me), you'll have to dig a bit into the menu to get everything dialed. But, all in all, I had this module tweaked to near perfection in a matter of minutes. Then I was off and running.

The back panel of the DTX-PRO module includes a USB port for connecting a flash drive, another USB port for connecting to a computer, a pair of L/R mono 1/4" outputs, a MIDI output, and 1/4" inputs for the drum and cymbal pads. Again, the layout is simple, elegant, and practical.

### The Hardware

The DTX6K3-X comes with the compact RS6 rack, partially assembled out of the box for quicker setup. The frame includes extension arms for the module and cymbals, sturdy plastic brackets and L-arm mounts for the toms, a highly adjustable ball-and-socket mount for the snare, and metal cymbal booms. The cymbal booms have angle-adjustable tilters and a proprietary locking seat that prevents the cymbal pads from rotating out of alignment as you play.

The kit comes with an acoustic hi-hat stand and a super-sturdy kick pad tower. I'm usually an outspoken critic of drum racks—especially on electronic kits—but the Yamaha RS6 won me over. I had the kit set up within ten minutes of getting everything out of the box, and it felt very stable without taking up very much real estate in my crowded drum studio.

### The Pads and Playing Experience

The DTX6K3-X kit includes three 13" PCY135 three-zone cymbal pads. They feel reasonably soft, and provide a bit of sway when you strike them for a more authentic playing experience. The 13" RHH135 hi-hat pad has two zones, and it includes a specialized clutch and bottom cup to allow it to play and move naturally on the hi-hat stand. It was easy for me to transfer my acoustic hi-hat techniques to the RHH135, because the feel and response were

nearly identical.

The 7" XP70 tom pads are single zone. They have a rubber-coated rim and the innovative TCS (Textured Cellular Silicone) head, which provides a soft feel that's very similar to acoustic toms. The snare is an 8" XP80 three-zone version that provides triggering capabilities for the head, rimshot, and rimclick. This pad performed exceptionally well—even responding to buzz rolls and ghost notes with an accurate response and feel.

The kick drum tower features a 7.5" rubber head with multilayer cushioning that feels true to a medium-tuning acoustic drum. It also provides excellent response at all dynamic levels. In total, the playing experience on the DTX6K3-X was very comfortable and familiar. I could sit down and play just like I do on acoustic drums without adjusting my technique in any way. That's a massive win in my book. The DTX6K3-X retails for $2,420. **usa.yamaha.com**

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

# Doc Sweeney Drums

## Legend Series M22 Drumset

A divine steam-bent beech setup that'll make you want to retire your vintage kit for good.

By Michael Dawson

In case you haven't been paying attention, Doc Sweeney Drums is straight killing it with its creative, innovative, and inspiring approach to the solid-shell snare and drumset. We have reviewed many of their drums over the years, and we continue to be blown away by the craftsmanship and the massive-yet-musical sounds.

This month, we got our hands on one of the first Legend series drumsets. This new line consists of two different three-piece shell packs that expand the very popular Legends series snares modeled after coveted Slingerland and Leedy solid-shell drums of the 1920s to 1940s. While the Legend series snares come in maple, walnut, and myrtle, the kits come in maple, walnut, and European beech. (Matching beech snares now exist, too.)

### The Specs

We received the M22 configuration, which comprises a 14x22 bass drum, a 9x13 tom, a 15x16 floor tom, and a matching 6.5x14 snare in European beech. Each drum features a sleek Dark Matter finish that gives the drums a striking and timeless look, while allowing the gorgeous woodgrain to peak through the black stain.

Hardware appointments include classic triple-flange hoops, heavy-duty spurs, easy-to-adjust floor-tom legs and brackets, and sturdy bass-drum claws. The rack tom comes without a mount, so you'll need to place it in a snare basket or add a suspension system later. (Spoiler: You won't need a suspension system to get the maximum tone from this bad boy.)

The matching beech snare has eight lugs and Doc Sweeney's proprietary DS1 rotary throw-off. We've talked about the DS1 in previous reviews, but to put it simply: It works…well.

Drumheads include Remo Ambassador Vintage Coated batters on the toms and snare, and Ambassador Clear and Hazy Snare Side on the bottoms. The bass drum features a Remo Powerstroke P4 batter and a Fiberskyn front.

### Sweet Sounds

In the accompanying literature, Doc Sweeney states, "Our focus was to build a kit with a big, fat, warm sound." (Check, check, check!) To achieve that, they incorporated a special 30-degree round-over bearing edge that puts more of the drumhead in direct contact with the steam-bent shell. (For anyone wondering, steam-bent shells consist of a single plank of wood that's wettened and then softened in a steamer so it can be curved into a circle and glued into place at the joint.) In my experience, steam-bent drums often exhibit punchier and denser tones than their plywood counterparts, but they sometimes succumb to choking out and sounding boxy. That's not the case with the Legends series kit. These suckers sing!

My usual approach to testing a drumset involves balancing and seating the drumheads at a tight tension, and then settling the tuning at intervals that make the most sense for the provided sizes. To sort out resonance, I often tune the batter and resonant heads identically. This approach offers maximum sustain. Once the drums are balanced and singing harmoniously at a high tuning, I'll then explore every possible tension, from cranked to slack. However, once I got this Legends series kit dialed at medium tight, I simply didn't want to change a thing. Even with the heads tensioned higher than usual, the drums put out a ton of beefy, thick, and musical tones that had me exploring classic rock beats for hours on end. The only tuning adjustment I ended up making involved backing off the batter heads a quarter turn, which fattened up the sound a bit without losing any response or resonance.

These Legend series drums produce a lot of sound, so you don't

have to wallop them to get the walls shaking. And microphones love them, whether you go for a sparse two- or three-mic setup, or a super-detailed multimic configuration. No muffling, no futzing, and no funky overtones are present—just big, juicy, beefy awesome sauce. Also, European beech rules.

The M22 shell pack retails for $4,500. An M20 shell pack (8x12, 13x14, and 14x20) is available for $4,350 retail.

**docsweeneydrums.com**

# Earthworks Audio

## DK7 Drum Mic Kit

An ideal multi-mic package for capturing the purest essence of your drumset.

By Michael Dawson

The DK7 seven-piece microphone set by Earthworks provides everything you need for detailed and accurate multichannel drum recordings and live-performance amplification. This kit includes four DM20 clip-on gooseneck condensers for snare and toms, two SR25mp condensers for overheads, and one SR20LS for a bass drum. The mics and clips fit neatly in a custom, foam-lined hard case for easy and safe storage and transport. Let's take a closer look at each mic in the DK7.

### SR25mp Overheads

Earthworks made its mark in the drum industry with its small-diaphragm condensers, which excel as overheads onstage or in the studio. The two SR25mp mics included in this pack feature a wide cardioid pattern with a 140-degree sweet spot for an even, balanced picture of the kit. The frequency range is 20 Hz-25 kHz, ensuring that every detail you hear from your instrument live in the room gets captured accurately.

The SR25mp mics also withstand up to 145 dB of sound, which means your hardest rimshots won't distort the recording. These mics also feature more than 30 dB of off-axis rejection, so they won't pick up much of anything that isn't within their intended target. This results in a much crisper, more precise sound with minimal ambient bleed from other instruments, stage monitors, or room noise.

