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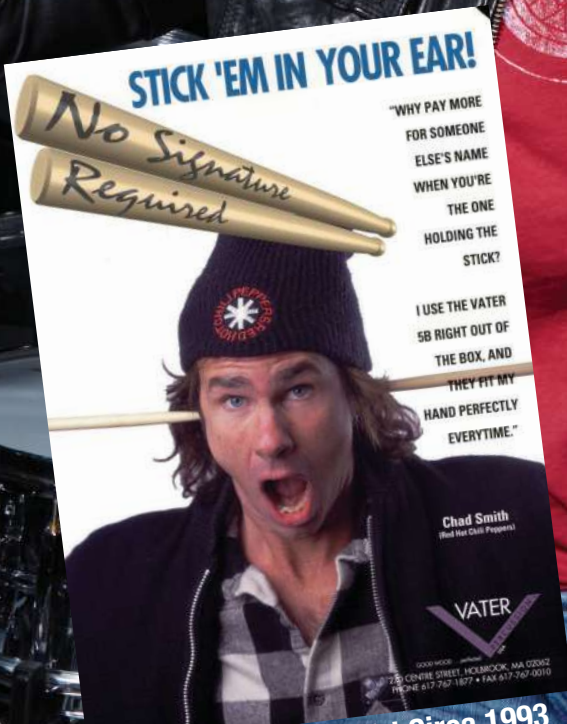
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Chad Smith



Early Chad Smith Ad Circa 1993



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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Make Every Second Count

How's everyone doing? Hopefully life isn't being too hard on you.

Spending time on social media, as so many of us do these days, we become more and more aware of what's happening in people's lives—and we communicate the general vibe of our own lives on a daily basis. Some days are good: We share news of a cool gig we're playing or a groovy beat we've learned, or we post pictures of a vacation that we'll cherish forever. And unfortunately some days are bad: We announce that we've lost a pet, or that a loved one has passed away.

And, of course, something that many of us musicians do regularly on social media is complain about the current state of the music industry. I've addressed this topic before, and I still can't say that I have all the answers. But one thing I do feel strongly is that all of us should try to complain less and just continue making music. Yes, we all want to be acknowledged and respected, and we all long to reach our goals. But ask yourself this question: Why do I make music? Your answer should *always* be, simply: Because it makes me happy, and it makes the people listening happy.

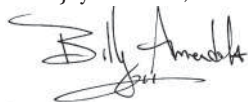
Take a look at our cover artist this month, Green Day's Tré Cool. I don't think I've ever seen Tré *not* looking like he's having fun. Sure, he's a very successful musician who's no doubt paid well for what he does. But he hasn't always been—and there are certainly plenty of other successful musicians who nonetheless seem to have a negative attitude in general. We can't let the shake-up of the music business get us down. While our industry seems to change every day, in reality it's always been that way. There's never been any guarantee that people are going to buy the music we put so much time and effort into making. And while it's true that streaming, which is the way most people consume music now, may not pay what we feel is fair, the upside is that more people are hearing our music than ever before. And truth be told, not all of us back up our opinions with action. If you stream a song and dig it, buy it. If we all did that, the state of the industry would change for the better.

As I grow older, it becomes clearer to me that perseverance is the main ingredient in success. Trust me, all you youngsters, you're still learning. And although you may think you know it all—and I say that lovingly—there's so much more that you're going to learn, and that only comes with experience. Yes, us "old dogs" are thankful to be taught some new tricks, but that doesn't change the fact that, for better or worse, wisdom only comes with experience.



But there are advantages to youth as well. You have drive and determination. That's a wonderful quality—keep that going! Believe in yourself. Set out to do everything you dream of. *Go for it.* But as you get older, don't lose track of what's important to achieving your goals, and don't be afraid to adapt to a different way of getting to the finish line.



Life will always have its ups and downs; it's how we handle them that's key. As musicians, we're lucky to be able to channel all that into our music. Not everyone is born with that gift. So appreciate what you've got, live for today, and make every second count.

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see you next time.



Billy Amendola
Editor at Large

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What Song Inspired You to Start Playing the Drums?

This month's cover artist, Tré Cool, certainly inspired plenty of drummers to pick up a pair of sticks. That got us thinking about what drew the rest of us to the kit, and when we asked our readers and social media followers that very question, it elicited a heap of responses. In the decades since Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich first lured some of our commentators to the drums, performances by players such as Ronnie Tutt, Ringo Starr, John Bonham, Joe Morello, Neil Peart, Dave Grohl, Travis Barker, and James "The Rev" Sullivan hooked plenty of the other budding musicians. Tré Cool himself chimed in, commenting that he took up the drums after hearing Ron Wilson's classic performance on the Surfaris' drum anthem "Wipe Out." Here are some of the responses.

My earliest recollection of feeling the power of the beat was circa 1979 while listening to my mom's Blondie record that had the song "Dreaming" on it [Eat to the Beat], with the great Clem Burke on drums. The driving 8th notes on the floor tom and his flurry of 16th-note fills were infectious—and I was only two years old at the time!

But the performance that made me know for certain that I wanted to be a drummer was Ronnie Tutt's playing on "See See Rider" from Elvis Presley's *Aloha From Hawaii via Satellite* TV special. He was perched behind that sweet blue sparkle, double bass Ludwig kit and driving that smoking TCB band.

Bobby Angilletta

It was a Karen Carpenter drum solo when I was in primary school. My dad was a big fan, and as soon as I saw her play a solo on the concert toms, all I wanted to do was play drums. She had massive talent, and it's a shame that she's no longer with us.

Andrew Woody Knight

I heard the Beatles' "She Loves You" for the first time on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. It was the first time I heard drums as a musical instrument—not just the beat—because of Ringo's opening riff and tight accents. I began drumming in 1964 at the age of ten. His creativity inspired me from that point forward.

Thomas Reid

When I was eleven, I saw the studio video for Rush's "Tom Sawyer." Neil Peart's drumming blew my world apart. I'd never seen anything so artistic and athletic. I devoted the better part of a decade to studying his performances. Even though my interests expanded to other players, his influence continues to this day, some thirty-five years later.

Sean A. Scapellato

I remember starting out around twelve years old. At that age, I was into straightforward rock. But when I heard Rush's "The Spirit of Radio," I was blown away—not just because of Neil Peart's amazing musicianship on drums, but also because of the whole song. The message of the lyrics and how all the parts fit together and complemented everything perfectly made me realize that I didn't want to just be a 4/4 rock drummer. That's when I began to expand my abilities and, as Neil puts it, add tools to my toolbox.

Michael Bernhard

"Wipe Out" by the Surfaris. I was just a kid when I first heard it, and I knew I had to play it one day. I got my first kit at age twelve and played "Wipe Out" that very day. I've always played by ear, but I really wish I had learned to read music. I missed an opportunity to play with the London Symphony Orchestra because of it—a lesson for anyone who reads this and who's in the same boat.

Dean Durham

Nilsson's "Jump Into the Fire." Jim Gordon's solo cinched my decision to start taking drum lessons. And my teacher was [*Modern Drummer* founder] Ron Spagnardi!

Gerry Ross

"Wipe Out." I heard this song on the radio when I was a kid, and it made me want to jump out of my skin and go crazy! That was the first time I realized the effect that rhythm can have on a human soul. I knew that I wanted to be able to feel like that again and make others feel like that. I picked up drumsticks at age twelve and have been doing it ever since.

Mickey Sticks

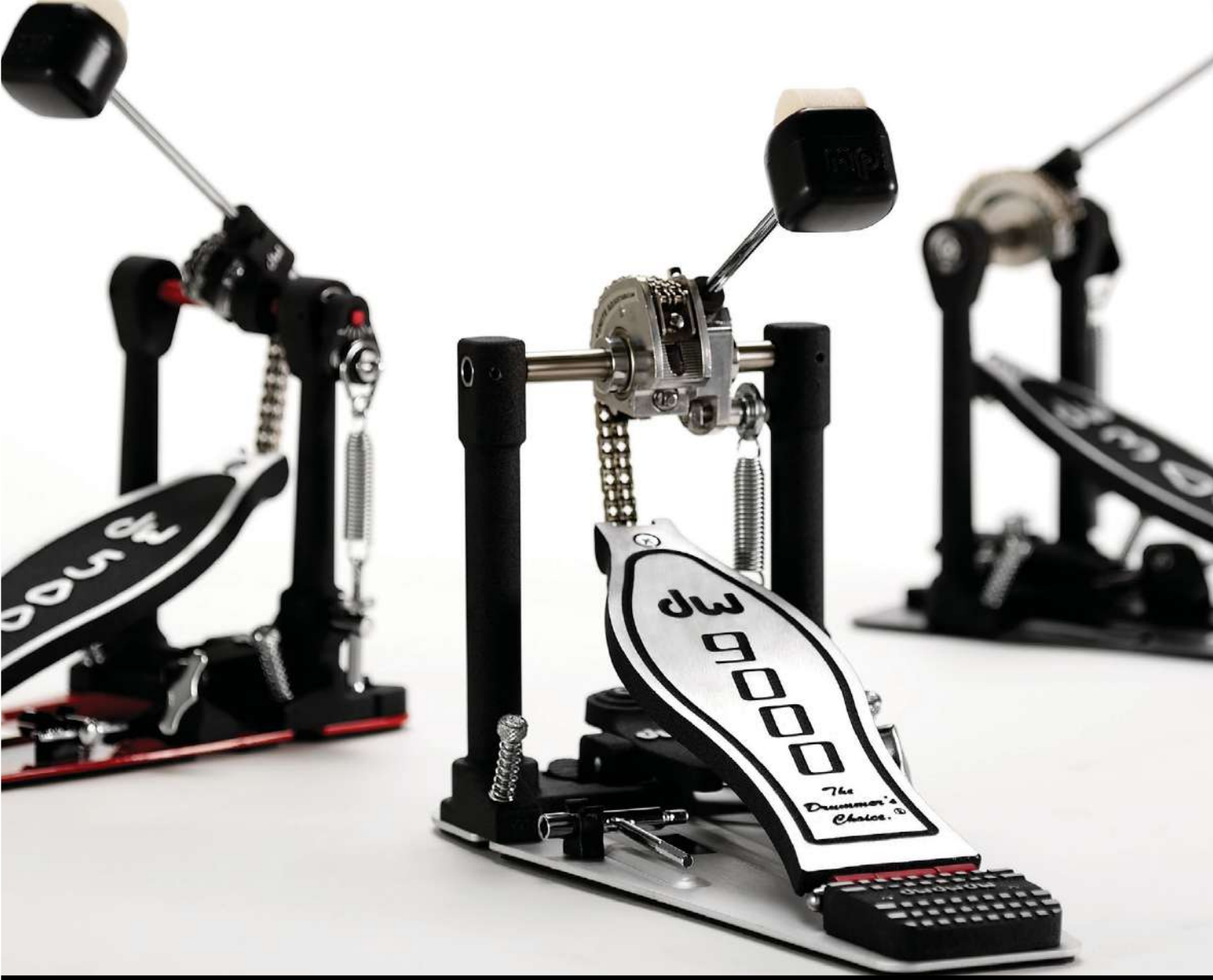
"Where Eagles Dare" by Iron Maiden. Nicko McBrain's incorporation of swing into heavy metal was so appealing to me. Plus, that intro fill obviously caught my ears. When I first started getting into heavy metal, I was taking drum lessons but wasn't very keen on practicing. Once I started listening to Iron Maiden, I watched their live DVDs and saw McBrain in action. Then it clicked. I started grinding and dissecting every note Nicko played. Somewhere along the way, I fell in love with playing the drums.

Ian Dubson

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OUT NOW



Priscilla C. Scott

Jess Gowrie on Chelsea Wolfe's *Hiss Spun*

Drummer and singer reunite on one of the more highly anticipated albums of the year.

You know when you put your ear right up to a perfectly tuned floor tom and tap the head ever so slightly, and if the room's quiet enough it sounds like that pillowy rumble could be coming from the very depths of the earth, and it might just go on forever? And you know when you're at a metal show and the drummer launches into a double bass attack that's so loud and low and forceful that you can feel your internal organs shiver and shake? Well, Jess Gowrie certainly knows those feelings. In fact, on Chelsea Wolfe's seventh album, *Hiss Spun*, she's the one pushing the music to the farthest ends of that dynamic spectrum. It's an extremely satisfying thing to experience, and it perfectly frames Wolfe's songwriting and arrangement style, which spans the fragile delicacy of acoustic icons like Nick Drake and the classic howl and drone of, say, the Cure's *Pornography* or the Melvins' *Houdini*.

The fact that Gowrie's playing works so well with Wolfe's music is no accident. Though this is the drummer's first appearance on one of the singer's solo albums, the two spent three years together in the Sacramento, California, band Red Host during the mid-aughts, a period when, as Wolfe has said in prior interviews, she was being influenced by the drummer's taste in heavy music. "I have a hard time taking a hundred percent credit," Gowrie tells *MD*. "But back then my friends and I were definitely listening to bands like Marilyn Manson and

Queens of the Stone Age. So by default it sort of got her into it too."

Cut to 2017, and we find the

two putting their heads, hands, and hearts back together in the service of creating an album concerned with, as Wolfe puts it, "cycles, obsession, centrifugal force, and gut feelings." Producer Kurt Ballou (Converge) helped flesh out the idiosyncratic tones that Wolfe is known for by providing a wide variety of snare drums and encouragement to try some unique production techniques. "I played on two different kits," Gowrie explains. "One we called the trash kit, and it was set up in the basement, where it was really reverby, and the other was more like your regular live kit. A lot of times I'd record the entire song on both those kits, and we would use certain parts played on each of them."

Ultimately, Gowrie's most important considerations for parts and sounds depended on Wolfe's voice and melodic sense. "One of the awesome things about playing with Chelsea," Gowrie says, "is that she has a real talent for writing melodies that are very catchy yet unpredictable. When I approach writing drum parts with her, I concentrate on the melodies almost more than the riff itself, because they dictate the mood, the vibe. And then when we went into the studio and really [focused on] the tone of the drums and which kit, snare, and cymbals we'd use, it really mattered to me how her vocals sounded on each track. On the song 'Twin Fawn,' for instance, I played on a banjo instead of a snare, which is very different from just playing with the snares off. It worked so well with her vocals, and that was the main objective."

To learn more about how Gowrie approached her performances on *Hiss Spun*, check out the extended version of our interview at modern drummer.com. **Adam Budofsky**

Gowrie is playing a Tama bubinga kit on the current Chelsea Wolfe tour.