We tested the SR25mp mics positioned in the recommended X-Y configuration, centered over the kit and 3' from the snare. The results were downright staggering. The cymbals sounded crisp and clean with a natural stereo spread among the hi-hat, ride, and crashes. The snare sounded full and punchy, and the toms sang just as beautifully as they did acoustically in the room. Frankly, you could get away with using only these two mics and a kick mic for any situations where you want an organic, drums-in-a-room sound.

The sound of the SR25mp is pretty neutral. They're not hyped up and bright, nor are they dark and muddy. This means you can sculpt the final sound to your liking with a little (or a lot) of EQ. I was able to push the ultra-highs more than I can with typical small-diaphragm condensers without the sound becoming harsh or shrill. Likewise, I could bump up the low mids to emphasize the fundamentals of the toms and snare without the mix becoming cloudy or muffled.

My drum room is mainly untreated, so some hard reflections sometimes lead to a harsh and smeary overhead sound. That wasn't the case with the SR25mp mics. They pick up only what you point them at, which resulted in a pristine, detailed, and nuanced sound with minimal mixing.

### DM20 Drum Mics

Even though you could get away with miking your kit with just the SR25mp and a kick mic, there will be times when you need more reinforcement for your snare and toms. The DM20 is a clip-on cardioid condenser mic that features a flexible gooseneck so you can get an ideal position between drums

and in other hard-to-reach places. These mics have a frequency response of 20 Hz-20 kHz, and a maximum input level of 150 dB. Again, that's plenty of headroom for even the hardest rimshots imaginable.

The DM20's RM1 rim-mount clip is made with sturdy metal parts, and it has a notched hoop lock that ensures that the mic stays in position once it's tightened in place.

Even though I love the crispness and detail that small-diaphragm condensers provide when used as close mics on drums, I often forgo them for duller-sounding dynamic mics to minimize cymbal bleed and other sympathetic resonances. The DM20 may have changed my mind. These mics had such exemplary off-axis and rear rejection that all sounds other than those made by the target drums were practically non-existent. The DM20 on the snare was especially impressive for minimizing dreaded hi-hat bleed.

As for the quality of snare and tom sounds that the DM20 mics captured, they were about as accurate as you could ever want. Of course, this means you need to make sure your drums sound great at the source. If you have a great-sounding drum, the DM20 is going to replicate it beautifully.

### SR20LS Bass Drum Mic

While the DM20 and SR25mp mics won me over for any and all drum-miking situations, the SR20LS took a little more convincing that it would have what it takes to deliver a punchy, snappy sound for most modern music. Like the DM20s, this cardioid mic has a frequency range of 20 Hz-20 kHz, and it can withstand up to 150 dB of sound-pressure levels.

The obvious application for the SR20LS is positioned outside of a medium or high-tuned bass drum for a more organic tone. Earthworks suggest placing the mic near the hoop and angling it 45 degrees towards the center of the head. I also tried my favorite position, which is 4.5" away from the head, and 1.5" off-center. I angled the mic 45 degrees to ensure that the air coming off the drum didn't overwhelm the mic and distort the sound. Both positions provided exemplary results. The drum sounded punchy, but not overly so, and the tone, sustain, and decay matched what I heard from the drum acoustically in the room. The SR20LS picked up a bit more ambient bleed than the DM20s, but not so much to cause any phasing or balance issues when mixing all the mics.

As the SR20LS sounds fantastic on the outside of a bass drum, if you're a jazz player—or just looking to capture your kick as authentically as possible—this mic is the ticket. But how does it sound when stuffed inside the shell and heavily treated to achieve the pronounced click needed in most modern applications? Well, true to form, the SR20LS captures what it hears. And what it hears inside a bass drum isn't necessarily the most beautiful sound in the world. But once I started applying some fairly aggressive EQ, everything cleaned up quickly. And I could easily transform the sound from subtly articulate to ultra-hyped without losing a sense of balance or realness.

Now, if you only need a kick mic that delivers extreme attack and beefy low end, then there are cheaper options. However, if you want a versatile mic that can do the modern aggressive thing when needed, while also being a stellar choice for capturing very natural and pure bass-drum tones, the SR20LS will check all the boxes. Ultimately, I'd probably flesh out the DK7 mic kit with a cheap dynamic bass mic that I could toss inside the kick for extra attack, while leaning on the rich, full sound of the SR20LS on the outside of the drum. Retail price is $2,999. **earthworksaudio.com.**

# Donn Bennett's Drum Vault

## The Paul "Jamo" Jamieson Collection

It's almost impossible to talk about drums in Los Angeles without Paul Jamieson's name coming up. "Jamo"—as he is known to virtually every top drummer and producer in L.A.—has been a first-call drum tech for nearly 50 years. When he began working in the early 1970s, it was before the term "drum tech" had even been coined, and he was an early pioneer of the Los Angeles drum-cartage industry. He also had a knack for making drums sound great. He soon discovered he could earn more for delivering an immaculately tuned drumset to another drummer's recording session than he could earn actually playing the session.

He founded Paul Jamieson Studio Rentals with just himself, a van, a few snare drums, and his own set of Ludwig drums. From those humble beginnings, Jamo's drum inventory grew to more than 25 sets, 100 snares, and countless cymbals and percussion items. The collection was housed in his warehouse in North Hollywood, along with his rather impressive car collection that includes a staggering number of vintage Detroit muscle cars, Corvettes, and Porsches. Talk about a candy store!

Demand for Jamo's services skyrocketed as Los Angeles became the hottest recording destination in the world, and he worked closely with all the top drummers, including Jeff Porcaro, Tony Williams, Gerry Brown, Steve Smith, Russ Kunkel, Mick Fleetwood, Steven Adler, Phil Collins, Alex Van Halen, and Steve Jordan. Some of the artists he has supported include Toto, Mariah Carey, Eric Clapton, Pink Floyd, Neil Young, Heart, and John Mayer. In addition, top producers and engineers such as David Foster, Mark Ronson, Al Schmitt, Ron Nevison, and Niko Bolas all consider Jamo as part of their studio "A-Team." While this is a pretty impressive list, it barely scratches the surface of the countless artists he has supported.

I've been talking with Jamo for years about selling his drum inventory, but it wasn't until he finally decided to retire last year that I was able to fly to Los Angeles to get a first-hand look at this truly amazing collection. Our plan was to inventory and photograph all of his drums, and eventually list them for sale on my website.

Jamo is a great storyteller, and after 50 years in this business,

**An extremely rare 1920s Ludwig Black Beauty. This drum, with its left-leaning engraved logo, is one of only two known to exist.**

**The Rolling Stones rented this vintage Gretsch set for its 1997 "Saint of Me" video shoot.**

he has a lot of stories. I'm a sucker for a good drum story, and virtually every drum came with a great one. We worked right up until it was time for me to head back to the airport. Suffice it to say, we had a great time and got a lot done, but I sure didn't get much sleep.

There were far too many drums, and far too many stories to cover in a single article. I'll take a closer look at some of the crown jewels in future columns. A few highlights are the Gretsch kit and Ludwig snare Steven Adler used to record Guns N' Roses record-breaking debut, *Appetite for Destruction*, and the Yamaha 9000 series (an early version of the Recording Custom line) that Jeff Porcaro played on *Toto IV*.