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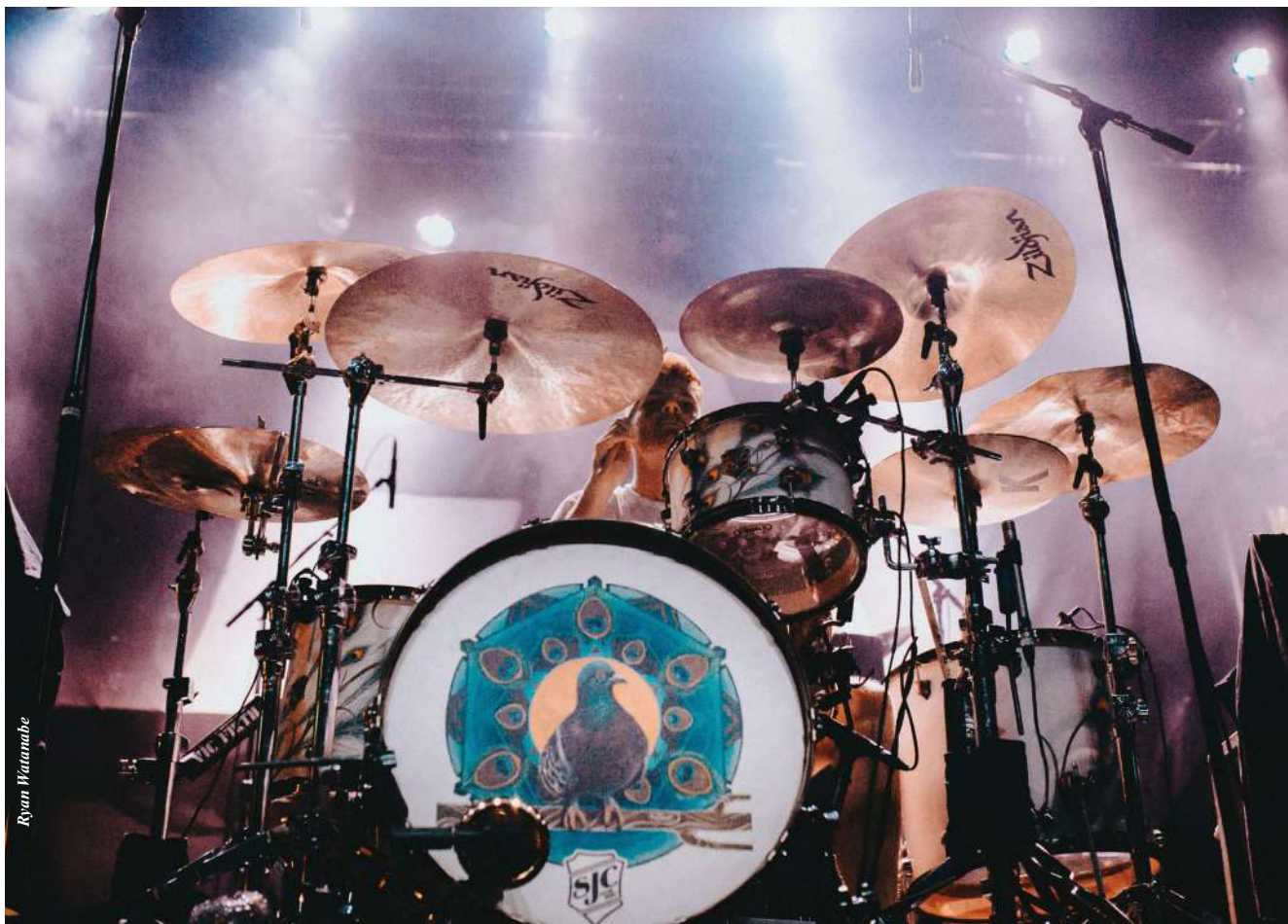


Wand Plum (Evan Burrows)



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ON TOUR



Ryan Watanabe

Josh Manuel With Issues

The drummer crushes a rising group's live set thanks to a background heavily steeped in gospel, rudimental, and hardcore influences.

The Atlanta-based metalcore group Issues is currently headlining an international tour that lasts through early November. Since joining the band in 2012, drummer Josh Manuel has brought a unique combination of gospel-inspired phrasing, drum-line chops, and slamming grooves to Issues' unique blend of post-hardcore, pop, and hip-hop influences—most notably on the 2016 release *HeadSpace*.

Manuel attributes much of his sound to the time he spent growing up in the Atlanta gospel scene. "I've learned so much over the years from playing at church," he says. "I play at Stonecreek Church every chance I get when I'm home. It teaches you how to be a professional musician—showing up on time, learning the songs, playing to a click, running tracks, playing with other musicians in a live setting, and more. It's mostly about supporting the song, using dynamics to create the perfect vibe and atmosphere. At a young age, it teaches the invaluable lesson that less is more."

Manuel plays SJC drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Vic Firth drumsticks, and uses JH Audio in-ear monitors.

Manuel utilizes his drum-line background in plenty of Issues' songs, including "Sad Ghost" from the group's self-titled 2014 release. "I use a lot of the sticking patterns that I learned from marching to try and keep it unique and interesting," he says. "Sad Ghost" opens with a marching snare

pattern. Also, everyone in our band plays drums except for our bass player, Skyler [Acord], so we're always open-minded when it comes to trying new ideas and seeing what we can get away with."

As the band continues to gain popularity and mature, Manuel's perspective on the pressures of higher-profile gigs has grown as well. "When I first started touring, I think I held myself to kind of an impossible standard, which caused me a lot of anxiety and stress," Josh says. "Eventually I came to the conclusion that we're human and everyone has good nights and bad ones. Don't get me wrong, when I have a bad night it still really eats at me. But I think perspective is important, and I'm thankful every night to be doing what I love. If I have a bad night, that just means I'll practice twice as much the next day."

Manuel attributes changes in social media to helping younger drummers get work—especially in his own case. "The main reason I got the gig with Issues was because of the videos I had up on YouTube," he explains. "So I think social media plays a vital role in getting yourself out there and building your brand as a musician. Instagram seems like it's taken over lately in the drumming community, and I think it's great. My favorite thing about posting ideas and play-alongs is the immediate feedback, whether it's good or bad. I think it's really beneficial for continuously improving as a player."
Willie Rose

Also on the Road

Bryan Devendorf with the National /// **Tim Very** with Manchester Orchestra /// **Ryan Meyer** with Highly Suspect
/// **Austin D'Amond** with DevilDriver /// **Jan Axel "Hellhammer" Blomberg** with Mayhem

NEWS

John Dentz Passes

This past May 9, Los Angeles-based drummer John Dentz passed away. "I loved the way John played," says the iconic studio and stage drummer Jim Keltner, who was friends with Dentz since the mid-'60s, and who in 1969 passed the baton in Gábor Szabó's band to the drummer.

"John was from the Max Roach school, with a lot of Philly Joe Jones thrown in," Keltner says. "He played with a lot of great artists, including Stan Getz, Freddie Hubbard, and Chick Corea. But I dug watching him play with Supersax—a fantastic big band that played in little clubs out in the Valley—or with Mose Allison, at a club down by the beach. I loaned him my 24" Zildjian A ride with rivets when he played with Mose and Gábor."

Though Dentz made his mark on the West Coast, he was originally from New Jersey, an obvious fact to anyone who engaged him in conversation. "I always enjoyed listening to him talk," Keltner says. "He was a real Easterner, with an edgy personality. And he had a beautiful family—his wife of fifty-two years, Marie; his daughter, Daphne; her husband, Chris; and their son, Oliver. As a classic-jazz drummer, John flew under the radar. I think he liked that."

To hear nearly eight hours of Dentz's work—including the track "Swing, Dentz, Swing," which was originally released under the drummer's name in 1981 but later reissued as a Chick Corea date in 1994—check out his playlist at *Modern Drummer's* Spotify page.



Latin Jazz Community Lends a Hand to Conga Legend Giovanni Hidalgo

This past March 22, the Hands United for Giovanni Hidalgo charity concert was held at the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts in the Bronx, New York, to raise money for medical expenses recently incurred by world-renowned conga player Giovanni Hidalgo, whose struggle with diabetes has limited his ability to perform.

Featured performers—all friends of Hidalgo's—included Rubén Blades, Paquito D'Rivera, José Alberto, Luis Enrique, Tony Vega, Domingo Quiñones, Bernie Williams, the Pedrito Martinez Group, and many more. "Giovanni has contributed so much to the music community throughout his career, it was only fitting that we return the favor in his time of need," percussionist Marc Quiñones says.

The event was produced by Marc Quiñones, percussionists Bobby Allende and Anthony Carrillo, and Latin Percussion founder Martin Cohen and his associate Javier Ruez. Hidalgo has played with Eddie Palmieri, Dizzy Gillespie and the United Nation Orchestra, Airto Moreira, Michel Camilo, Zakir Hussain, Tito Puente, and many others. Donations for him can be made at gofundme.com/giohidalgofund.

Stephan S. Nigohosian



DW Drums Receives Certificate of Congressional Recognition

While celebrating its forty-fifth anniversary this year, the California-based drum manufacturer Drum Workshop was honored with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition acknowledging the company's craftsmanship of musical instruments and its commitment to supporting music education.

California congressional member Julia Brownley toured the company's facilities and presented executive vice president and drum designer John Good and president and CEO Chris Lombardi with the honor. During the tour, Brownley observed how DW handcrafts its award-winning Collector's and Performance series drums and machined pedals made from aircraft-grade aluminum.

"Receiving this congressional recognition is a proud moment for all of us here at DW," Lombardi says. "The drums we manufacture here in California end up on stages and in studios, homes, and schools all over the world, and we're honored to be recognized for our long-standing commitment to American musical instrument manufacturing and promoting the importance of music education."



From left: John Good, Julia Brownley, and Chris Lombardi

Francesco Desmaete



Allen

Who's Playing What

Carl Allen (Christian McBride & Inside Straight, educator) is using **Vater** drumsticks.

Troy Luccketta (Tesla) and **Rikki Rockett** (Poison) have joined the **Toca Percussion** family of artists.



Luccketta



Rockett



BENNYGREB

The Time Machine



Shown in the new
Vintage Black Slate Finish

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OPTIONAL BD BRACKET



The SONOR team, in cooperation with artists and collectors, worked tirelessly to bring the Vintage Series drums as close as possible to the look, feel, and sound of its predecessor from the 1950's and 60's. SONOR then combined this with it's knowledge of modern drum building to create an instrument that will hold up to today's modern playing.

SONOR.COM



Yamaha Drums at 50

After a decade spent laying the groundwork, the Japanese manufacturer captured the imaginations of drummers who obsessed over its top-level endorsers, including the drum heroes Rick Marotta, Andy Newmark, and Steve Gadd. Today players like the Dave Matthews Band's Carter Beauford, Pearl Jam's Matt Cameron, and jazz greats John Riley, Dafnis Prieto, and Antonio Sanchez continue to rely on Yamaha drums for their professional sound and construction. Here's a rundown of some of the company's notable acoustic lines from over the years.



1967

The Japanese corporation, whose roots in instrument manufacturing go back eighty years prior, introduces its first drum lines, the D20 and D30, in an effort to offer instruments to musicians inspired by the wave of British Invasion bands like the Beatles.



1977

Yamaha introduces a bona fide classic drumset in its YD9000 model, later known as the Recording Custom. It features 100 percent birch shells, one-piece lugs, and piano-finishing techniques. Top endorsers include Steve Gadd and Cozy Powell.



1984

The Tour Custom model is introduced, replacing the YD7000. This original kit featured shells made of meranti wrapped in birch. Yamaha's now reviving Tour Custom with thin maple shells.



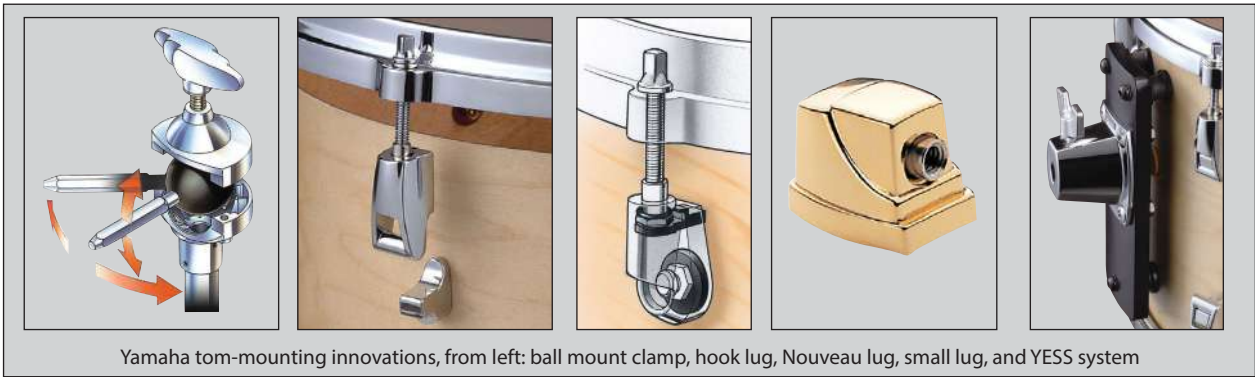
1976

Yamaha's System Drum concept unifies drum-mounting hardware across the company's lines, allowing players to mix and match as they desired. Notable aspects included hex rods, 22 mm freestanding hardware piping, and hideaway boom stands.



1991

Yamaha introduces maple shells in response to changes in contemporary music styles and recording technology, via its Maple Custom line. Hardware mass is reduced to aid in shell resonance, leading to the Yamaha Enhanced Sustain System (or YESS) nodal mount design.



1996

Stage Custom is introduced, employing the same type of birch shell and one-piece lugs used in the RC series but at a lower price point.

2011
Yamaha appeals to vintage drum fans with the Club Custom line, marrying modern manufacturing techniques with retro-looking, hand-painted swirl finishes that pay homage to '60s-era designs, but without the vibration-restricting nature of wraps.



2002

Oak Custom drums, benefiting from the company's Air Seal System technology, are introduced.



2013

The Live Custom series is created to be ideal for live situations. It features 1.2 mm oak plies that are 10 percent thicker than those used on Oak Custom drums, with bass drum shells made of eight plies and tom and snare shells made of six.



2008

Yamaha's PHX line features a hybrid shell and minimally sized lugs that suppress unwanted harmonics.



2016

Iconic Yamaha drummer Steve Gadd collaborates on the design of a new Recording Custom set, which aims to provide a more focused sound and a rounder, deeper tone. North American birch 6-ply shells with 30-degree bearing edges are complemented by a redesigned Hi Tension lug that is weighted to enhance lower frequencies.



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

LP

Uptown Sculpted Ash Congas and Valje Bongos

A textured veneer finish for the industry standard and the reintroduction of a legendary name in percussion.

LP has been at the forefront of hand percussion since introducing its first wood conga, the Classic Model, in 1972. Now an industry standard, the Classic series is available in various natural and painted finishes, and the company recently expanded the line to include a unique Sculpted Ash veneer in a dark ebony stain. This new subseries, dubbed the Uptown, includes a trio of congas (11" quinto, 11.75" conga, and 12.5" tumba) and matching bongos. We were sent the congas to review, along with two pairs of vintage-inspired Valje bongos.

Valje Bongos

Valje is the name of a company founded by California-based percussion builder Tom Flores in the 1950s and later taken on by his protégé, Akbar Moghaddam. Valje handcrafted drums achieved legendary status after being used by Santana and other Latin-rock bands in the 1970s. LP's modern version of the Valje bongos, which are made in the U.S. under the direction of Moghaddam, are designed to reflect the craftsmanship and heritage of the originals, including the quarter-sawn shells, precision bearing edges, half-round hoops, compact hardware, and center joining blocks.

Valje bongos are offered in two shell types: red oak and mahogany. Both versions include a 7" macho drum and an 8.5" hembra drum. They stand 6" tall and include synthetic Remo Tucked Fiberskyn heads. These heads retain the warm sound and natural feel of rawhide while increasing the overtones and tuning capability for a brighter, livelier tone with added projection.

The Valje bongos tuned up easily, and the smaller macho drum had a crisp snap while the larger hembra had a more guttural voice. I couldn't detect any major sonic differences between the mahogany and oak versions, so the decision to go with one over the other would be largely cosmetic. Both sets of Valje bongos sounded great, providing classic, rich tones with a touch of modern clarity, and they looked as classy as they sound. Each set is signed and dated by Akbar, and the list price is \$423.99.



Uptown Congas

The Uptown congas are designed to provide professional-grade sound and features at moderate prices. The 12.5" tumba lists for \$434.99, the 11.75" conga is \$414.99, and the 11" quinto is \$399.99. The shells are made from glued staves of Siam oak and have an outer ply of black-stained ash that's been treated to retain its rough, natural texture. The congas come with handpicked rawhide heads, Comfort Curve II rims, and sturdy steel tension rods and reinforced LP Heart side plates. There's also a carrying handle and stand mount attached to each shell. The tension rods include rubber bumpers above the nut to prevent the hardware from damaging adjacent drums, and a thin metal ring protects the bottom opening of the shell.

Aside from the new Sculpted Ash finish, which looks amazing, the Uptown congas are classic, traditional drums designed to provide rich and earthy open tones, clean and crisp slaps, and deep bass. They can be cranked up for ultimate cutting power and shorter sustain, or you can tune them lower for more subtle applications. The Comfort Curve II rims are rounded to minimize impact on the hands, and they held tension very well. Tuning the drums, with the included rubber-handled wrench, was smooth and easy. There are reasons why LP Classic congas remain so popular: they're versatile, they're durable, and they're comfortable to play. The cool visual vibe of the textured veneer finish used on the Uptown Sculpted Ash series is the cherry on top.

Michael Dawson



Dunnett

Res-O-Tone and Res-O-Two Drumheads

Hazy timpani-style film for a warmer tone with fast attack and quick response.

In early 2017, Remo debuted the Felt Tone bass drum head, which is a modification of the popular Powerstroke 3 that has a strip of felt affixed to the muffling ring on the underside so that it floats against the head for additional dampening. We reviewed those heads, which were designed in collaboration with Canadian drum builder Ronn Dunnett, in the July issue. For the Dunnett catalog, Ronn had Remo make a set of single- and double-ply uncoated heads, called Res-O-Tone and Res-O-Two, that utilize translucent timpani film rather than standard clear Mylar. There are also Dunnett-branded single-ply PS3 Hazy and Felt Tone versions for bass drums. Let's give them a closer look.

Res-O-Tone

The Res-O-Tone is a single-ply, Ambassador-weight drumhead. The Hazy film allows some light to pass through, but it looks more like a coated head than a clear when installed on a drum. They reminded me of the semi-coated heads Slingerland used on its drums in the 1960s but with a completely smooth surface.

The Res-O-Tone sounded great as batters on the toms of a bebop kit. At higher tunings, they maintained the warmth of a Coated Ambassador but had the more open tone of a clear head. I could also tune them low for a snappy, punchy sound that had tons of articulation and deep sustain. These heads are also a great option for the resonant side to give your kit a more classic look without inhibiting the resonance.

Res-O-Two

For the two-ply Res-O-Two, Dunnett had Remo layer clear Ambassador-weight film on top of the Res-O-Tone head. These heads were very versatile and easy to tune. They had the open, articulate sound of clear 2-ply heads but with a bit more warmth. I loved how fat and resonant they sounded on a set of vintage 3-ply drums, but they also paired well on a birch kit for more modern attack and smack. The tone of the Res-O-Two leaned closer to that of a traditional clear 2-ply head, but it had some of the rounded, controlled boom of a coated.

The Res-O-Two heads are sure to become popular with drummers who desire the bigger, brighter sound of clear 2-ply heads but like the classic look of coated. They allowed the drums to speak with a big, open voice with just the right amount of overtone control, and they have a clean, classic look.

Res-O-Tone PS3

The Res-O-Tone PS3 bass drum head has a 2" muffling ring installed on the underside of a single layer of hazy timpani film. The Remo PS3 head is very popular among drummers of all playing styles because it has a near-perfect balance of attack and tone. It can be used without any additional muffling for a more open, boomy sound, or it can be dampened with towels or pillows for an ultra-precise punch. The Res-O-Tone PS3 falls in between the brighter tone of Remo's PS3 Clear and the drier, darker vibe of the PS3 Coated.

As with the tom heads, Dunnett's Res-O-Tone kick batter leans closer to the sound of a Clear PS3, but it incorporates some of the controlled overtones of the coated. Pairing the Res-O-Tone batter with the Felt Tone on the resonant side produced a great bass drum sound that had deep, rich low end, focused but natural resonance, and a dense, contemporary attack. If you needed to, you could cut a port in the Felt Tone for more flexibility with miking and dampening, but the Res-O-Tone bass drum head combo sounded so good that I doubt you—or your sound engineer—will want to change anything about it.

Michael Dawson



Res Tone™



Res Two™



Roland GO:MIXER

A smartphone audio mixer for social media performers.

We've seen quite a few new microphone and interface options for smartphones over the past few years. Most of those have been limited to one microphone or audio input. Roland recently upped the ante by introducing this mobile audio mixer, which has five inputs and is compatible with iOS and Android devices. Let's check it out.

Inputs and Control

What makes the Roland GO:MIXER enticing is not just its five inputs. It also provides separate control of the audio level for each input, the master output, and the monitor output. All of those adjustments are made via physical knobs on the interface. The knobs were great for making quick level tweaks during a performance without having to close the camera app and open another app in order to adjust the mix. Keep in mind, however, that although the GO:MIXER has five inputs, the final output is a stereo mix. So you'll want to get the levels balanced to your liking before you start recording.

The GO:MIXER comes with Lightning and Micro-USB cables to provide compatibility for iOS and Android devices. The interface is powered by the phone or tablet being used to record, so there's no need for batteries or an AC adapter. The inputs include one for a quarter-inch mic cable, one for a quarter-inch high-impedance instrument cable (guitar or bass), two quarter-inch inputs for a stereo instrument (keyboard, synth, drum machines, etc.), and two stereo line-level inputs for music players (laptop, cellphone, tablet, etc.).

In Use

We used the GO:MIXER in two different configurations. The first setup involved running multiple drum mics through an audio interface connected to a computer, and then connecting the headphone output of the computer to one of the line-level inputs on the GO:MIXER. This setup allowed us to process the drum mics within a DAW first, and then send the mixed audio to the GO:MIXER to be recorded at the same time as a video.

The second setup involved running multiple drum mics to a mixing board, and then sending the outputs from the mixer to the Instrument inputs of the device. This gave us the ability to balance, EQ, and pan the mics on the mixing board. With both setups, we still had additional inputs on the GO:MIXER for other instruments or play-along devices. (You can check out video demos of these setups at moderndrummer.com.)



In Conclusion

We loved the ease of use and tactile control of the Roland GO:MIXER. It was a great tool for capturing a full-band mix during rehearsals or for producing final audio/video performances for social media. The GO:MIXER was also a powerful practice tool, as I was able to quickly and easily record myself playing along with backing tracks and then review the footage to discover various things that I could improve on. Roland did a fantastic job of developing this highly functional, affordable, and portable recording device. List price is \$109.

Miguel Monroy

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Jon Cross

6.5x14 Macassar/Gaboon Ebony Snare

A powerhouse segment-shell drum with more musicality than most.



Jon Cross made his first drumkit, a six-piece with segment-style purpleheart shells, in 2009, and he launched his company in 2011, focusing on building segment- and stave-shell drums from exotic woods. We were sent a gorgeous 6.5x14 segment-shell snare featuring two types of ebony: a middle section of black Asian Gaboon and outer sections of striped-brown African Macassar.

Specs

The wood used in this shell was constructed from three boards that were numbered, cut into blocks, and glued—in their original order—into five rings. The rings were then stacked, glued, and machined into a shell. Because Cross was careful to keep the segments organized, the grain pattern of the wood flows as naturally as possible around the entire shell. To strengthen the joints at the top and bottom of the shell, Jon cut grooves into the edges and inserted a narrow strip of maple. Forty-five-degree bearing edges were shaped into the shell so that the drumheads sit squarely on the maple inlays.

This drum is finished with high-gloss polyurethane, and the hardware included die-cast hoops, ten single-point Ghostnote lugs, a Trick GS007 three-position throw-off, and Puresound wires. The badge is installed within a machined portion of the wood so that it sits flush with the exterior wall of the shell.

Powerful, Pure Tone

Ebony is a very dense timber, which makes it great for building snares that marry the pure tone of a solid-wood shell with the cutting power of metal. I used this drum for two shows with a loud hard-rock band that demanded all the volume I could muster. I typically grab a thick, cast-steel snare for these types of gigs, but the ebony drum was more than capable of cracking through stacks of heavy guitars, distorted bass, and intense vocals. In fact, I ended up preferring the JC drum to the steel because it had smoother overtones (which meant less muffling), a stronger and chunkier attack, and a warm, open tone that added a nice natural reverb tail after each backbeat.

Whereas rimshots on the steel drum I often use for loud gigs can get a bit piercing at tight tunings and unruly at lower tunings, the Cross drum sounded musical, balanced, and focused across the entire tuning range. It never choked at high volumes, and soft ghost notes spoke clearly and crisply. This was one of only a handful of wood drums I've played that sounded fuller and richer the harder I hit it. If you're tired of sacrificing tone for power when playing in louder situations, check out what Jon Cross has to offer. This is top-notch stuff.

Michael Dawson

Agner

Number, Name, and Signature Series Drumsticks

Durable, balanced, and great-sounding models made from hickory, maple, and the little-known hornbeam wood.

Agner is a respected manufacturer from Switzerland that's been making high-quality marching and drumset sticks, brushes, and mallets since 1985. Its catalog includes standard-size models, uniquely styled designs, and signature sticks for a number of notable European drumset artists and the world-renowned marching ensemble Top Secret Drum Corps.

Some of Agner's sticks are made from traditional hickory and lightweight maple, while others are made from a hard birch-like timber called hornbeam. We were sent a selection of models across the entire line to review, so let's check them out.

The Number Series

The majority of drummers use either a 5A, 5B, or 2B drumstick, and Agner's versions are designed to work for a variety of styles and applications. The 5A is available in maple or hickory and measures .567"x16.25". Both feature a bullet-shaped tip and a short taper. The hickory 5A has a heavier, front-loaded feel, while the maple is lighter and has more rebound. Agner also offers a hickory 5A Short, which is a little less than 16" long and has quick rebound and a stout, short taper. The 5A Nylon has the same dimensions as the 5A Short, but it has a longer taper and an oval plastic tip.

For its 5B models, Agner varied the tip shape between the hickory and maple while maintaining identical dimensions (.606"x16.22"). The hickory model has an oval tip, and the lighter maple has an acorn tip. Both have a great balance of power and rebound, but the maple version provides a touch more agility. The 2B is 16.25" long and .634" in diameter, and it has a larger acorn-style tip. This model was great for pad work, snare drum playing, and hard-hitting drumset applications. The large tip made for smooth, dense buzz rolls and big, fat drum tones. Cymbal articulation was a bit too wide and washy for light playing, but the extra mass did help elicit massive crashes and strong bell tones at higher dynamics.

More atypical models within the Numbers series include the .630"x15.83" SD2 maple with a small round tip for delicate, clean articulation on drums and cymbals, the longer (16.54") S15 hickory with a large round tip, and the S8 MG, which has a standard acorn tip



and a slightly contoured butt end that provides an alternative striker for fatter tones.

The Name Series

Agner's Name series includes models that are appropriately titled to indicate their intended applications. The smallest of our review batch was the Junior, which is designed for smaller drummers and measures .543"x14.882". It's made of hickory and has a smaller barrel tip and a standard medium taper. Despite its short stature, the Junior stick felt well balanced and responsive. The .579"x15.354" Funky hickory stick has a rounded teardrop tip and was quick and responsive and produced a balanced, full sound. The Light model is made from maple and measures .551"x15.945". It has a small round tip for great cymbal articulation and a short taper, which makes it feel longer and heftier.

There are four models within the fusion category. The N.Y. Fusion has a green finish and measures .547"x16.063". It has a medium-sized barrel tip and a short taper. The red-finished L.A. Fusion is .551"x16.063" and has a small barrel tip. If your gigs include Chick Corea, Mike Stern, or some facsimile thereof, these sticks are for you.

The Jazz Fusion maple is .583"x16.181" and has an integrated round bead. This stick was super-quick and light and produced very clean, clear cymbal tones. I'd use this model often when playing any gig that requires controlled dynamics. The Fusion hickory is .579"x16.063" and has a medium round bead and a long taper. It was articulate and quick, making it ideal for busier playing styles.

For fans of larger sticks, there's the .543"x16.299" Hard-Rock hickory with a large round bead and long taper and the .610"x16.339" Driver maple with a medium oval tip and medium taper. The Hard-Rock is thinner but has a front-heavy feel, while the Driver is beefier but lighter and has a more balanced response.

Signatures and Oddities

Some of the artist sticks we checked out included the diminutive (.571"x15.12") A. Berger model with a small acorn tip and long taper.



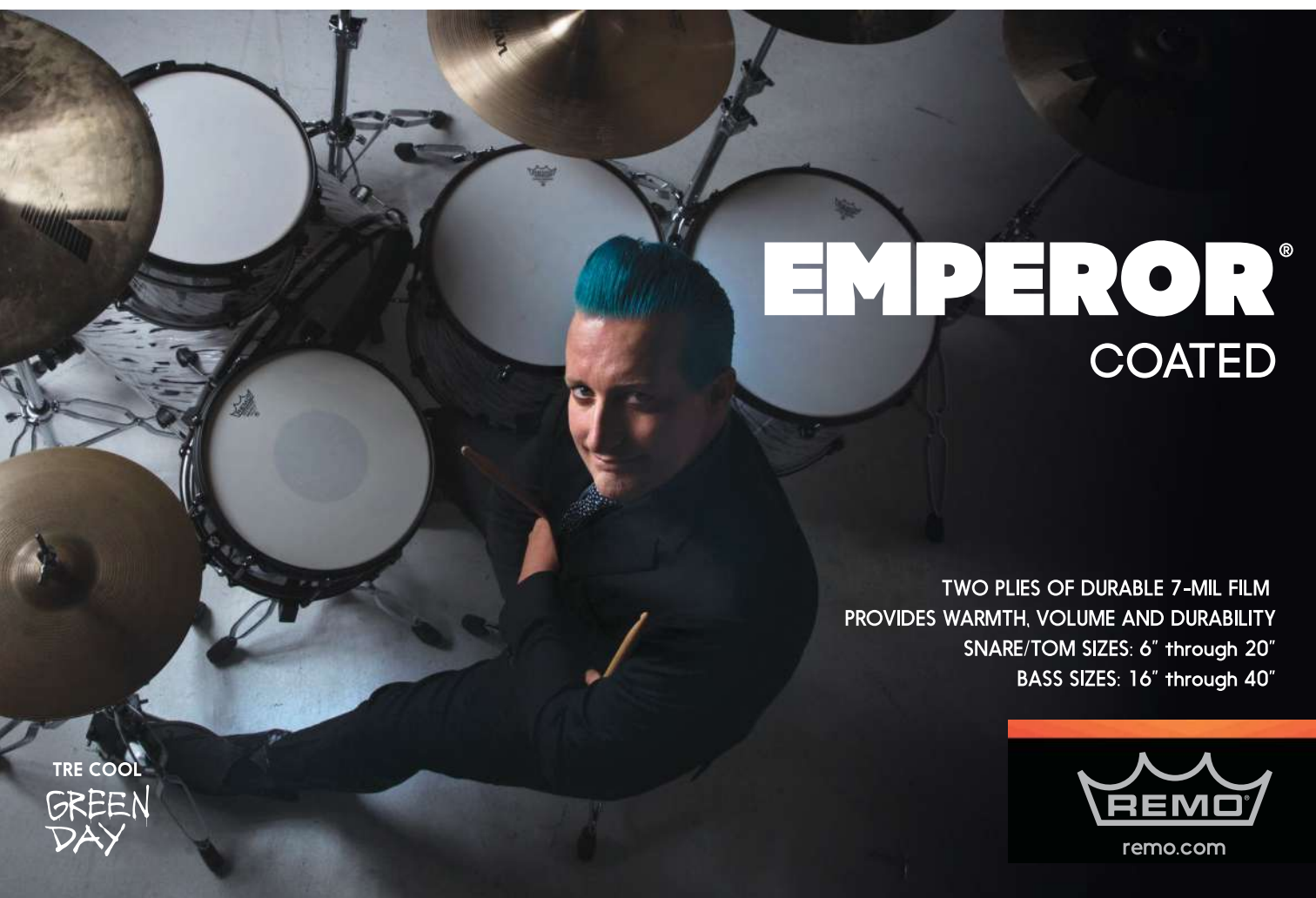
This stick is made from hornbeam, which is a dense wood within the birch species that felt somewhere between hickory and maple. Giorgio Di Tullio's stick is similar to a 5A but is made of lightweight maple and has a white finish. Other signature sticks have painted finishes, including the extended 5A-style green hickory model for Flo Dauner, which measures .571"x16.378" and has an oval tip and long taper.