His inventory includes dozens of studio-tested workhorse snares. These drums are not pristine, unmolested eye candy. Most have been tweaked, modified, and rebuilt to create some of the greatest-

**This Gretsch set and vintage Ludwig snare were used to record *Appetite for Destruction* by Guns N' Roses.**

**Jamo and friends (left to right)—Myron Grombacher, Alex Van Halen, Jim Keltner, Paul "Jamo" Jamieson, and Jeff Porcaro. Front: Jeff Chonis.**

**Hanging with legends (left to right)—Ronnie Wood, Abe Laboriel Jr., Charlie Watts, Paul McCartney, Jim Keltner, Steve Ferrone, Will Lee, and Jamo.**

A small sampling of the artists Jamo has worked with over the years.

**Jamo Special—Jamo's hot-rodded Slingerland Radio King snare tracked countless hit records and inspired copies by virtually every major drum maker in the world.**

sounding studio snares ever recorded. These tried-and-true drums have earned their stripes on countless multiplatinum albums, under the scrutiny of the greatest producers of our time.

One of his most popular snare drums was known as the "Jamo Special." Jamo built these drums for his studio inventory, as well as for many of the top players in Los Angeles at the time. He took a vintage, single-ply Slingerland Radio King shell, and paired it with die-cast Gretsch hoops and a Sonor throw-off and butt plate. The edges were cut to his specs, and the snare bed widened to accommodate 40-strand snare wires. Most of these Jamo Specials were painted with a custom sunburst finish by Pat Foley, although he did several other versions, such as the jet-black model he made for Jeff Porcaro. The Jamo Special became his "secret weapon," and eventually paved the way for countless single-ply, cast-hoop copies by virtually every major drum company in the world.

There are also plenty of rare and collectible vintage drums in the collection that Jamo picked up in his travels. Some are beautifully restored; others never quite made it to the restoration bench. All are dripping with vibe.

The collection documents the career of one of the most uniquely influential players in the modern drum industry, as well the drums and drummers who created some of the most important music of our time. Jamo made a huge impact on the drum and music worlds, and his influence will be felt for decades to come.

**The Yamaha 9000 series set used to record *Toto IV*.**

# Rogers Drums, January 1977

It seems fitting that two far-reaching events were marked by the inaugural January 1977 issue of *Modern Drummer*: the beginning of *MD*'s now 45-year reign as the foremost publication for drums and drummers, and an advertisement—our only full-page advertiser at the time—that heralded Roger's innovative Memriloc system, which had debuted in 1976. Future *Modern Drummer* columnist Roy Burns and Dave Donoho collaborated on Memriloc for Rogers, and the hardware's robust stability, rapid assembly, and capability, which allowed players to standardize and repeat their setups gig after gig, were a phenomenon. The ad got it right—Memriloc made drum history. And *Modern Drummer* didn't do too bad, either! —Michael Molenda

8:02 PM
8:04 PM
8:06 PM
8:08 PM

**This picture made drum history**

Never before has it been possible to set up drums this fast and accurately. (Affidavit of timing available on request.) The secret is Rogers new MemriLoc hardware. With its pre-set locking mechanism, your precise three-dimensional set-up is duplicated for every performance. For the first time in history, you play the exact same instrument each and every time and annoying adjustments are no longer necessary.

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# Crashes in Your Fills

By Dawn Richardson

The stereotypical rock drum fill might be a measure of 16th notes cascading around the kit from snare to toms, but there are many other options. As we progress as players, we want to increase our vocabulary of beats and fills so that we have a variety of both to draw from when playing songs. Listen closely to the music you like, and you should hear many more options than "cliched" or orthodox fills.

This lesson will focus on one of those options—fills with crashes. As drummers, part of our responsibility is choosing the right fill for the song. Sometimes a crash or two in just the right place is the perfect choice. Other times, incorporating crashes with 8th- or 16th-note figures is a better fit. This concept is utilized with great results in the following song examples.

These exercises and examples are taken from my book, *Chart-Topping Drum Fills* [onlinedrummer.com], where I explore drum fills from the '60s through today. The book is designed to develop your skills through sequential lessons with an emphasis on coordination, vocabulary, and fill selection.

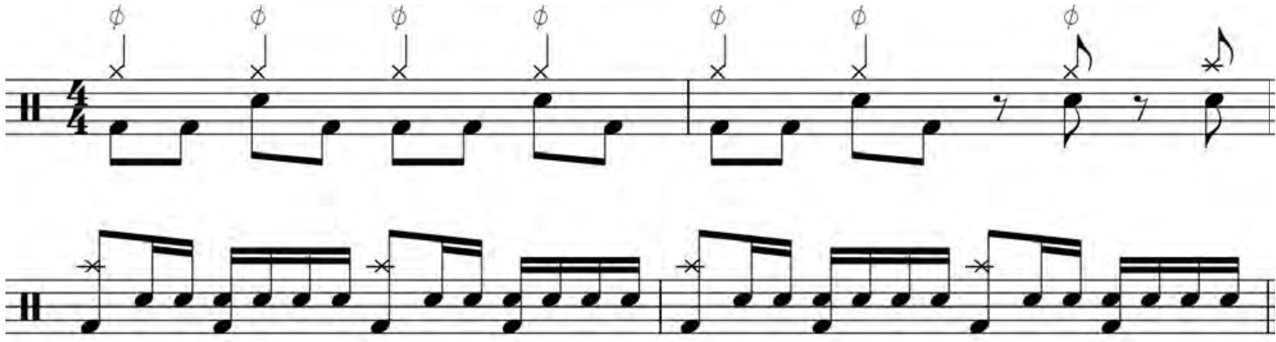
**"Rockin' in the Free World," Neil Young (1989)**

Chorus Main Beat

Transition to Solo

**"Walk," Foo Fighters (2011)**

Chorus Fills



### Skill Builders

Use this practice template and the following exercises to develop your fills with crashes and provide you with some novel ideas. These are written for snare, but also try orchestrating rhythms around the kit by substituting the snare with toms to create new fills, once you are comfortable with them as written.

Plug the one-measure fill ideas into the Practice Template to run through the fills in context. Once you're used to the concept, you can substitute any groove.

### Practice Template

**Dawn Richardson** has had eight drum-method titles published via Online Drummer and Mel Bay Publications. She has toured or recorded with 4 Non Blondes, Tracy Chapman, Shana Morrison, and Elettrodomestico (featuring Jane Wiedlin of the Go-Go's). She holds a B.A. degree in percussion, and is endorsed by Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Drum Workshop/Pacific Drums and hardware. Learn more about Dawn at dawnrichardson.com.

# Foundational Brush Technique

By Ed Soph. Presented by Drum Channel.

When I first started playing brushes, I copied what I heard on recordings, and what people like Joe Morello were doing. When Joe came to town, I would get as close as I could to watch how he played brushes. I taught myself a brush technique in which one hand primarily sustained, and the other hand articulated staccato notes. There are all sorts of variations, but the left hand stays on the head, and the right brush is off the head like a stick, so you have a staccato hand and a legato hand.