Some of the more eclectic sticks in Agner's catalog include glow-in-the-dark (Glow-Sticks) and partially painted (Gripp-Stick) versions in standard 5A, 5B, and 7A sizes. There's also a combo 5A hickory

stick that has a small hard-felt beater screwed onto the butt end. This stick felt surprisingly balanced and would be a great tool for musical theater, multi-percussion, and more experimental setups.

All of the non-painted Agner sticks we tested had a smooth, slightly polished feel, and they were perfectly balanced and pitch-matched. They also held up well under several sessions of heavy use. If you're looking to try something new, or are on a quest to find your "perfect" stick, give some of these Swiss guys a try. There's something for everyone in Agner's extensive lineup.

Michael Dawson



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Adam Deitch

Goes Deep About *I Get a Rush*

Known widely for his drumming with Lettuce, John Scofield, Nigel Hall, Break Science, Pretty Lights, and others, Adam Deitch is also a prolific music producer, crafting tracks for artists like Jean Grae, Matisyahu, Ledisi, Talib Kweli, KRS-One, and 50 Cent. His recently released album of hip-hop instrumentals, *I Get a Rush*, is an interesting window into his taste, his aesthetic, and the mechanics of his beat making.

"I was so obsessed with hip-hop when I was in junior high," Adam Deitch tells *Modern Drummer* while on a break from a recent string of Lettuce dates. "Even earlier than that, I was already into music production. My goal up until recently was to get a track to an MC, to have a rapper validate it by buying a piece of music, and putting their vocals on. Then we share the publishing, and it goes out. That was the old goal. The new goal is not waiting for a rapper to cosign or validate my music. It's just putting out these tracks very much in the style of how J Dilla released thousands of his instrumentals to the public. Now hip-hop music has become an artistic statement as an instrumental thing, to be appreciated on its own. That was the idea behind *I Get a Rush*. Being a drummer, it makes sense, because hip-hop is drums."

"Joe Mode" pits a sample of saxman Joe Henderson against a big, slightly sloppy beat, celebrating resourcefulness and restraint as well as the legacy of a jazz giant. "The way I got into jazz in the first place was through hip-hop records that mentioned the jazz records that they sampled," Deitch says. "It was more of a treasure-hunt thing for me, an entry point to jazz."

Deitch explains his process this way: "I like to mix prerecorded samples, whether it's a piece of a Lettuce song or ringing some chimes at a friend's house, recording it on my phone and bringing it home. Taking random sounds from different places that give the track a color, and then creating a layered drum part that feels really good. It's not a goal to make drummers go, *Wow, the programming on here is kicking my ass*. The goal is to make your head bob the entire time, and just to feel really good. I spend a

lot of time with the intricacies of the feel of the tracks, how the hi-hats lay, where the snares go, what the kick pattern will be, whether it's a four- or eight-bar kick pattern. Making sure that the feel is human, not quantized or computerized."

Pro Tools is Deitch's "method of madness." "I've been using it for ten years," Adam says, "and I'm very comfortable creating that style of music with programs like Battery, which has a lot of great drum sounds in it. You can also place samples in it and play them on your keyboard or pads. All of my drums and all my keyboard sounds and samples are triggered from my USB keyboard. I'll sample bits and pieces of my live drumming and throw that in as a live flavor, to go with the Battery drums. So it's a combination of live and prerecorded drum sounds that I've picked over the years."

"I have a bunch of the drums that I recorded for Pretty Lights, on the *Color Map of the Sun* record, which they spent months EQ-ing," Deitch continues. "If you hear live drums it's most likely a chop or a piece of that. A lot of the drums that were recorded for that album weren't used, so I like to take those very analog, dirty drums and layer them with even thicker sounds to make them really hit."

"Slippin' Into Science" features a snippet of Lettuce covering War's "Slippin' Into Darkness," and that track, like the raucous "Obey the Crowd," is distinguished by beats dropping out and starting up in unexpected places. "You really can't enjoy the bass and the drums if they're in the whole time, as much as you would if you take them out," Deitch explains. "I've noticed that from the live touring producers that I look up to. Once they remove the drums and

the bass, the crowd feels this emptiness. It's incredible. If you do that for the right amount of time and bring them back in, it's like a rebirth—it breathes life into the track."

"Boom 'n' Pound" features the drummer's trademark ruffs, drags, and ghost notes, taken from the Pretty Lights session. "I'm hoping that a renaissance comes back, where people start using live drums on hip-hop records—you know, if you want to hear those ruffs, those little things that make it feel like a human being," Deitch says. "The 808 drum machine will always be there, and it serves a purpose, but I'm trying to bring a little bit more balance to the hip-hop scene."

There's even a drum fill on the track. "I found some fills that made sense with the record," Deitch says. "That's what it's about. If you find the right fill, and it works with the music, great. If not, I'm going to stay on 2 and 4."

The title track features some nice kick-pattern variations and dynamic shifts from the hi-hats. "It has to always vary some way, even if it's subtle," Deitch says. "And I like to layer drumkits. That particular beat is based in the triplet swing of a go-go kind of sound, and DJ Premier's swing and tempo—just that heavy, deep triplet feel."

"The head-nod factor is everything for this music," Deitch concludes. "There are a lot of other styles out there, and I appreciate all of it. But at a certain point I just like the drums to serve their purpose—to create forward motion and to feel good, and to allow you to move and sway to the music in a way that you can appreciate all the other elements."

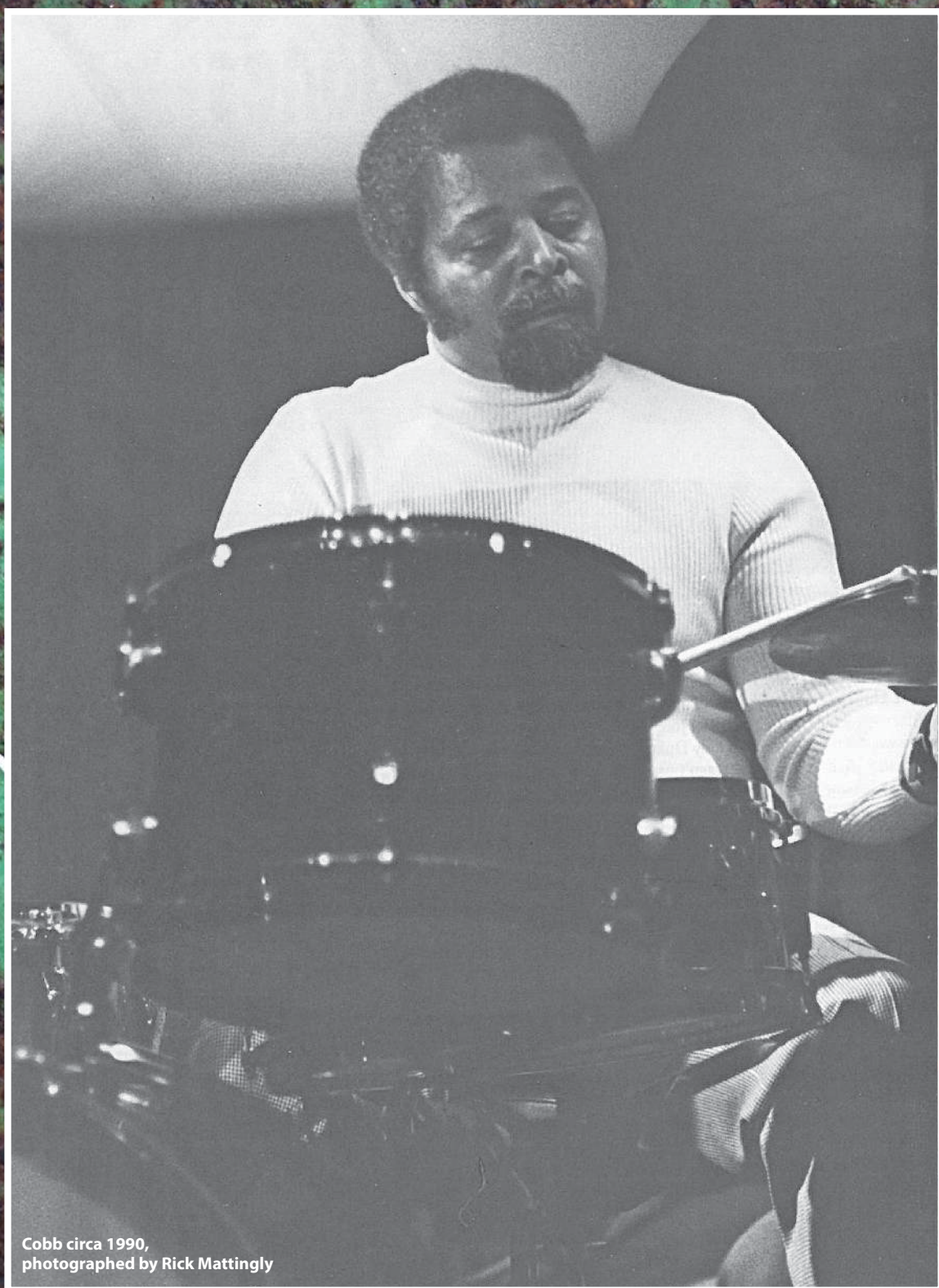
**Story by Robin Tolleson
Photo by Alex Solca**



Adam Deitch uses Tama drums and hardware, Zildjian cymbals, Vater sticks, and Evans heads.



ON TOPIC



Cobb circa 1990,
photographed by Rick Mattingly

Jimmy Cobb

On Sticking a Powerful Jazz Ride Cymbal Pulse

When I was a youngster I came up in an environment where the drummers were playing the big 4 on the bass drum. I never could do that strong enough for what the big bands wanted, because they had sixteen or eighteen guys on the bandstand. I remember working with Dizzy Gillespie's small band once, and he put his ear down to the bass drum. He wanted to hear a lot of that 4/4 bass drum that I didn't have. I was playing more coordination. I said, "I don't really have a lot of 4/4, Dizzy." So then I started playing the beat heavier on the cymbal. I saw a guy who came through my hometown of Washington, D.C., once, and I liked the way he played the cymbal. So I started to play like that, to put the beat on top. So that's how that happened.

On What Miles Wanted

Miles Davis never verbalized what he wanted to hear on any of those albums we did together [*Porgy and Bess*, *Jazz at the Plaza*, *Kind of Blue*, *Sketches of Spain*, *Someday My Prince Will Come*, *In Person Friday and Saturday Nights at the Blackhawk*, *Miles & Monk at Newport*, *Miles Davis at Newport 1955-1975: The Bootleg Series Vol. 4*]. Occasionally, Miles wanted 2 and 4 on the rim, maybe during a piano solo. He never talked about beat placement or being behind the beat. I played above the beat most of the time anyway. [laughs] Now, the bass player in that band, Paul Chambers, he could play with anybody. If I played faster, he would play so it worked okay. If I played slower too—he could adjust to anything. A really great bass player. But back then everyone used to accuse the drummers of playing ahead of the beat. The time going bad was only the drummer's fault. But that was not going to be me.

On John Coltrane

Coltrane didn't give directions either. He might say, "This is straight-ahead," or a waltz, but nothing about time. I did a handful of great records with him: *Standard Coltrane*, *Stardust*, *Kenny Burrell and John Coltrane*, *Bahia*, *Coltrane Jazz*, and "Naima" on *Giant Steps*.

On Miles and Ahmad and Vernel

Miles may have gotten his time conception from Ahmad Jamal, the great piano player from Chicago, with Vernel Fournier on drums. Miles used to go and hear them play every night when they played a hotel there. That's also where he got a lot of those tunes for the quartet. The way Vernel played in that trio was wonderful.

On Heroic Drummers

When I started playing I was into Max Roach, Kenny Clarke, Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa—a bunch of big bands and a lot of good drummers in those big bands, you know. In my town they weren't playing a lot of bebop on the radio. I would have to listen to the standard bands—Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Charlie Barnet, all that.

On Playing at Eighty-Eight

Anything that can happen to old people might happen to me. Sometimes I switch from traditional to matched grip. I can get more strength if I need it with that grip. I will get on the pad and play single- and double-stroke rolls until I feel that I can play the things that I know I can play. I don't use a metronome.

On Playing the Cymbal Beat "Too Wide" or "Too Closed"

I like a few younger drummers, some I don't know their names. They call me for lessons at the New School. But there's Lewis Nash, Kenny Washington—he's great. He knows the history of everybody. If a drummer has trouble swinging at the school, I tell him he has to work on his cymbal beat, whether it's too wide or too open. If the cymbal rhythm is too wide or too open I play it with them, explain what I mean to get the right phrasing on the ride cymbal. They might be using their whole arm instead of using their wrists. Sometimes they're working too hard. If they want to play fast I have them play the hi-hat on 1 and 3, and they can play as fast as they want. Then they can hear what they're doing wrong.

On Swing as a Direction

I don't know if you can teach someone to swing. You can point them in that direction. You have to have some feeling for it. And you have to know it when you hear it so you can get with it. At least know where you want to go.

On Being One of the Last Great Drummers of the Bop Era

I don't know, we still got Roy Haynes! I knew [the great, recently deceased Dizzy Gillespie drummer] Mickey Roker when he first started playing jazz. He said, "Man, I have to do all of that stuff?" "Yeah, man," I said, "if you want to do it!" He started late. But Mickey could hear it and he could produce it, and that's it, man.

Interview by Ken Micallef

Jimmy Cobb plays Drum Workshop drums and a mix of Sabian and Zildjian cymbals. He uses Vater sticks and Remo heads.



Green Day's Tré Cool


Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Gregg Schneider

His multicolored pompadour in outrageous full effect, his powerful punch-to-the-gut drumming a testament to his long-term success and ongoing love of life and music, Tré Cool is the world's eternal punk rock poster boy.

Green Day has released twelve albums and sold millions and millions of records. In an era when rock 'n' roll claws and scratches for market share as the masses are engrossed by tween pop and hip-hop, Green Day thrives. The band did seem on the verge of joining the league of gentleman-rock has-beens in the early 2000s, but its seventh studio album, 2004's *American Idiot*, propelled the group back to the kingdom of rock royalty and festival fame, where it remains.

How has Green Day prospered when others simply collect moss and rolls of fat? Punk rock keeps the trio young. And talent motivates them to do more. No better example of the band's timeless punk appeal exists than in live performance. At the 2016 American Music





Awards, while playing "Bang Bang," the first single from the group's latest album, *Revolution Radio*, like a mob of flaming sledgehammers, singer/guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong chanted, "No Trump! No KKK! No fascist USA!" This is the face of punk rock, USA, 2017.

As timeless as the music of Green Day is the drumming of Tré Cool. Now possessing the wisdom provided by time, Cool hasn't slowed, he's grown—his pocket wider, his rolls more balanced, his fills more dangerous. Twenty-five years in, he still takes glee in drum-throttling, still glories in the magic of punk rock precociousness.

Like a Keith Moon slashing, crashing, and burning punk rhythms into digestible kernels of USDA Grade A rhythm, Cool's good-natured personality is a major part of the Green Day story. Growing up in a mountain community where he slept in a tent and used outside latrines, Tré didn't make his first phone call until he was fourteen. By then, he was already playing drums in the Lookouts, a seminal punk rock trio wherein you can hear the roots of Green Day.

Riding the crest of the wave generated by *Revolution Radio*, which debuted at number one in the U.S., the U.K., and several other countries, Tré Cool, with his positive demeanor and riotous drumming, shows no signs of slowing down in his forty-fourth year. And the band continues to expand its horizons, recently executive-producing the documentary *Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk*, directed and produced by Corbett Redford.

"It's a hell of a badass movie," Cool says. "We interviewed all of the people from the scene. It's not a movie about Green Day at all. We're definitely part of it, because we had a lot to do with the story. But we have Metallica, Guns n' Roses, and Jello Biafra—and it's narrated by Iggy Pop."

Modern Drummer spoke with Tré as the group was taking a break between legs of its year-plus-long international tour.

MD: How did *Revolution Radio* differ from earlier Green Day records for you?

Tré: We recorded *Revolution Radio* following a pretty long break. We were off for three years. I felt like an out-of-work musician for a while. Billie demoed the songs. He's a good drummer himself. He'll start with drums on a song, throw down a scratch guitar, come up with melodies, and piece the song together.

He'll create these outstanding demos and send them to me and Mike [Dirnt, bass]. Nine times out of ten we're blown away. His demos sound better than a lot of people's records. We'll learn the music and then play it together as a band, gauge when we're ready, and then ask, "Are we making a record now?" That's how *Revolution Radio* happened. We realized we had twelve or thirteen songs and we hadn't released anything for a long time. Everybody was healthy and we were champing at the bit to go, so we did it.

Tracking *Revolution Radio*

MD: How did you record the drums for the album?

Tré: We decided not to go back to our Jingtowntown studio in Oakland; we've been there for years. We felt like we'd used up all the mojo. The past was literally on the wall—the graffiti from *21st Century Breakdown* is on the front door as you walk in the studio. So Billie built a new studio, a very small studio. You wouldn't believe how small this place is. Billie calls the place "Otis." It's a good size for a record store maybe, but not a studio space. But we put a wood floor down, put the drums on one side of the room, and figured out how to get great sounds out of the space.

We have a kick-ass stereo mic in the bathroom. We had another kick-ass vintage mic in the hall. When I'd track drums we'd leave all the doors open. There's a living space above the studio and a stairway leading to it that we used like an echo chamber. The tile bathroom had a real cool room sound as well.

We maximized the room as much as we could. We had a total of seven room mics going for the drums to pick up as much as we could. We wanted to capture the dynamics of the drums. We wanted to make it sound like, *Okay, here's a unique drum sound.* We were looking for something original, and to not add a lot of processors on the drums so they sounded like everyone else's drums.

MD: And I hear you did your own teching?

Tré: Yes, I did all my own drum teching on this record as well. I changed all my own heads, did all my own tuning. It was very slow going! But once we start recording, it doesn't take me long. I only need a few takes of each song, and we've got it. I'm not one to futz around; I just need to focus. If it sounds good to me and it's human, then that's what I want. I'm not trying to make it perfect or put it through Beat Detective. I put on my headphones and push and pull the time a little bit, but I want it to sound human, like a musician.

MD: Your drumming always sounds big, fat, and in the pocket.

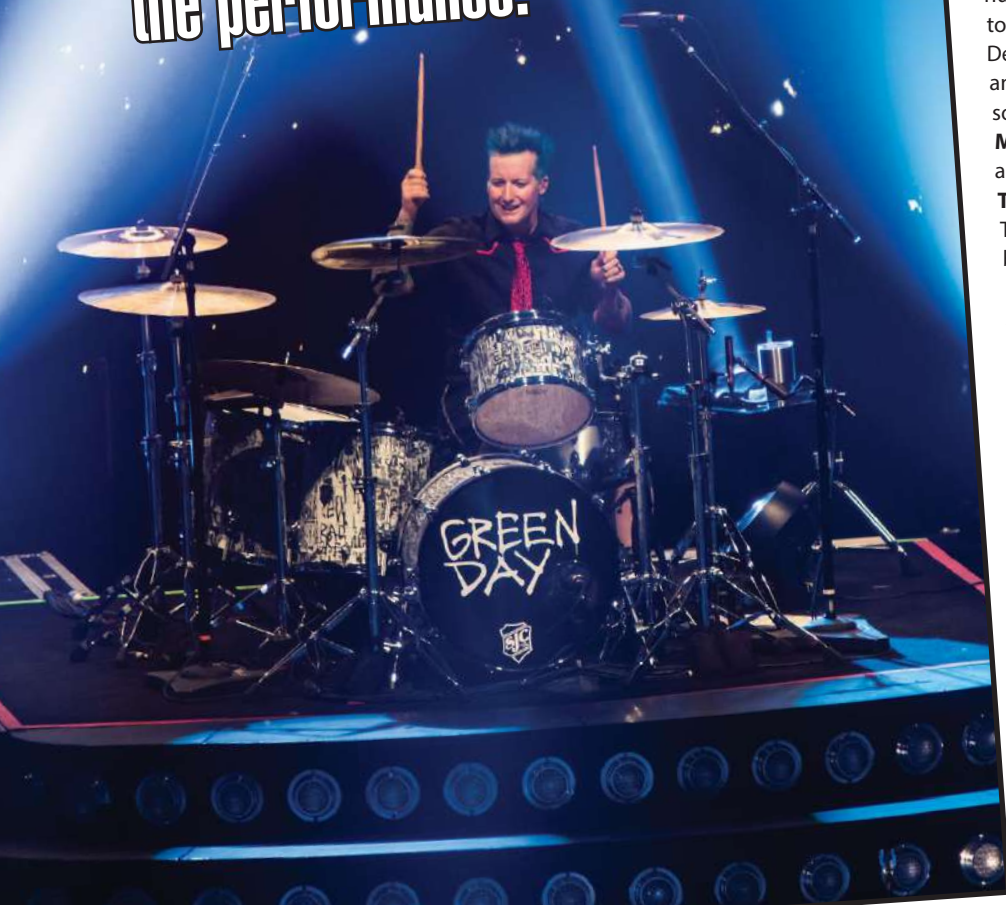
Tré: Thanks. I try to make it sound real. The drum sound on *Revolution Radio* is no bullshit. It's a drumset in a room with a bunch of mics on it.

MD: Did you use any vintage drums from your vast collection on *Revolution Radio*?

Tré: I used all SJC Custom drums. They made me a special recording kit out of mahogany, and where I really hit pay dirt was using different drumheads. On tour, I use Remo Coated Emperor heads for batters and Clear Ambassadors for resonants. That's where I started in the studio, and it sounded cool, but I wanted to try some other heads, so I experimented with the Remo Vintage series—always Remo heads. I tried Vintage heads, thicker, thinner, Clear, Black Dot. And remember, I'm changing all that stuff myself!

So whenever I had a new idea, I had

"Whenever I had a new idea, I had to tell the guys, 'Sorry, it's going to be another day. I haven't found the sound yet.' Until I find the sound, we're not going for the performance."





to tell the guys, "Sorry, it's going to be another day. I haven't found the sound yet." Until I find the sound, we're not going for the performance. We know the song, we know what it's supposed to sound like, the structure. We know what we're going for. But sonically it's a tough nut. You have to get the perfect balance to get a good drum sound: the heads, the materials, the shell, the sizes of the shells, the tuning. If one little thing is bugging me, then I'm going to tweak out until the whole kit sounds right.

MD: Why be your own tech?

Tré: Kenny Butler, my longtime drum tech, retired. And my other guy, Mike Fasano, has his own gig, Tiger Army, God bless him. And I wasn't going to use some new guy. It's such an intimate situation. Our engineer, Chris Dugan, and I worked together on getting drum sounds. We trade ideas and think about a vibe, and he has the capability to achieve that vibe. We used a lot of vintage gear as well, but we didn't record to reel-to-reel tape. We've done that in the past and it seems counterproductive. The warmth we thought we were getting didn't really exist. We would run everything through a Studer tape head, then into Pro Tools, but now we don't have the room for a tape machine. And you can end up going down the rabbit hole with that kind of stuff. We just wanted to make a new record.

I did finally find a great drum tech: Nathaniel Mela. He's way on top of all the drum and cymbal gear. I'm really happy with Nathaniel. I worked with Kenny Butler for twenty years, and I hope Nathaniel will also be long-term. He's great with the Green Day family, a total drummer, an inspired drum geek. Nathaniel worked side by side with Johnny Craviotto for seven years, handcrafting those gorgeous handmade drums. He learned from the master. You have to trust your drum tech everywhere you play. On festivals, we'll play for over two and a half hours, and if something is off you might even get hurt. But Nathaniel handles everything. He's a badass.

MD: Billie gives the demos to the band, then you go in like true

studio craftsmen.

Tré: Right. It's like someone has given me the blueprints to a building, then I get to work to make the structure. I'd be the framer and the roofer. I got both jobs. [laughs]

MD: What did you record drums to—guitars, bass?

Tré: Billie's scratch guitars. We recorded takes live. Billie would be playing guitar in the room with me so we would get the performance. Then Mike is really good at creating to the pocket I've recorded. Mike is so great; we're so lucky to have him.

Green Day, Masters of the Punk Rock Universe

MD: Green Day is an enduring phenomenon in that the band remains current, decade after decade. Your influence seems to only grow. What makes Green Day timeless?

Tré: I think it has something to do with where we come from. The punk rock community in the East Bay is a very cool thing. And all the bands we looked up to weren't trying to become rock stars. We didn't come from the Sunset Strip or the New York scene. That's cool and all, but we looked up to bands that were having a good time and speaking their minds and being more political, who spoke out against racism and sexism. That sort of camaraderie within the East Bay community and that sort of mindset was very important to us.

MD: How did success feel initially?

Tré: When success first came to us, we were in denial. We were just doing our thing and playing shows, and, sure, we got bigger and people noticed there was something different. We were getting paid money. That was cool—we knew we were going to eat and we could pay our rent. We got a tour bus. Things became a little more comfortable. But it wasn't like we needed more.

MD: Did the band have a goal?

Tré: One thing that we've always had as a mantra is: Make music



that's going to sound good in twenty to thirty years. You can't help the music being dated through certain things, like, *Oh, that song reminds me of high school* or *My wife and I used to bone to that song!* The songs will remind you of a certain time in your life. But we never did a mash-up with a hip-hop artist. We never jumped on trends. Those things can be cool, but we just wanted to make good music that makes us happy. If it inspires a kid to pick up a guitar or the drums, then all the better.

MD: I'm sure you've inspired thousands of musicians.

Tré: Almost every day someone I meet for the first time will say, "I began playing music because of your band." *That's* success for us. We're moving the arm forward and keeping people interested in guitar music and rock 'n' roll. That in itself is harder and harder to do. The epidemic of DJ culture and people paying good money to see somebody push buttons on their laptop—that's not our thing. And

I'm really proud that we do inspire younger people to pick up an instrument and try it for themselves.

MD: Are Green Day punk purists?

Tré: No. We can write a pop song, but it's going to sound like Green Day. We have it down; it's not like we're going for something. When I play drums and Billie plays guitar and Mike plays bass, it's f**king Green Day. You hear it and you know it. It's a musical fingerprint. If we wanted to change it, we could. But luckily we all like it, and we continue to be motivated and inspired by each other. It's a real honor to play music with your best friends and travel the world and make people happy at the same time. We just play music and try not to be dicks. I've been in Starbucks and somebody will drop stuff on me, like, "I was going to kill myself, and your song saved me." I mean,

Tré Cool's Live Setup



Drums: SJC maple with *Revolution Radio* custom graphic finish

- A. 6.5x14 aluminum snare
- B. 9x13 tom
- C. 16x16 floor tom
- D. 16x18 floor tom
- E. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" hi-hats (A Rock top/A Dyno Beat bottom)
- 2. 19" K Dark Thin crash
- 3. 19" A Custom Medium crash
- 4. 22" Tré Cool Custom ride
- 5. 22" Constantinople Hi Bell Thin High ride
- 6. 19" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash

Heads: Remo Coated Emperor snare batter and Hazy Ambassador snare-side, Coated Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador resonants, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and Ebony Powerstroke 3 front head

Sticks: Zildjian Tré Cool signature model

Hardware: DW 9000 series hi-hat and cymbal stands, 5000 series single bass drum pedal

Accessories: bicycle bugle horn

wow. Cool. You have to not be a dick. A lot of famous people turn into dicks. It's really easy—don't be a dick!

Tré Cool 101

MD: Who were the first punk bands to have a big influence on you?

Tré: When I first started playing drums I was in a punk band. I always played with other musicians. I wasn't playing alone or by myself, trying to put beats together. There was always a bass player and a guitar player. I had to figure out: *What's my part?* Cymbals were really fascinating to me. I was an eleven-year-old rambunctious kid with ADHD. I thought cymbals were awesome. In one band practice, halfway through the first song, Larry Livermore, our guitarist in the Lookouts, said, "Whoa! Stop!" He takes all my cymbals away, including the hi-hat. He says, "Start by playing the drums. Once you

toward was AC/DC, Judas Priest, Foreigner, all when I was ten. Foreigner songs are super-catchy; they have good song structure, and I've always been a fan of good songs.

One of the first punk rock bands I got into was 7 Seconds. Then the Dead Kennedys, NoMeansNo—their drummer, John Wright, is amazing. He was a huge influence on me. And the Mr. T Experience—their drummer, Alex Laipeneiks, was really nice to me when I was young. He's one of the few guys who actually took the time to sit me down and show me some stuff on the drums. Again, that band was about songs. Down the road a couple years I was into bands like Operation Ivy. A lot of the East Bay bands had a lot of energy and were fun; they all had their own sound. The common denominator in all the bands was their energy.

MD: Were you into cassette tapes as a kid?



get the drums down I'll start giving you your cymbals back."

I went to band practice and started figuring it out on my own, and I got my hi-hat back! And eventually my crash and ride cymbals. I went into playing with bands from a songwriting angle. That was the context. That carries over to my drumming today. I don't play super-flashy or technical. I've got some licks like that, but I'm not a Steve Gadd kind of drummer. I'm the best Green Day drummer in the world.

MD: Do you remember the first records you bought?

Tré: My cousin lived with us, and he liked a lot of heavy metal. The stuff I gravitated

Tré: Yeah, all cassettes. I grew up in the mountains, so we didn't really have record stores. We'd have to drive hours to find a record store. My family was very environmentally aware, but a few towns over there were cow towns. I would burn cassettes off my friend's boom box. We made mixtapes of different punk bands, and we'd all pass them around. That's how I got a lot of my music.

We lived in Mendocino County, on Spy Rock Road. It was a pot-farming community then. We lived up in the sticks. We didn't have running water or electricity; we didn't have any of that for a long time. We had to pump water up from the creek and then

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Tré Cool

depend on the gravity flow. Eventually we had a water tank on the top of the hill above our house. We used 12-volt solar panels for electricity. I used to do my homework [by the light of] kerosene lamps.

MD: Were you homeschooled?

Tré: Regular school. We would carpool with other people who lived on the mountain.

MD: Do you remember your first concert?

Tré: I was in the band drumming at my first concert! The Lookouts were playing gigs since I was twelve. We recorded a record in 1986, *One Planet One People*, and another one, *Spy Rock Road*. Lots of songs. That's my old band when I was a young lad. And pretty good drumming!

MD: Your dad must be proud of you.

Tré: He was our first tour bus driver. He had a bookmobile that we outfitted with bunks for our first tour. We played Lollapalooza from a bookmobile. We were stoked because we weren't in a van anymore.

MD: What do your kids listen to?

Tré: My son likes rock music—Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Nirvana, all the classic bands. My daughter likes a wider variety of music. They didn't go wrong there.

The End of Life on Planet Rock?

MD: If Green Day showed up today in the

"I went into playing with bands from a songwriting angle. That was the context. That carries over to my drumming today."

era of electronic pop and hip-hop, how would they become successful?

Tré: We've always oversimplified everything: Make good music, play with your friends, enjoy the people you're with. Let people make their own mistakes. Don't do it for the wrong reasons. Don't play music to be successful. Play for yourself and make yourself happy. More than likely, if you enjoy it, someone else will too. Beyond that I don't have a lot of advice to aspiring punk rock musicians.

MD: Are we really seeing the death of guitar rock bands?