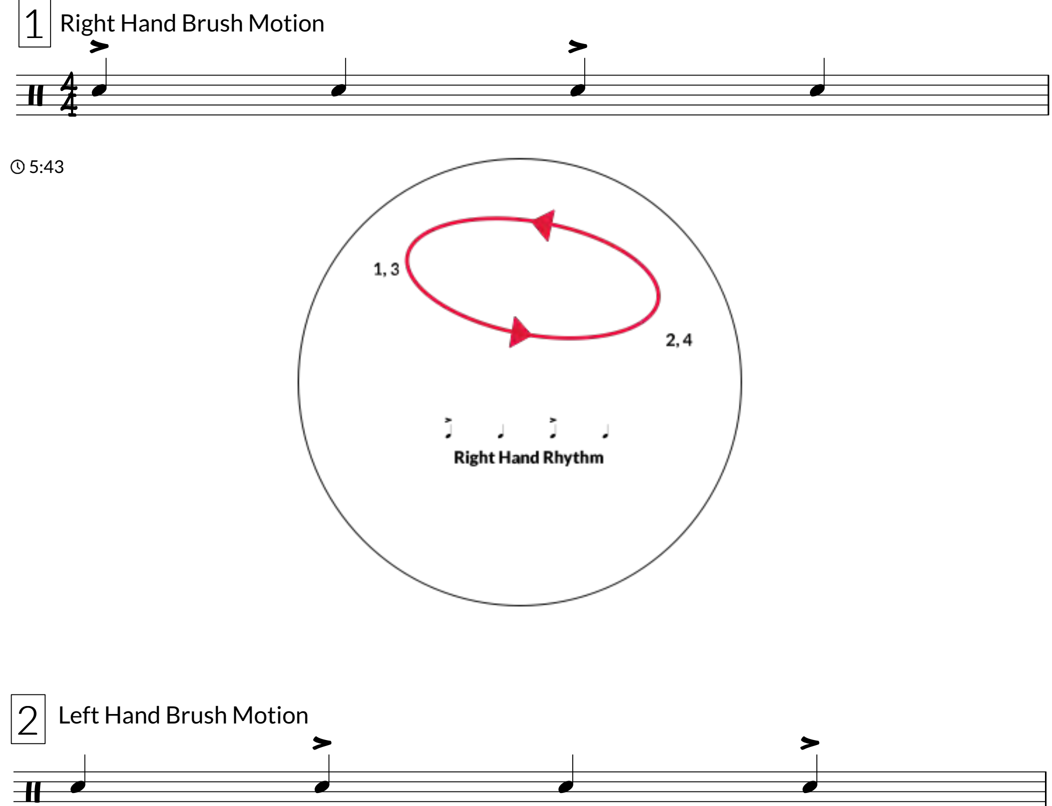
Years later, I heard a great group—the Bill Evans Trio—with drummer Marty Morell. Marty's brush technique is really individualistic. What I came up with after watching him is the idea that brushes can work in the same way as sticks. By this I mean, instead of playing a staccato and legato hand, why not have both hands playing the same thing? The sticking is right-left-right-left, and you apply it to the drum with a horizontal motion. Both hands are legato, and the accents of 1-2-3-4 are created by pressing more of the brush fan onto the head. This is why it is very important to play the basic motions with the forward portion of the fans—*not* with the full fan pressed against the head.

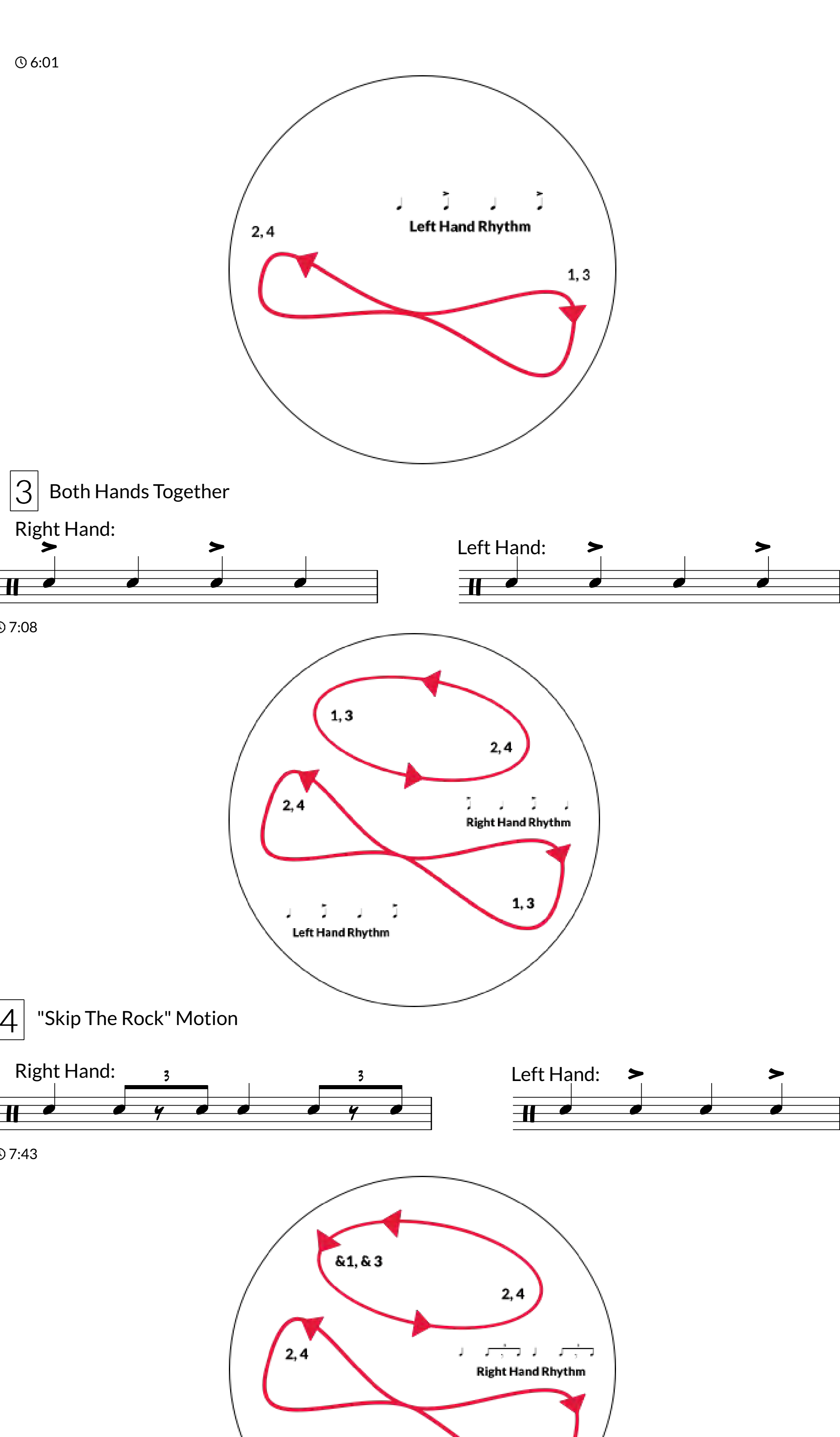
We have to talk a little bit about grip, and this is entirely personal. If the result is musical and pleasing, the technique is correct. Some people naturally move counterclockwise, and some people are more comfortable moving clockwise. I prefer counterclockwise, but if you move clockwise, that's perfectly fine.