Tré: No way. It always goes in waves. Before Green Day hit and got really successful the first time, the biggest bands were pop bands: Backstreet Boys, In Sync. Even the big rock bands, like Spin Doctors—that kind of bubblegum pop. Jesus Jones. Then

Nirvana, Green Day, and the Offspring came up and the bubblegum bands were gone. Now we're in a guitar recession, I suppose. A drum drought! [laughs] Not to say that there isn't awesome music being made—it just doesn't involve [guitars and] drummers.

But a lot of the beats in these hip-hop songs are fantastic. Some of the hi-hat rhythms blow me away. I challenge you to play those on a drumset. Questlove can play that shit on a drumset and make it look easy. He also has the feel and technique to play that kind of stuff. I've seen the Roots many times and it blows me away how they can turn a hip-hop record into a live band performance. I don't dislike hip-hop or pop—it has its place in society—but I root for rock, rock 'n' roll bands. That's my favorite. This weekend I'm going to see One Less Zero, which my wife, Sara, happens to be the singer of.

Finding the Perfect Drumset

MD: Why SJC drums?

Tré: I think they're the best handcrafted drums out there right now. They're the most creative, they're a young company, they're in the U.S. They really care about their product. They're trying to grow the company, but not at the expense of their drums. They're at the higher end of the price range of American drumsets, but they're more of a [boutique] company. I also have a huge collection of vintage drumsets, all stored in a big warehouse.

MD: How many sets?

Tré: I don't know. Lots. Hundreds of snare drums, close to a hundred full kits, tons of cymbals—and I'm not being figurative. I've got every drumset that has been in a Green Day video or on a Green Day record. I've got an original Gretsch Birdland kit from 1954 or 1956, the crown jewel of the drumset world. It's green with gold hardware. And a Ringo Starr 1960s Ludwig black oyster kit. Tons of Gretsch, Slingerland, Ludwig, Leedy & Ludwig, and Pork Pie for good measure. A clear Fibes acrylic kit, but the finish is like a shower door—pretty badass. A bunch of Vistalite—clear, candy-stripe. I've got a bunch of Noble & Cooley snares, including the *Dookie* snare, which I played

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seen the company change a lot over the years. They want to make money, so I've seen them go after the consumer and do what people want. And I've seen them go through a lot of R&D. Then I noticed that they stopped making some of the cymbals that I liked. So rather than bitch, I called and asked them to make the new cymbals similar to the old ones I liked. They'd send me prototypes, then ask me a lot of questions. It's been a discourse, communicating with them.

Zildjian is all about bonding with the artist, like they did with Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. All those guys were buddies with Mr. Zildjian. They have that mentality of making cymbals for artists and that sound good on records. And if the cymbals sound good on records, they'll sell to the kids.

MD: Have you asked Zildjian to make a Tré Cool line of cymbals?

Tré: They don't do that. That's a can of worms Zildjian doesn't want to open, and I don't blame them. And I love Zildjian—they sound so good. They make so many different styles of cymbals, for jazzers, rock guys, pop guys, everything.

MD: What's the most fun you have when not on the road with Green Day?

Tré: I really enjoy being on the road and hanging out. But I fish and play golf, and the kids and I enjoy water-oriented activities like scuba diving, surfing, and stand-up paddleboarding. Standing up protects your vitals if a shark comes along. That's my favorite fun thing to do right now. Perhaps it's not as cool as surfing, but it's more fun. It's kind of nerdy and dorky—but I'm a dorky guy!



on lots and lots of records. And tons of '60s and '70s Rogers kits. It's a good time in the warehouse.

MD: You love the beauty of the old drums?

Tré: And the vibe and the sound. I'll set them up and start playing, and each kit makes me play differently. [Green Day side project] Foxboro Hot Tubs began when I picked up a '60s Rogers kit. I set up those drums in the big live room at Jingletown and started playing, then [Green Day touring guitarist] Jason White came in with an old Gretsch guitar and we started playing these old-school mod riffs from the '60s. It brought that spirit out. These old drums carry the spirit of music that was played on them. It sort of goes through you and possesses you when you play them. Guitar players say the same thing about old guitars from the '50s and '60s. There is some sort of spirit that gets

stuck in the wood.

MD: Can you speak to drum endorsing?

Tré: I've endorsed almost every American drum company. They've all been great—all the drums are good. But where I felt like SJC won a million times over compared to other companies is that they are so personal. If I have an idea, they'll take it seriously. I know who's there, and they pick up the phone. SJC has some of the best craftsmen in the world. And I don't feel lost in a shuffle of a million drummers with SJC. Gretsch was awesome, but they have a lot of artists. If you can get with any of the big three, go for it. The drums will be good no matter where you go, be it DW, Ludwig, Gretsch....

When Mr. Zildjian Is Your Friend

MD: What is your relationship with Zildjian?

Tré: I've been with Zildjian since 1993. I've



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A Lot Like Birds' Joseph Arrington

That place where wild improvisation meets super-refined composition? It's a very sweet spot indeed, and this drummer is at his best when he's smack-dab in the middle of it.

Joseph Arrington joined the Sacramento-based post-hardcore act A Lot Like Birds in 2010, soon after moving to California from his native Utah. Since then, ALLB's live shows and three proper studio albums—founder Michael Franzino put out a collection under the group's moniker in 2009 before a true lineup coalesced—have resulted in much attention coming Arrington's way. So has Night Verses drummer Aric Improta's popular YouTube video "Drum Chain: 9 Drummers, 1 Song," not to mention Arrington's ongoing work with several other projects, including the West Coast conglomerate Sianvar, which features members of his main band as well as Dance Gavin Dance, Stolas, and Hail the Sun.

With the recently released *Divisi*, ALLB has embarked on a bold new strategy, abandoning the thick, twisting arrangements and the mix of dirty and clean vocals for a decidedly more mainstream though still virtuosic sound. Cory Lockwood's vocals in particular help to distinguish *Divisi* from the band's earlier material, as do the cleaner arrangements, which don't present the risk of injury to the listener's neck while head-banging along.

A trained, seasoned professional, Arrington is obsessed with fluid technique, rich drum tones, and flawless performances, which balances squarely with his ability to smash ALLB into a frenzy when the moment is right. *MD* caught up with Joseph during the band's headlining domestic tour earlier this year.

Story by Ben Meyer

Photos by Lauren Jenkins



MD: What was the process for creating the new A Lot Like Birds record?

Joseph: On our first LP, *Conversation Piece*, I would sit in our studio and mess with drum ideas and try to collect a handful of grooves and fills and parts that sounded cohesive, that were all the same tempo and stuff, and I would just give them to Michael. He would lay them all out and Frankenstein them a little bit, and we would end up with an entire drum skeleton. We'd have a three-and-a-half- or four-minute skeleton, and then he would layer guitars and bass over it.

That definitely happened on the new album, and... I love that dude, but he would take my grooves and just invert them. He'd take something I'd played and split the measure into three parts and move them all around. Michael would fully realize these movements, but he's not showing up saying, "Here are these drumset parts I programmed; you should play them verbatim." He says that he prefers to write with rhythmic ideas first. He's a very melodic person, but he enjoys infectious rhythms. If you have the talent to write infectious rhythms, things that make you want to move or make you feel good, that's a serious skill. Then having the ability to put great melodies over it, that's gold.

MD: Did the song "The Sound of Us" start with a rhythmic germ?

Joseph: It's interesting that you mention that song, because it's one of the ones on the new record that started with the drum parts. Almost the entire song was mapped out ahead of time. That song was almost completely drums first.

MD: You can sense that. Was that the only song on *Divisi* that came about like that?



Joseph: In its entirety, yes. Another song, "Further Below," definitely grew from some of my drum parts as well.

MD: Talk about the new stylistic direction on *Divisi*. You had two members leave since your last album, *No Place*. Was it intentional to go in the direction of being more melodic and vocally centered, with less-frenetic arrangements, or was it just a natural development with the members you have now?

Joseph: It was definitely intentional. *No Place* was written a lot in the same way as *Conversation Piece*, but this new record is definitely more refined. It was a very difficult change, because we were used to chaos—that's kind of where we'd gotten our identity. I look back on *No Place* and I can't even

listen to that record sometimes. There's just so much going on, so many layers.

I'm blessed to have lots of projects to pull from and dive into. That means that, in a very selfish way, I have my projects where I can kind of go nuts and really be the crazy drummer in the back of my head. Then I've got A Lot Like Birds, which is a really great opportunity to become a songwriter, you know? I don't just want to be a crazy chops guy, which I don't really feel I am anyway. But that little drummer devil is in the back of all of our heads.

MD: Let's talk about the gear you're playing.

Joseph: I'm a Gretsch artist, and they're awesome people. I have two New Classic kits that I got before they discontinued them. Those are the ones that I use for studio stuff. I have one that I've used on just about every record that I've put out. That thing is just like butter. I also have a newer Renown kit that they shipped me at the beginning of 2015. Once I wore that one in on the road, it sounded

Arrington's Setup



Drums: Gretsch Renown Maple in vintage pearl finish

- A. 6x14 Hammered Brass (or 5.5x14 New Classic) snare
- B. 7x10 tom
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 14x16 floor tom
- E. 16x18 floor tom
- F. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" A Custom Mastersound hi-hats
 - 2. 19" A Custom crash
 - 3. 22" K Constantinople Bounce ride
 - 4. 20" A Medium Thin crash
- Various "veloci-stackers" made of broken Zildjian cymbals

Sticks: Vic Firth American Classic 5B wood-tip model

Hardware: DW, including 9500TB two-leg hi-hat stand, 9300 snare stand, 9700 boom cymbal stands, and 9000 series single bass drum pedal; Gretsch tom mounts; Roc-n-Soc saddle-style hydraulic throne

Heads: Remo, including Coated Controlled Sound X snare batter and Black Suede snare-side, Vintage Emperor tom batters (Coated or Clear depending on the band) and Clear Ambassador resonants, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and black PS3 front head

Accessories: Westone ES60 in-ear monitors

different, but still amazing. They're ridiculous-sounding drums. There's just something about the New Classic kit, though. It just has this essence.

MD: What drew you to Gretsch?

Joseph: I worked for a company called Skip's Music in Sacramento for a while. It's an incredible family of people that runs that place. I worked in their backline department, and I had an opportunity to play just about every company under the sun before I really spent money on a nice kit. I tuned and played all the high-end kits, and what I learned is that none of them has that undefinable thing that Gretsch has. I've used my black-sparkle New Classic kit on all of these records, and every engineer is just gaga over it. It's been fun to bring it along on this journey.

MD: Your toms are set up fairly flat. Do you make any kind of technical accommodations for that, or does it just feel right to you?

Joseph: It does feel right. I'm a tall guy. I'm 6'1" and I spend a lot of time sitting behind a kit and trying to position my hands and find what makes the most sense ergonomically. If you do flat toms the right way, you can kind of make even a large kit more compact. All my toms and my snare are fairly flat. My rack toms angle toward me a little bit, but it just feels right.

MD: As far as projects that you're officially part of, you're doing A Lot Like Birds, Sianvar, and Alone., right?

Joseph: That's right. Alone. is a cool departure. That's Michael's solo stuff, which is a whole other story. He wrote with programmed drums and stuff, then he hired me to come in and learn every single part he had programmed, as verbatim as possible. There's definitely some of my spice in there, but for the most part those drum parts are his concoction.

Alone. has never performed live. I'd love to do that at some point, but we're not sure what's going to happen there. Sianvar is a side

project with a bunch of musicians that I really respect. [Dance Gavin Dance guitarist] Will Swan's record label, Blue Swan Records, funds the records, and we recoup instantly. We tour when we can, and I think we're going to start writing again this year.

I also have my own crazy stuff. Toward the end of the year I'm going to be putting together an instrumental prog nerd record. I've got to do it once in my life. I want to try my hand at that sort of Animals as Leaders spectrum—I'm not saying that I'm on their tier at all, just that kind of material. All the stuff that I didn't do on this last Birds record is going into that project tenfold. That's going to be my own vision. I'm going to hire some friends from around the country. I haven't landed on exactly who yet, but I have the funding for it, so I'm going to make a full-length record.

MD: Do you have a name for that project yet?

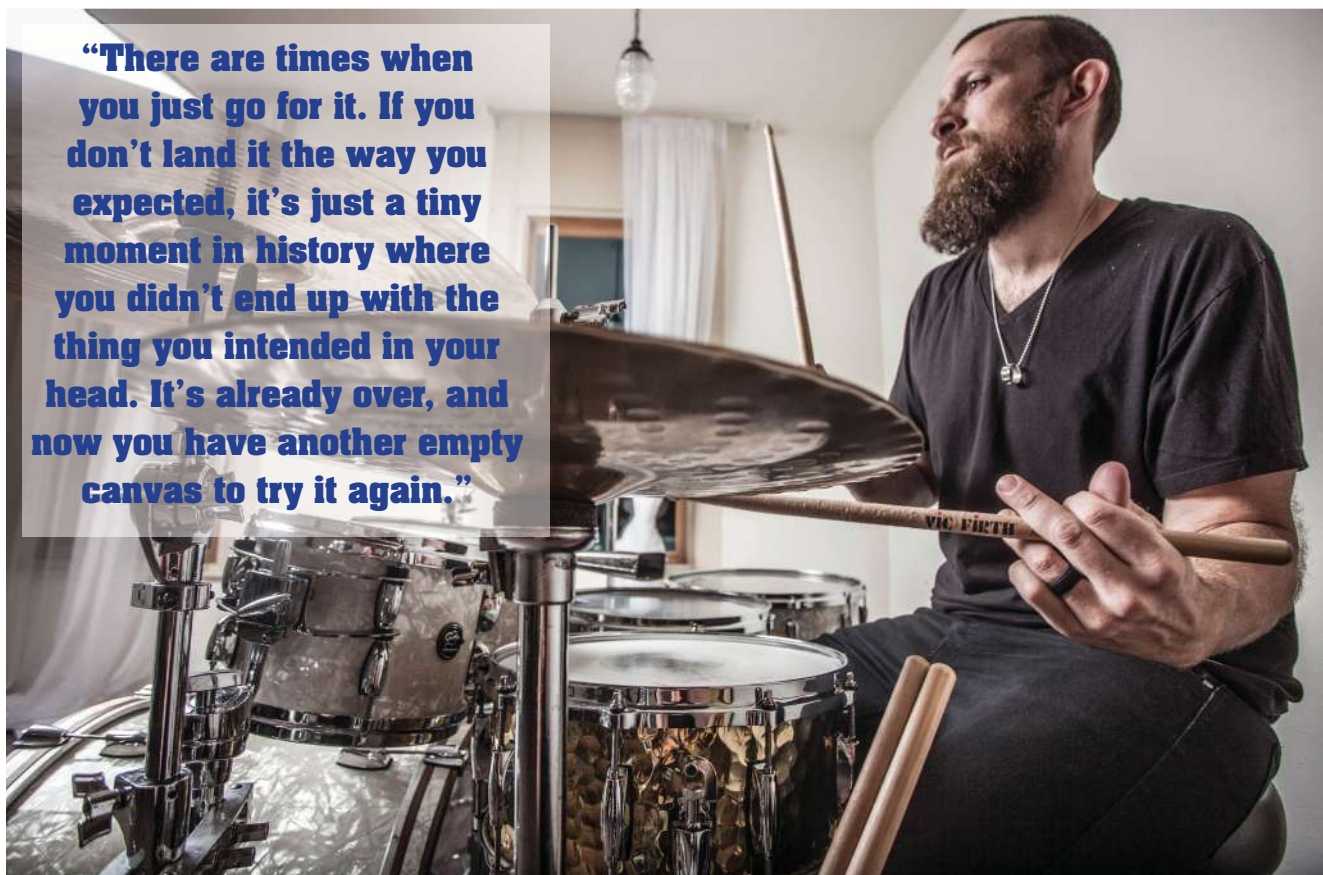
Joseph: I don't. Right now I'm at a point where slowing down is not even possible. I'm launching a Patreon [popular online patronage site], which is going to be just crazy amounts of video content and drum blogs. It's not really going to be lessons, because I feel like if you want the basics and stuff, it's all out there. It's like, if you want [to get] in my brain, inside of our little cosmos, here's a really portable, cheap way.

Another project I'd like to mention is a thing with my friend Brian Curtin. It's his brainchild and it's called Love Mischief. It's kind of like the Grateful Dead meets Chick Corea, with maybe a little bit of the Headhunters thrown in there. We've filmed these live takes of songs, Snarky Puppy style. We've done fifteen or sixteen of them, and they're just lying in wait for Brian to finish school. He's going to start this big marketing process, and those videos will be dropped like a bomb.

MD: Are you teaching at all?

Joseph: I do Skype lessons, and I meet people on tour at shows. We

“There are times when you just go for it. If you don't land it the way you expected, it's just a tiny moment in history where you didn't end up with the thing you intended in your head. It's already over, and now you have another empty canvas to try it again.”





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Joseph Arrington

just set up a kit in an alleyway and go at it for two hours.

MD: Are you primarily marketing that through social media?

Joseph: Yes. I did one Instagram post and I filled up every single date on this tour. That was a good sign! The teaching on tour has been really great for me. Seeing the size of the drummer crowd at these shows has been a big inspiration. I think a lot of the video content on the Patreon will be how we approach songwriting and drum parts, where the ideas come from and why I use them.



MD: The video play-through you did for “The Sound of Us” is a great example of how precise your playing is. How composed are your parts? Do they change from night to night live?

Joseph: You’ve stumbled into my personal Pandora’s box! These things are both strengths and weaknesses. I come from playing a lot of jazz and improvisational music growing up. When I’m home in Sacramento, I’m a working jazz musician

playing in trios and quartets. My drummer brain has been influenced by all of the guys I’ve idolized, like Tony Williams, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Steve Gadd. They were so in the moment. When I play live, I lose myself sometimes. I’ll go for these fills and parts that just feel so cosmic. Like, *That felt amazing—I don’t even know if I can repeat it.* Sometimes I’ll go for a fill and the bass player will look back at me, like, *No. Don’t do that again.* [laughs]

There are times when you just go for it. If you don’t land it the way you expected, it’s just a tiny moment in history where you

didn’t end up with the thing you intended in your head. It’s already over, and now you have another empty canvas to try it again. I’ve never even gone back to try to play my stuff the same way I did on the records.

MD: I got the impression that most of your parts were preconceived, probably just due to the precision of your playing on A Lot Like Birds’ material. Your execution seems practiced and polished to that point.

Joseph: Thank you! There are obviously parts that have to stay intact. There’s this crazy linear groove in the verse of “The Sound of Us” that’s fairly verbatim every night. There are some things that are so fast and so hectic that trying to improvise there isn’t really practical. The devil in the back of my head is like, *You should go for this fill, but I’m like, Don’t screw this up. Not this part.* [laughs]

I mostly improvise in fills and a few kick and snare patterns here and there. I explore that much more with Sianvar. I’d say 90 percent of my fills are improvised on the spot on these records. When I recorded the latest Sianvar full-length last year, my goal was to be as honest as possible. There are a few cringe-worthy fills that other people like, and I’m like, *That’s not what I wanted to do there, but it’s honest.* It’s just me in the moment, sweating in a warehouse, recording drums.

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The National's Bryan Devendorf

Bryan Devendorf's drumming is deceptively simple. A brilliant accompanist to the National's diverse, moody, and propulsive oeuvre, Devendorf provides vital rhythmic hooks to some of the group's best-known songs. If you seek out a live performance of "Bloodbuzz Ohio" or "Squalor Victoria," you can hear an audible audience roar when Devendorf introduces the signature drum patterns for these fan favorites. But what's more fascinating than his deep pocket and creativity is his contribution to the craft of the band's songwriting. Bryce Dessner, guitarist with the National, says, "Bryan often has the hardest and earliest job in the studio, and he spends weeks and weeks getting his drum parts down. He also has to deal with the [rest of the band] constantly commenting on direction and his parts."

But Devendorf can be a taskmaster himself in the studio. "If you're looking to get your feathers fluffed," National singer Matt Berninger says, "he's not the guy." But thankfully for the band's productivity, Devendorf is not a source of negativity, he's about solutions. "He's an astute student of songwriting," Dessner shares, "and often has amazing ideas for finishing songs in the studio. He can be a harsh critic of things that are not good, but he's really skilled at bringing a song across the finish line."

Ben Lanz, a touring member of the National and principal member of Devendorf's other, more Krautrock-influenced band, LNZNDRF, says, "It's as if every sound, every articulation, is equally important to him, and from this, all is thought out and considered and reconsidered."

You can hear this attention to craft in Devendorf's parts on the National's new album, *Sleep Well Beast*. The release represents the band's first deep dive into combining electronic beats with the drummer's acoustic playing. Songs often start with a stern electronic pattern that Devendorf elaborates on with his signature kit playing as the track progresses. The results are effective and open up the songs to wider emotional vistas. An example of this strategy can be heard on the album's second single, "Guilty Party," wherein a high-pitched, crisp electronic beat gets fleshed out after a minute and a half by Devendorf's stuttering, syncopated playing. According to Dessner,

Bryan wrote out fifteen different break patterns for the song, which gave the guitarist material to create the evolving electronic pulses.

It's odd that it's taken the band this long to explore these kinds of timbral juxtapositions, but maybe that's simply because Devendorf was already such a rock-solid, metronomic presence. National bassist Scott Devendorf describes his brother's drumming in two contrasting words, "machine organic," and engineer and producer Peter Katis says, "Bryan is one of my favorite drummers in the world—his sound has an almost aggressive precision, but without sacrificing feel." On *Sleep Well Beast* these two aspects of Devendorf's style find their explicit expression.

In person, Devendorf's modesty stands in stark contrast to his towering 6'5" physical presence. He's not one to oversell himself—I was not aware until very late in this interview process that he's scored out all his drum parts for the National's albums. He's a relentless perfectionist, as hard on himself as he is on the rest of the band. But it's definitely for the best. Devendorf is the anchor and core of the National. "Bryan is by far the loudest thing I have in my monitors when we play live," singer Berninger says. "His drumming is what I attach myself to and what I retreat to." "He's one of the best musicians I have ever played with," Dessner adds, "and definitely the most talented drummer that I know."

Story by John Colpitts • Photos by Keith Klenowski

MD: I feel like you're the contemporary rock scene's Mick Fleetwood: Your playing is tasteful and creative and adds a great arrangement atmosphere. Do you have any musical influences that loom large for you?

Bryan: That's a big compliment. Thank you. Mick Fleetwood's playing has certainly influenced mine. Those tom fills he does into the choruses of "Dreams" with the ride hits? Amazing. And *Tusk*?

There are so, so many drummers and musicians over the years who I've been wowed by and therefore driven to imitate or even steal from. I'm like a butterfly flitting from flower to flower in that regard. Some contemporaries whose playing has been hugely influential on mine are Glenn Kotche [Wilco], Matt Barrick [the Walkmen], Sam Fogarino [Interpol], and Georgia Hubley [Yo La Tengo]. Of all the twentieth-century greats, I'd say I most emulate Ringo, John Bonham [Led Zeppelin], Tony Allen [Fela Kuti], Jim Keltner, Jim Capaldi

[Traffic], Moe Tucker [Velvet Underground], Klaus Dinger [Neu!], Jack DeJohnette, Elvin Jones, and of course Stephen Morris [Joy Division, New Order].

MD: You grew up in Cincinnati, correct? How did you find your way to the drums?

Bryan: That's right. My dad got a job there in early '79 and moved the family down soon after. My mom put me and my brother Scott in the Suzuki violin program at CCM [College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati] that same year. We lived in the suburbs, so it was a thirty-minute drive to the conservatory, and on those drives I got my first exposure to really listening closely to recorded music on my mom's tapes. She had a lot of classical tapes but also some contemporary pop like Neil Diamond and Linda Ronstadt. However, my favorite was *The Supremes' Greatest Hits*. I still remember staring out the car window and quietly singing along with Diana Ross.



After about a decade, I had burned out on the violin and was more into skateboarding than practicing. I forget which came first, but sometime in the seventh grade I acquired a Yamaha DD-5, and this kid named Mike Hunting permanently set up his drums in a small room at our school and let me play them during lunch. So I was playing every day, either on Mike's kit or on that little four-pad drum machine. By eighth grade I'd convinced my parents to let me quit violin and focus on the drums, so they sold my violin and with the proceeds bought me a drumset.

MD: How would you describe the early days playing with your brother? Were you a rhythm section from the start?

Bryan: In the beginning Scott and I were a violin duo of sorts. We played school events, parties, etc. He got out of the violin thing long before me and started playing guitar. Once he joined a band, I wanted to be their drummer, but I didn't manage that at the time. We played together eventually in other bands, but he was always on guitar. We became a

bass-drum team in the early 2000s, when he and [National guitarist] Aaron Dessner switched instruments.

MD: You used to take lessons with Steve Earle from the Afghan Whigs. Their Sub Pop album *Congregation* made a huge impact on college radio when it was released. Can you talk about the scene in Cincinnati at this time, how you were able to get in touch with Steve and what he taught you?

Bryan: I wasn't part of any scene, just some clueless kid from the suburbs who had a nice big brother with a great collection of records and tapes. Scott was more into the local band scene, seeing bands like Lizard 99, Brainiac, the Tigerlilies, Over the Rhine, and of course the Afghan Whigs. My studies with their drummer, Steve, occurred completely at random. He happened to be teaching lessons at a music shop in my part of town. He was also painting houses at the time; I remember him coming to lessons covered in paint.

"Bryan warms up every night backstage playing Steve Reich's 'Clapping Music' on his drum pad," Bryce Dessner tells *Modern Drummer*. The piece by the famous minimalist composer is constructed of two clave patterns progressively offset by an 8th note until they're back in unison—"easy to do by two people, but quite difficult by one," Dessner explains. "I work with Steve Reich a lot, and he was amazed that this is Bryan's warm-up routine. These elaborate shifting patterns are the soundtrack to our preparation to go on stage."



Steve was a great teacher, always patient and very kind. He stressed the basics from the start: snare-only in the beginning, lots of rudiments and exercises from method books like *Stick Control*. After a month or so of focusing on the snare, we started on the kit with *Realistic Rock* by Carmine Appice. We worked together for somewhere between six months and a year before he quit teaching to go on tour.

MD: I revisited those '90s Whigs records a bit recently, and I definitely heard a continuum between Earle's drumming and your own.

Bryan: I hear you. I think the way Steve divided a drum part up into discrete sections, his clearly punctuated accents, his style of syncopation, his referencing of Motown beats, and his slight swing definitely informed my playing.

MD: I hear that swing in your playing for sure. How would you say you were able to cultivate this?

Bryan: That was something that might have developed from lesson times, or [maybe] being in a small room together. He never said, "Hey man, try playing like this...." He emphasized technique and reading and also straight-up kick-snare-hat beats. Maybe I internalized his feel early on because I listened to that record *Congregation* a lot when I was first playing with other people, and there's a lot of that kind of work on there.

MD: Are you still in touch with him?

Bryan: Unfortunately, no. The last time I saw Steve was in '95 or '96. The Afghan Whigs were playing in Cleveland, where I was going to school. He was really cool—said hello to me and my friend after the show. I know he's been pretty active in the local music scene here, playing drums and also fronting a band on guitar. I hope I run into

him again someday.

MD: Did the fact that your teacher was working in a professional band with gigs make an impression on you and the other people who ended up in the National?

Bryan: Looking back, having a teacher that was actually engaged in what I wanted to do was certainly a huge piece of my musical upbringing, though it was never spoken of or reflected upon at the time. Then I was more focused on dissecting Bonham drum parts or collecting Dead tapes. But seeing Whigs shows at the local rock venue opened my eyes to the possibilities of being in a band.

MD: How did you guys end up connecting with the Dessners and Matt Berninger?

Bryan: I first met Aaron and Bryce when I was in sixth grade. They were one year younger. We didn't actually end up playing in a band together until a few years later—I must have been fifteen at the time. Their mom drove them to my house for our first jam session. This was when I was really getting into the Grateful Dead. They knew "Eyes of the World," so we ended up playing that for a while.

Scott met Matt at the University of Cincinnati, where they studied design. They bonded over a mutual love of Guided by Voices, the Smiths, et al., and started a band called Nancy. I first met Matt sometime in the early '90s, probably over at Scott's house or at a party or something.

After college the [Dessner] twins and I played in a five-piece band, which ended in the early summer of 1999. It was then that Aaron and I started taking trips into Brooklyn to record songs in Matt's apartment for what would be the first version of the National. Aaron and I both lived in New Haven at the time. Bryce did too—he joined the band soon after Aaron and I did. The as-yet-unnamed

band/recording project was an extension of Nancy, Scott and Matt's college band.

MD: When do you feel that the band really came into its own?

Bryan: Probably during the writing and recording of the *Alligator* album.

MD: What went into that process?

Bryan: We rehearsed a lot and recorded basic tracks in the same studio where we'd been rehearsing in Red Hook [Brooklyn]. Also, we had just signed with Beggars Banquet and were definitely feeling the pressure to make something good. Maybe it's the haze of nostalgia—this was thirteen years ago—but I remember playing for hours and doing whatever I felt like doing and it all seeming good and coming together organically. I know for sure one of the guitar/drum jams Aaron and I made up on the spot became the song "Mr. November."

The overdubs for the record were done in the upstairs apartment at Aaron and Bryce's sister's house in Ditmas Park [Brooklyn]. So I think our physical proximity was definitely influential in bringing the band together creatively. And something about that era, performing and recording rock music in New York City, was edifying and cool. The making of *Sleep Well Beast* was sort of a throwback to the *Alligator* days in that we spent a lot of time together, not just working but also hanging out.

MD: There's a lot of electronic/acoustic interplay on *Sleep Well Beast*. You mentioned the great Stephen Morris as an influence. Was his electronic/acoustic fusion at play for these sessions?

Bryan: Stephen Morris's drumming has been quite influential on me. His beats are unique and very satisfying to play and notate. "Heart and Soul," "Atmosphere," "Transmission," "Ceremony," "She's Lost Control," "Disorder," "Love Will Tear Us Apart," "Everything's Gone

Devendorf's Tour Kit

Bryan plays a C&C kit featuring a 13" tom, a 16" floor tom, and a 20" bass drum, along with a 6.5x14 Ludwig main snare and a '70s-era 5x14 Slingerland auxiliary snare. His Istanbul Agop cymbals include a pair of hi-hats made up of two 16" OM crashes, a 20" Signature ride/18" Signature stack, and a 17" Traditional Dark crash/14" Traditional Medium stack (he'll take the top cymbals off in real time, depending on the song), and 12" 30th Anniversary auxiliary hi-hats. His electronics comprise a Roland SPD-SX multipad, two Roland PD-85BK 8" mesh pads, and two Roland BT-1 Bar pads. He uses Regal Tip 5A sticks, Vic Firth T1 General mallets, and Lewis custom shaker sticks. His hardware is made by Yamaha, and his drumheads include an Aquarian Super-Kick II bass drum batter and Remo Coated Ambassador tom batters and Coated Emperor snare batters. For percussion Devendorf plays various shakers and tambourines, and his accessories include a Boss DB-90 Dr. Beat metronome, a Reflexx Conditioning Pad, and Radial ProD2 direct boxes.

Green," "Age of Consent," "Love Vigilantes," "Thieves Like Us," "Bizarre Love Triangle"...too many to name. [They were] in play here for sure.

MD: On the new album, the song "I'll Still Destroy You" has an arrangement that begins with electronic beats and marimba. How much input did you have on the arrangements that include electronics? And what about the percussion on this track, the marimba and metal percussion elements?