Here is a story I like to relate. Like anything else on this instrument, anything played fast sounds very cool. If a clarinet player walked in right now, and I gave him or her a pair of sticks, and they played right-left-right-left-right-left on a drum, someone outside would say, "Hey, there's a drummer in there." But what if I gave a clarinet to a drummer? Someone walking by wouldn't say, "There's a clarinetist in there." They would say, "There's a fool drummer in there trying to play a clarinet."

The instrument is very deceptive in that all you have to do is hold onto two pieces of wood and start hitting, and that's why it's important to think in terms of musical attributes. We can take something that is very basic and form it into something that is very musical.

In my course, *Jazz Improvisation*, available in the Drum Channel store, you will develop your musicianship and improvisational skills. The course covers foundational stick technique, Moeller stick exercises, pedal technique, and brush technique, along with rhythmic improvisation on the set accompanied by a great jazz rhythm section.




6:01
Left Hand Rhythm
2, 4
1, 3
3 Both Hands Together
Right Hand:
Left Hand:
7:08
1, 3
2, 4
2, 4
Right Hand Rhythm
1, 3
Left Hand Rhythm
4 "Skip The Rock" Motion
Right Hand:
3
3
Left Hand:
7:43
&1, & 3
2, 4
2, 4
Right Hand Rhythm
1, 3
Left Hand Rhythm

# The Importance of Writing Notation

By Billy Ashbaugh

We have all heard that it's very beneficial for drummers to learn how to read music. I completely agree. For me, it was one of the many game changers for my drumming. Learning to understand basic notation gave me the ability to explore totally new ideas through various books, videos, and other documents. These were ideas I would never have stumbled upon in my normal "sit down and jam or learn songs" regimen. Even though my career has never *required* much sight reading, I have still benefitted greatly from acquiring the skill of reading, and I feel it has opened many doors for me over the years.

## The Next Step

As wonderful as it was having this new skill, it wasn't long before I realized I was only getting half the benefits of understanding notation by merely knowing how to read. I needed to learn to write out figures, as well. Not surprisingly, this came to me when I was looking at 40 songs I had to learn in about a week for a new gig. I'm sure a lot of drummers have found themselves in this situation before. It was at that moment, I decided to begin my journey towards learning to write notation.

## Power of the Pen

At the time, it didn't dawn on me, but learning the skill of writing out computer-generated notes and rests takes just as much practice and patience as mastering any other task when sitting behind the kit. To master this skill, I needed to put down my sticks and pick up a pencil and eraser. In the beginning, a lot of time was invested in learning how to write out my own interpretation of rests and notes. It took some experimenting on my end, but soon I was comfortable writing out my version of a quarter-note rest, dotted 8th notes, and so on. All of these things require nothing more than slight learning curves. I have vivid memories of getting to the gig excited to read my newly written-out charts, only to discover I couldn't read my own notation. Now, I'm able to chart out stuff with ease. In fact, if it's a basic song and groove, I can chart a song in real time without stopping the music to write out figures. You just have to put in the time. The rewards will come.

## Finding the Note

Now, I'd like to talk about the other side of being able to utilize this concept. You must be able to accurately identify exactly where the notes are landing within the time. For example, is the kick drum landing on the "e" or the "&" of beat three? Did the snare play the "&-a" or the "e-&" on beat two? Is the hi-hat playing 8th notes or 16th notes? When you hear a groove, can you identify each individual voicing?

You're developing your ears for this, and if you cannot accurately identify where these notes are landing, then learning to write out notation will have no value to you. What good is having the ability to write notation if your ears cannot accurately tell you what to write?

Developing your ear can be a challenge. I recommend that you get a good teacher, so they can make sure you're getting everything down correctly. One exercise I do with my students is I'll play a basic one-bar groove over and over while they attempt to tell me what each individual part is playing. They are mainly listening to kick, snare, and hi-hat. I ask them to write it out for me, and I check it for accuracy. If a student is struggling with this exercise, I'll try another approach. We'll go to a lessons page we're working on that includes some grooves they are comfortable with. I'll then randomly play one of the grooves for them. Their job is to listen and find the groove I'm playing. In the beginning, I'll play the groove as much as they need. But, over time, I'll challenge their ears by only playing the groove once before they must figure it out.

In this scenario, the students are listening to a figure, dissecting what they're hearing, and associating it with the note value, instead of seeing the note value and being told what to play. This requires a totally different mindset than reading a figure from paper. I know I'm being redundant, but you must be patient with this process. Like anything, the more you do it, the better it gets. Challenge yourself by picking a song you like and trying to chart out the groove. I still have my old charts that I did 35 years ago.

**This chart was my first attempt at notating an entire song. It took many hours to finally get this one finished. I remember working on it well over a week!**

## The Reward

Taking the time to learn this skill has proven to be one of the best investments I've made. Not only did it help me learn a bunch of tunes at one time, it's also a great tool to have at rehearsals. Let's say your band mates or the music director changes or adds a part on the spot. Back in the day, I would panic and do my best to memorize the information as it was coming at me. Quite often, this would cause me to

**These are some random fill ideas I jotted down for a song I was working on.**

put a mental block up and just make the entire learning process even harder and more frustrating. But once I had the skill of writing notation, the whole process was as easy as writing it out and reading it.

Also, imagine being able to write out the ideas you come up with. Have you ever had a cool idea or a groove only to forget it the next day? I certainly did. Now, you can easily notate a library of ideas that will be at your fingertips for future recall. Think of it as jotting down notes. Being able to read and write notation is like learning the alphabet for a language versus simply being taught a few key words or phrases. It's that powerful.

## My Stories

I'd like to share a couple of stories of how utilizing this technique saved me hours of trying to memorize parts. Back in 1999, NSYNC did a song with Gloria Estefan for the movie *Music of My Heart*. While on tour, we found out we were going to perform the song with Gloria on the Teen Choice Awards. The problem was that filming the performance was literally the next day. Obviously, I didn't have much time to prepare. It would have been no big deal—except the kick-drum pattern for this particular song was all over the place. It constantly changed throughout the song. Even more concerning, although I would be playing live, they wanted to keep the programmed kick part from the original track in the mix. This meant that I had to lock dead on with the track to avoid flamming. And, remember, this is live TV! Thank goodness I was able to chart the kick pattern out before we got to rehearsals the next day. I had two pages of kick drum written out that I had to follow. Needless to say, this was definitely one of those times I was glad I had learned to write notation. I'll never forget that during the rehearsal, Gloria's husband and renowned producer Emilio Estefan smiled and nodded as if he knew I had avoided a potentially disastrous situation.

A similar situation happened when we had to learn three new songs to back Jordan Knight of New Kids on the Block on *Good Morning America*. Again, this was live TV, and filming was just a day away. Though the songs were structured conventionally, it was still awesome to write everything out and read my charts on the gig. This was a much better scenario than having to spend hours listening to and memorizing three songs.

**This is one of many charts I've written out for various gigs I've had.**

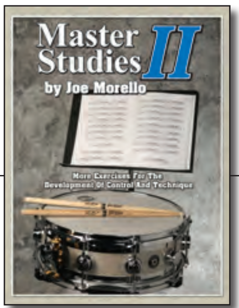
## The Challenge

I hope sharing my personal experiences with you might help inspire you to take the plunge and embrace this concept. As I mentioned earlier, I felt that just learning to read notation was only giving me half of the potential benefits this world has to offer. Everything seemed to come full circle once I learned to write. I have the ability to pick up a book and explore new ideas, and I have this amazing ability to chart out parts with ease. What a difference this has made! Trust me, writing notation is one skill you will not regret putting in the time to master.

# Endurance Exercises

## Balance Your Left and Right Hands!

From *Master Studies II* by Joe Morello




The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen each hand individually in order to achieve a balance between the two. For the right-handed drummer, the left hand is the weaker hand, and vice versa. Play each example starting with your left hand, as shown, and then try the examples with your right. This exercise is great for developing the single-stroke roll.

1

L R L L L L L L L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

2

L R L R L L L L L L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

3

L R L R L R L L L L L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

4

L R L R L R L R L L L L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

5

L R L R L R L R L R L L L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

6

L R L R L R L R L R L R L L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

7

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

8

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L L L | L L L L L L L L L L L L

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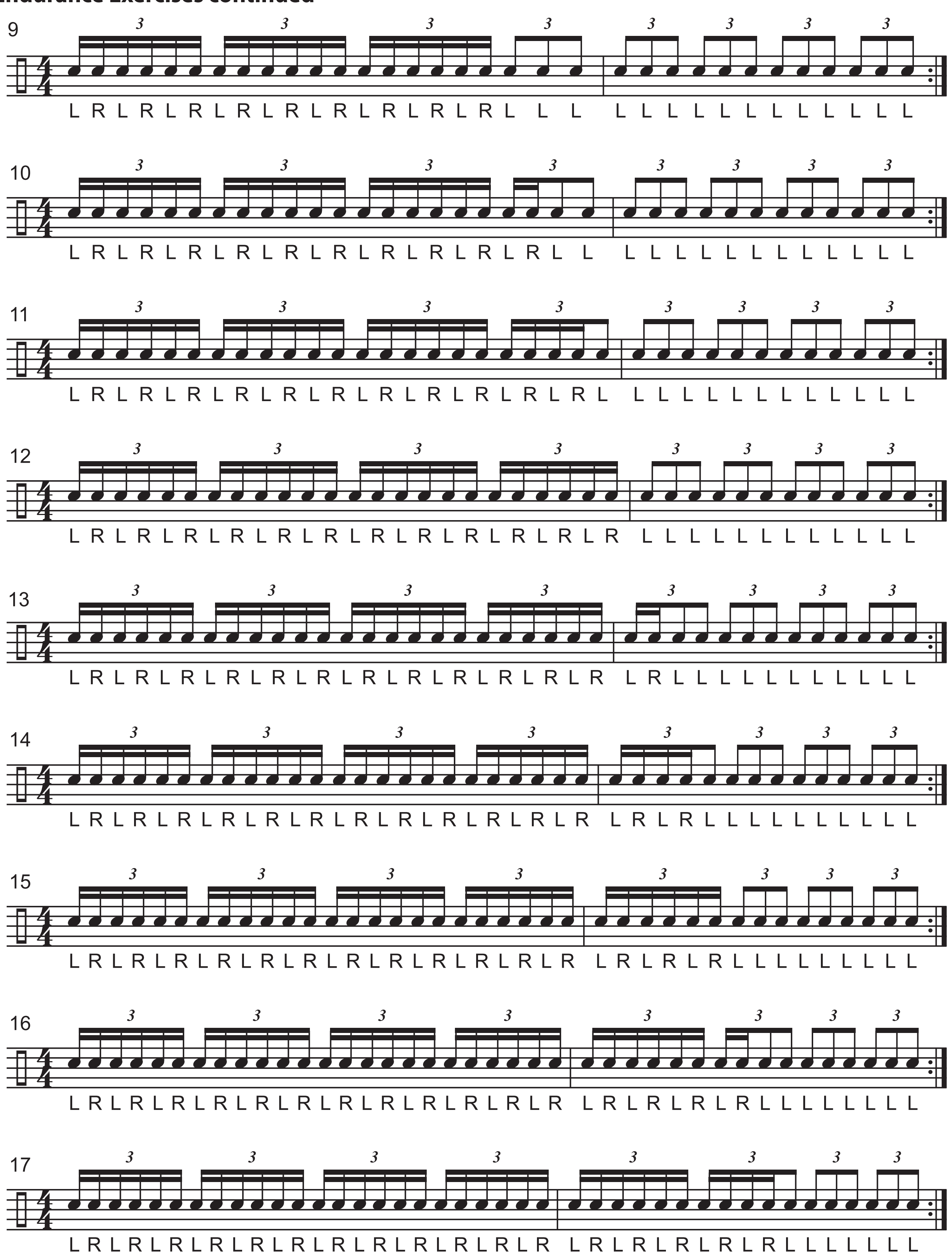
## Endurance Exercises continued

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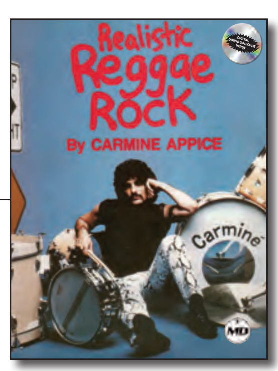
# *Realistic Reggae Rock,* Part II

## Awesome Drum Fill Ideas for Irie Playing

By Carmine Appice




In the April issue, we kicked off your journey through Carmine Appice's *Realistic Reggae Rock* [Modern Drummer Publications] with a session on hi-hat patterns. This month, Carmine unveils some cool and authentic reggae fills. Dig in!

1.
HH SD BD

2.
HH SD BD

3.
HH SD BD

4.
HH SD BD

5.
HH SD BD

6.
HH SD BD

7.
HH SD BD

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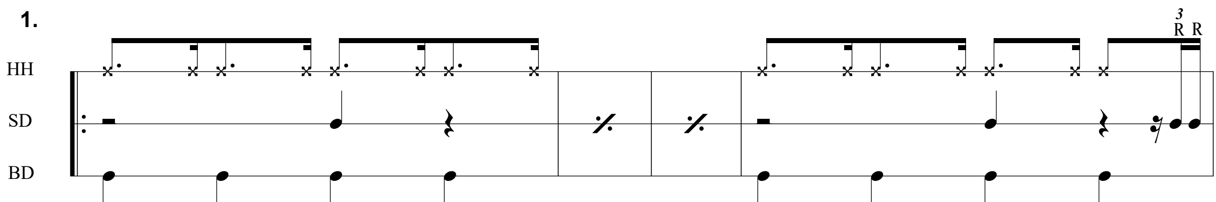
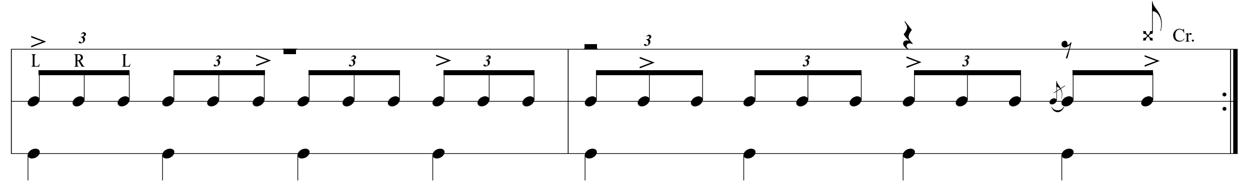
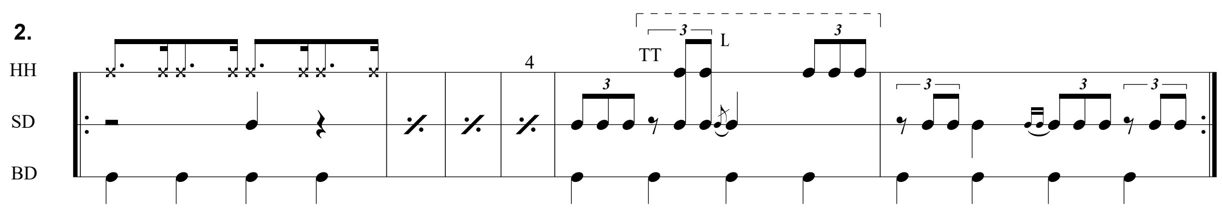
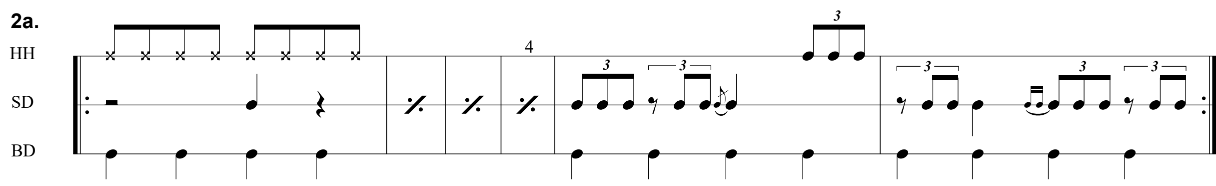
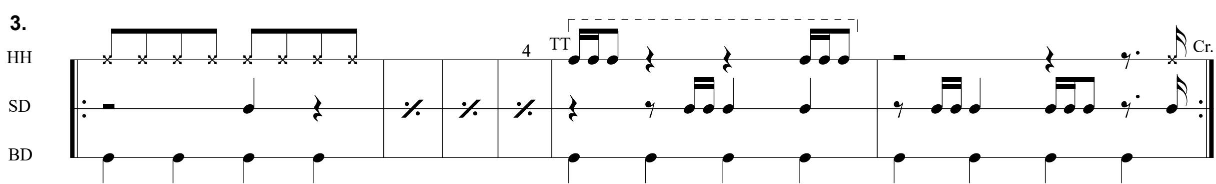
## *Realistic Reggae Rock,* Part II continued

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# Developing Speed Naturally

By Roy Burns, February 1984

Almost all young drummers attempt to see how fast they can play at some point. This is a natural stage of development. It is sort of like flexing your muscles just to see how strong you are.

Technique is needed to play any instrument well, but technique means more than just speed. It also means control, touch, accuracy, and consistency. In addition, it includes producing a musical sound from the instrument. Such factors as coordination, endurance, and power should also be considered a part of technique. To me, technique means skill.

To play the drumset well in contemporary music does require good technique. The problem is not really with learning technique or attempting to learn to play faster. The problem is with the side effects of ineffective practice methods. Here are some tips on developing speed naturally.

**Practice with the Sticks You Normally Play With**

Avoid metal sticks or sticks that are much larger than those you normally use. If warming up with a heavier pair feels good to you, do so, but avoid extremes. A few minutes with a slightly heavier pair than normal is fine. Then, practice with your regular sticks.

**It's Difficult to Develop Good Technique if the Stick is Too Light**

A 7A is a very small stick for practicing. A good 5A stick seems to be the lightest weight for effective practicing. Again, just avoid extremes. If you are playing in a trio and using 7As every night, spend a few minutes each day with a pair of 5As just to keep loose.

**Avoid Tension When Practicing**

This is sometimes easier said than done. We all want to do well, and sometimes we try too hard. The result is tense, over-tightened muscles. When this happens, endurance, speed, sound, and control are sacrificed to some degree. Play the practice patterns at about 80 percent of your top speed—fast enough to work out, while avoiding straining or tensing up. Play more repetitions of each pattern or exercise. In this way, you begin to develop the ability to stay moderately relaxed while playing fast. If you continually tighten up in an effort to play faster, you are simply practicing tightening up. This amounts to learning a bad habit. By playing 20-percent slower, you develop the habit of playing in a relaxed manner with a musical sound and in tempo.

**Practice a Variety of Sticking and Accent Patterns**

Reverse patterns or change the accents whenever you feel limited or bored. Play as many different kinds of patterns as possible.

**Practice with One Hand at a Time**

Play around your drumset with just the left hand, and then with just the right hand. Practice reaching for each part of the set with each hand. This will provide a real workout for you—especially with the left arm.

**Practice at a Variety of Dynamic Levels**

The ability to play quickly and softly is important in developing a "touch" on the instrument. It helps to develop sensitivity and control.

**Practice with a Metronome**

Especially when practicing for speed, a metronome will keep you honest. It will make you aware of when you try too hard and rush the tempo. The metronome can also be a great aid for learning to play in time at slow tempos.

**Be Aware of the Sound You Are Creating**

When you tighten up, you change the sound. As you increase the speed of an exercise, make certain that the sound changes as little as possible. If the sound changes only slightly as the exercise is played faster, then you are not tightening up. If the sound changes drastically, check the muscles in your forearms, hands, and upper arms to see if you are becoming tense. If so, slow down a little and relax. Play a little easier until being relaxed physically becomes a habit.

**Use Your Feet**

Even when practicing on a practice pad, tap one or both feet to keep the tempo secure. This also helps to develop coordination. When practicing on the drumset, devote some time each day to developing your feet. Play patterns with just the feet so you can concentrate on the sound, as well as how your muscles feel. Make sure that your pedals are well oiled and in good working condition. Buy a practice pad set for your feet if you are limited by an apartment or sensitive neighbors.

**Try Standing Up**

If your shoulders and/or arms become tense while practicing, a practice pad on a stand that reaches the height of your belt buckle is perfect. Adjust the pad up or down until you are comfortable. Practice standing up at the pad. This allows the arms and shoulders to move more freely than when you are seated at the drumset. Again, avoid extremes. A few minutes each day when warming up should be sufficient.

**A Last Thought**

Everything we think, feel, and understand (or don't understand) is projected to others in the way we sound when we play. If you are tense, stiff, or uptight because of ineffective practice methods, others will hear it. Always practice in a relaxed way, listen to each sound, be patient, and you will develop speed, control, and technique naturally.

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# Ralph Peterson Jr.
## May 20, 1962 – March 1, 2021

By Michael Molenda

Ralph Peterson Jr.—who came to prominence in the 1980s as one of jazz's swinging, improv-driven "Young Lions"—succumbed to cancer on March 1. He was just 58 years old.

Peterson's commitment to bebop—as well as being an avid student of the history of drumming—earned him a long-time spot as the second drummer in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Blakey became a mentor, and, after Blakey passed on in 1990, Peterson kept his mentor's spirit and legacy alive through several musical projects throughout the years.

"Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, and Philly Joe Jones were my holy trinity, but Blakey was my main inspiration, and he did the most to get me heard in the community by giving me the gig in the Jazz Messengers Big Band," Peterson told *MD* in 1986. "Every drummer who has done that gig with him on the same bandstand has gone on to be a voice in the music field. From Blakey, I got the concept of building and constructing a solo with the soloist. While a drummer's main role is as an accompanist, the jazz language has become more conversational, as compared to when the original role of drummers was being completely in service to the soloists. Now, the soloist is as responsible for listening to the ideas coming from the rhythm section as the rhythm section is for listening to the soloist's ideas. I got all that from Blakey. I would watch him train Terence Blanchard and Wynton Marsalis in the Jazz Messengers. Art would let them know when they made their move too soon, or when they played too long. He would simply go to another intensity of volume level and swallow them whole. They would be pushing and pushing, but you could only hear Art's cymbals."

Peterson—whose father, grandfather, and four uncles were also drummers—played the trumpet in high school, and when he applied to Rutgers University's jazz studies program, he failed the percussion exam and had to enroll as a trumpet major. Nonetheless, it was the drums that powered Peterson's thoughtful yet bombastic approach to music—ultimately leading him to perform with a dizzying array of jazz talent, appear on upwards of 150 albums, release nearly 30 albums as a band leader (from 1988–2020), start his own record label (Onyx Productions), and become a full professor at Berklee College of Music. He was also a rest-

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**Ralph Peterson Jr. continued**

less explorer, who managed to evolve while simultaneously holding true to Blakey/bop principles.

"He makes hard bop sound daring again," wrote *New York Times* music critic Jon Pareles in 1988, hailing Peterson for not being "stifled" by tradition.

Peterson's unbridled productivity is even more remarkable, considering he fell victim to drug addiction in the '90s.

"It was no secret—I was a crackhead," he told *MD* in 2016. "The only person who didn't know that everybody knew was me. Addicts are often the last to know. I had help to quit, but it wasn't an immediate process. I learned that my brain is biochemically different from most people's brains. I didn't have a cutoff switch. It took me a minute to learn how to enjoy playing unaltered, because I'd done it high for so long. But I realized I was beginning to do some of my best work. My energy was used to uplift the people I played with, instead of beat them down in some testosterone-induced display of musical machismo [laughs]."

Although he had the assumed advantage of having a father as a musician—his father was also Pleasantville, New York's first Black police chief and first Black mayor—Peterson didn't immediately take to his dad's jazz influences. James Brown and Tower of Power were more vital stimuli at the time, even though his father tried to "keep sounds around" that would help Peterson understand what it would take to become a better musician. It obviously worked. Peterson's lifeforce and music held clues that the teachings of his dad, Blakey, and others—even his six-year battle with cancer—forged a desire to address something bigger than himself.

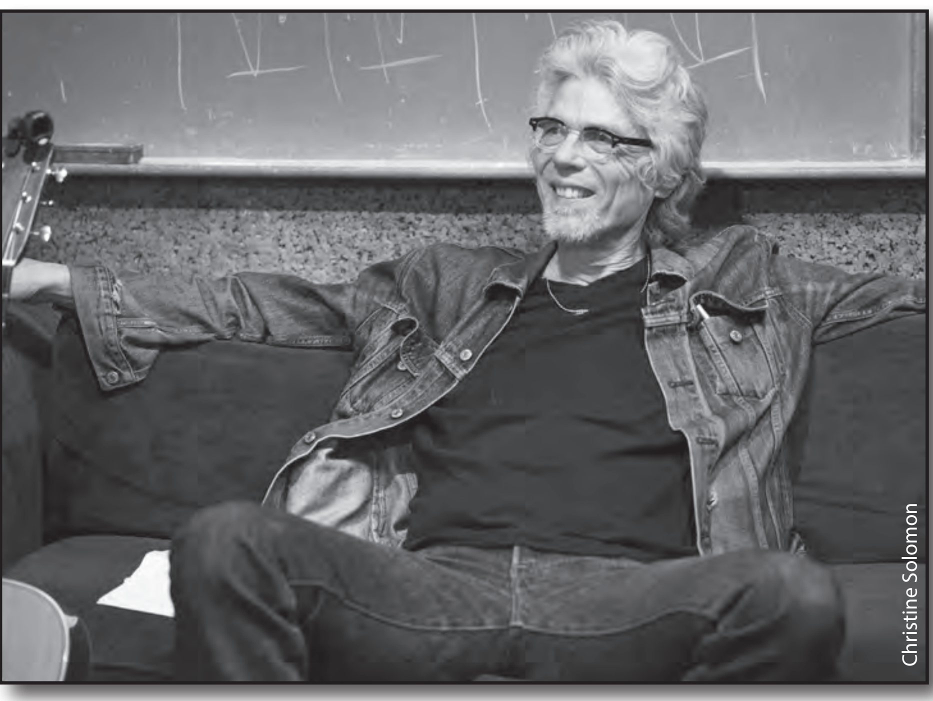
"You can't separate one's persona from one's music," he counseled *MD* readers. "The music is a more honest expression of who you are. It's important to listen. It's important to play good time. It's important to not be selfish. Being a musician is actually being a part of the service industry. The thing we serve is the music, and the music is a principle greater than any musician who plays it."

# Don Heffington

## Dec 20, 1950 – March 23, 2021

By Lauren Monroe

Drummer, multi-instrumentalist, and songwriter Don Heffington died on March 23, after a short-term fight with leukemia—a loss so many were not ready for.



Christine Solomon

Born into a musical family in Los Angeles, Heffington was known as a drummer's drummer. Often referred to as a swinging human metronome, he could play it all—jazz, rock, folk, country, and blues—and he was the go-to drummer for producers around Los Angeles for more than 30 years.

Heffington's credits include decades of collaborations with Tom Waits, Bob Dylan, Lowell George, Van Dyke Parks, Jackson Browne, Victoria Williams, Dwight Yoakam, Emmylou Harris, Randy Newman, Joe Cocker, Chuck Prophet, Sam Phillips, Matthew Sweet, Adam Sandler, and dozens more.

The luminous and unforgettably talented Heffington was tall, lean, and handsome, with a slow-moving walk and a signature mane that had turned silver by the time I met him. His kind smile lit up a room, and his humble nature downplayed his epic talent. I was one of the lucky ones who had the gift of working with him on my last album, which was produced by Jim Scott.

I think everyone who played with Heffington agrees he didn't just play percussion or drums—he played songs. He heard the details—he could play with dynamics and sensitivity to the song.

"Don could not only play the deepest groove at any tempo, he also made a beautiful sound," remembers Scott. "I loved the way he hit the drums. He hit them so musically, and the sound always fit the song. On top of that, he always looked so cool doing it. He will be deeply missed."

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**Certain people expect me to shine all the time, but artists can't be at their best every day. No one is perfect.**

If a song is a good song, it's much easier for me to play well. But if it's a bad song, then I might not sound so good, no matter what. That's the way of music. Also, me and Robbie [Shakespeare, bassist] always try to keep something in reserve. If we perform today and play well, in the back of our minds, we know we could do even better. But we try to hold a little back, so that the next time we play, there is something extra special. Not too many drummers like to think like this—not too many bass players, either—but that's the way Robbie and I execute the best.

Sly Dunbar
*Modern Drummer*, April 1985
**moderndrummer.com/archive**

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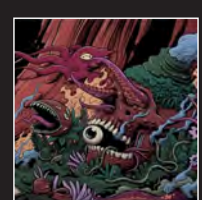

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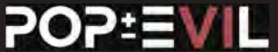


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