Bryan: Creating the beats on this recording—electronic and drumset—was for the most part a three-way collaboration with Jon Low, who engineered the sessions, and Aaron, who produced the



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Bryan Devendorf

sessions. I would come up with some ideas and then Aaron would essentially choose the ones he thought fit best, and Jon would get sounds that suited the parts. On a few others, Bryce provided the electronic beats and I just played along on the kit.

On "I'll Still Destroy You," I think the electronic beat is something I programmed on a Korg Volca Beats [drum machine] that was then run through Ableton by Bryce. The marimba and metal were played by Jason Treuting and Eric Cha-Beach of So Percussion.

MD: I hear a lot of creativity in your beats.

They often include a signature syncopated tom phrasing. What is your process of coming up with drum arrangements, and how do you approach songwriting within the group?

Bryan: I don't know why, but I always seem to end up pounding the toms. They seem to work well with the dark timbre of Matt's voice.

I don't really have a specific process for the beats and arrangements. It's trial and error usually. For this record I was "composing" a lot on two very approachable drum machines, the Roland TR-8 and the

Korg Volca Beats. Sometimes we ended up just keeping those parts and I would layer real drums on top.

In our group, the songwriting occurs over the span of many months—years sometimes. Usually the twins will record dozens of sketches for Matt to check out. The ones he finds stuff for make it to the next round, where another winnowing down occurs that's more group oriented.

MD: I found a quote from 2010 where you said, "We record the drums, and then everything else generally comes after that." Can you elaborate a bit more?

Bryan: Let me clarify this statement. It's not just me alone in a room playing to nothing but a click track; there's always preexisting scratch tracks of some kind or another. Usually the singing is one of the very last things to be recorded. If there are vocals on when I'm tracking, they're either scratch vocals or wordless melodies. So usually everything I play to eventually gets muted or replaced by something else, so a whole new track emerges. That's kind of how things have gone for the past ten years.

MD: What advice do you have in terms of creating effective drum arrangements for vocal rock music?

Bryan: Listen to the singer and shape things around the voice. Keep it simple, but look for unusual ways to articulate the rhythm.

MD: It's very hard to have a busy beat sit within a song with vocals. On the new album, "Empire Line" has all this, but it works so well. Was there a story behind that one?

Bryan: It is a busy beat, and it's hard to sing over busy drumming. Somehow Matt made it work here. I had engineer Jon Low chop up the busy section of the song in Pro Tools with a view to making it more machine-like and even under the vocals. Thankfully, Aaron heard what we were up to and was not into it—the lack of human feel—so we undid all the edits and kept it au naturel.

MD: You've ended up in Cincinnati again. What's special about the place?

Bryan: It's just really easy to live where we live day to day. And it's especially kid-friendly—my wife and I have three kids now, and having the first two in Brooklyn, for me, was enough. I wanted out of the apartment. Also, basements are the norm here, so I'm able to work at home in a soundproofed room. It's really great.

I think there's a fair amount of local pride for the bands that have come out of here, and the history of King Records is something that people should look into. Also Bootsie Collins is from here—that's pretty freakin' special!

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The advertisement features a black and white photograph of Thomas Lang, a drummer, sitting and holding a large, dark, soft-shell case for a drum set. The case has the AHEAD logo prominently displayed on its front. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights Lang's face and the texture of the case. In the bottom left corner, there is a large, stylized AHEAD logo with the text "ARMOR CASES" and "USA" below it. In the bottom right corner, the website "WWW.AHEADARMORCASES.COM" and the phone number "818.727.1127" are listed. A small credit line "(C) & (P) PHOTO BY F. DESMAELLE" is visible in the bottom right corner of the image area.



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JP Bouvet



Written on the wall of the ancient Egyptian temple of Luxor is the proverb *Know thyself, and you will know the gods*. Whether or not he's come across that bit of wisdom during his travels, this drummer certainly gets the gist of it. For the many, many hours he's spent perfecting his own unique powers have led to undeniable success on multiple fronts.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Tanya Ghosh

New York–based drummer JP Bouvet is a chameleon, but even that seems like a limiting term when you consider the range of drumming styles he executes exceptionally well. His band Childish Japes rocks hard and dabbles in jazzy grooves and beats primed for rappers, with enough slick kit work for the fusion heads to notice. But he’s also the drummer for Generation Axe, a traveling circus of guitar heroes from the 1980s and beyond. And then there’s his online educational presence, where he steers clear of explaining beginner material, instead focusing on his unique perspectives on rhythm and craft.

Growing up in Minnesota, Bouvet dipped into everything from big bands to Hendrix before making the choice to attend Boston’s Berklee College of Music. “At Berklee I went

through a phase where I wanted to be a studio cat, and I’d be on everyone’s songwriting and production projects,” he says. “But then I realized the session-guy thing is not really for me, because I’d rather care and be invested in the music I was doing, as opposed to showing up, doing the job, and leaving. I’m much more interested in being creatively involved and showcasing what I have to say.”

But before the bright lights of New York City lured him to recent pursuits of *saying something*, Bouvet first had to drop out of Berklee to focus on winning the Guitar Center Drum-Off contest. MD caught up with the twentysomething Bouvet to discuss committing to that goal, and the new artistic directions he pointed himself toward once he attained it.

MD: Talk about your experience at Berklee.

JP: I did two and a half years of the four-year program at Berklee. It was an important place for me, because I came from a place where I was one of the only drummers I knew, and I thought I was awesome. And I came to a place where people from all around the world were doing things that I had never heard of. I was plopped into this very deep pool of new ideas. And it was primarily from fellow students. I could walk by the drum practice rooms and immediately have months of things to work on. In my first year there, I made the fastest progress I ever had in my life. I had lots of time to practice, so I’d be in the room for six hours a day fairly consistently.

The big misconception about Berklee is that it hands you a career on a silver platter, which is completely untrue. But it is fertile soil. And it goes for any art community or music school that there’s no other time in life where you’re with a group of young, hungry, good musicians who have all left their hometowns and have nothing going on except this drive to create something new.

And I was in so many different bands there—prog bands, a metal band, Latin-jazz bands. I always had a dream of someone saying that I was so sick on the double bass drums and then another musician saying, “That can’t be the same JP—he’s a killer jazz cat.” I always wanted that odd situation to occur. And fast-forward that I played for Generation Axe with Steve Vai, Zakk Wylde, and Yngwie Malmsteen, juxtaposed next to my own band, which is essentially an art-rock jazz hip-hop project. It’s about as close to that dream

coming to fruition. I ended up dropping out of Berklee because I wanted to practice more for the Guitar Center Drum-Off the year that I won it.

MD: You made the Drum-Off a priority?

JP: I’d done the Drum-Off five times before. Since I was fifteen years old, on and off, I’d prepare a solo and do my thing. Two years into my Berklee career, I was on my A game for drumming, practicing for hours a day for years, pushing myself, practicing some things I thought were cool and new that I hadn’t heard other people do, especially on the Drum-Off. So after the first round of five, which is the local level, there was a key turning point where I thought I could actually win this. *I possess the tools to win this.* And the fact that I got through the first round was a little bit lucky, because in

Boston you have all these sick Berklee cats.

MD: Did you do the same solo each round?

JP: No, it was evolving. And at that moment, it lit the fire and I knew I was going to obsess over this, and I set a strict four-hour-a-day practice regimen. I was an A student, but at this point I was skipping classes and my midterms. And I kept progressing through the rounds at the Drum-Off over the course of months, getting to the regionals, which I’d never gotten to. I was still refining my routine, working on a 7/8 clave with the left foot, and a 5/16 time signature. I watch the video now and it’s a little bit painful, because it was just the beginning of my exploration of those ideas. I’m much further along now. But I’d spend the first half of the day practicing on an acoustic drumset, and I had this 360-degree Neil Peart set going on, and I’d play on this electronic kit, because at the time I was also preparing for this international V-Drums competition, which was the week after the Drum-Off.

MD: Did winning the Drum-Off raise your profile to where you started getting calls?

JP: What it does is turn tens of thousands of heads toward you for maybe just a few minutes. So you get a huge wave of people that have a look [at you]. The next day I got 250 friend requests and the video was obviously amassing a lot of views. But as you can imagine, especially today with how quickly interesting videos come and go, a month later no one really gives a shit. But I knew as soon as I won that I needed to become something other than the guy who won the Drum-Off, because people are going to stop caring very quickly, and also this time next year there’s a new winner, and if I was just the winner of the Drum-Off, at that point I’m nothing.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Bouvet plays a DW Jazz series maple/gum kit with an olive ash burl outer ply featuring a 5.5x14 snare, a 10x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 16x20 bass drum. His Meinl cymbals include 14" Jazz Hats, a 21" Nuance ride, a 22" Symmetry ride, a 20" Medium Thin Jazz crash, and a secondary hi-hat comprising a 12" Trash Hat top stacked on top of a 14" Generation X X-treme bottom. He uses Vic Firth 55A sticks, and his Remo heads include a Coated Ambassador snare batter, Coated Emperor tom batters and Coated Ambassador resonants, and a Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter.



JP Bouvet

It was a huge spark, and it enabled me to build a fan base and a career in the drum community, but I emphasize “build,” because it took a massive amount of effort. At the time I was aggressively doing these video blogs that were meant to be an open window for people into the process of being a nobody and hopefully becoming a somebody in the drum world. High school and college students who had similar goals were interested in following that. I brought them along with every milestone—my first clinic tour, my first drum festival, my band recording an album.

MD: How did the Generation Axe thing happen? You’re thirty years younger than everyone on that stage.

JP: The best part of going to Berklee is the network that you accumulate. I lived across the hall from Matt Garstka, drummer

any pain in my hands. My body wasn’t used to doing that, especially for three and a half hours straight.

MD: Your band Childish Japes has an interesting sound. What was the impetus to begin that project?

JP: It’s an essential part of a musical career to be musically invested in a project that is creatively rewarding. So I enjoy doing gigs like Generation Axe, and there are several other dream gigs, but those alone would not make me a happy drummer. The whole “show up and do the right job” thing is exciting for a while, but I feel I have more to say. Over the past few years, I’d practice and come up with crazy ideas and focus on finding what I thought were innovative drum things, with no outlet for those ideas.

And Childish Japes is a creative safe space for all the musicians involved—who are some

That’s where syncopation comes in, and dynamics and placement of notes. So that ends up being your fingerprint as a drummer. My goal is to never hit a technical roadblock when it comes to syncopation or independence.

“After You’re Born” is a good example of us being aware that we’re a trio and trying to produce a lot of sound for three people. I’m trying to sound like there’s more than one person playing on the drums, or there’s an added tambourine here or a click separately. All four limbs are working together, but they’re each playing a different sound. And that one pre-chorus is meant to throw you off, to give you a rhythmic punch. The snare drum is accenting the second triplet of the groove. I’m not a fan of losing people too far, but it’s another tool that creates a little tension and release.

MD: What’s the plan for your educational career?

JP: I had already been designing an educational website regardless of whether I won the Drum-Off. I had no idea how deep the online drum education world was, because I was never part of it or studied on it. People like Mike Johnston, and Drumeo, I literally didn’t know they existed. My goals are different from most people who get into it. I’m not interested in building the world’s biggest encyclopedia of how to play any groove and how to learn the drums from day one. A website like Drumeo has done that extremely well, and that is their goal. My website is meant to be an extension of me. I don’t want to tailor who I am to the audience; I want to create a band that enables me to do whatever I want to do.

For my educational content, I want to share what I genuinely think is cool and interesting and what I’m practicing and finding personally useful. But I’m not likely going to break down a bossa nova 101 on my website. It’s an interesting dilemma, because I’m aware that starting a more basic-level drumming [site] is a better business model if you want to attract more numbers and students. But at that point I would just become an online teacher. So my website is more artistically inclined than most other sites. If you were interested in playing or thinking like me, my website is the best place to go for that. It’s for drummers who want to keep pushing and do something creative and unique.

I recently had a lesson with Mark Guiliana, one of my heroes, and I took away from him that I don’t need everyone to like me or care. I need to find the realest output. There’s an audience for everything and everyone out there, if the product is honest and of a certain quality.



for Animals as Leaders, one of the best drummers alive right now, and we had an ongoing practice/competition thing. He was the original drummer on that tour, and he recommended me for the gig.

It was all music that was new to me. It was fun and an awesome challenge. It was trial by fire in an extreme way. I had never played with real rock gods in venues that big. I needed to hit way harder than I ever had, and basically I suffered through a lot of blisters for a couple of weeks. That volume of playing is a technique that I hadn’t developed. I tried to be efficient with my energy but also bring the power and the look. You have to look like you’re playing hard as much as you have to actually play hard. It’s a show. I was on the first tour for two weeks, and I remember that [only] for the last show did I not have

of the finest in New York—to bring their crazy ideas. It’s not only okay but *encouraged* for us to explore. It’s really a passion project. All the catalysts for the songs on this first album have come from jams. And it’s a more open and artsy project where we can feature any of our favorite singers. I want to create something so cool and unique and open that it could draw some of my idols to collaborate.

MD: “After You’re Born” has some very cool syncopation. Talk about how you develop that.

JP: We’re all working with the same simple tools. We have four limbs and a handful of drums. We use singles or doubles almost exclusively, with some amount of rest between them. So the real goal of drumming is to be able to control when each of your four limbs triggers, and how hard it triggers.



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Pictured: Damon Grant

Mickey Roker

Jazz drumming great Mickey Roker died this past May 22 in Philadelphia, at the age of eighty-four. Known for his propelling swing, Roker performed with top jazz artists throughout a career spanning six decades. A drummer sprung from swing and bop, Roker had an irresistible groove, sensitive dynamics, unshakable time, and tasteful kit artistry that earned him a long and impressive discography. Above all, he was supportive. "I just like to swing the band," he told *MD* in a 2002 interview. "That's where I get my kicks."

Roker toured the world extensively, most notably during his nine-year stint with Dizzy Gillespie. Fellow musicians knew him as a kind man full of positive energy and humor.

Granville William "Mickey" Roker Jr. was born in Miami on September 3, 1932. After his mother died when he was ten, Roker was raised in Philadelphia by his grandmother. His uncle bought him his first drumkit, and the self-taught drummer began playing local R&B gigs, eventually gravitating to jazz. Philly Joe Jones was a significant inspiration.

In the mid-'50s, following army service, Roker circulated with notable local jazz figures, including Jimmy Heath and Jimmy Oliver. He married his wife, Priscilla, in 1956; they had two children, Ronald and Debra.

The rising drummer began gigging in New York in 1959 with Gigi Gryce, followed by stints with pianist Ray Bryant and with Junior Mance's trio, backing up vocal great Joe Williams. Roker settled in the city in 1961, and his profile rose through appearances with Art Farmer, Stanley Turrentine, Clifford Jordan, Shirley Scott, and Mary Lou Williams.

In 1964, Roker began a long association with pianist, composer, and arranger Duke Pearson. Playing with small groups and big bands, he recorded nine Blue Note albums with Pearson and became a frequent call for many other Blue Note record dates during the label's classic '60s and early '70s output. Roker frequently cited Pearson's 1966 sextet LP, *Sweet Honey Bee*, as one of his favorite albums.

During his tenure with Gillespie from 1971 through 1979, Roker recorded numerous albums on the Pablo label



that showcased his hard-driving yet sensitive energy, transported by his classic swinging cymbal ride. Gillespie famously incorporated Latin elements into his sound, and Roker deftly infused that rhythmic influence, as heard on the 1975 album *Afro-Cuban Jazz Moods*.

When Dizzy's nonstop globe-hopping finally caught up with Roker, the drummer left the band, but soon hit the road again with Milt Jackson and with the Ray Brown Trio. Roker would later reunite with Jackson when he joined the Modern Jazz Quartet in 1992.

Although Roker claimed he didn't favor playing with vocalists, many of the world's finest certainly favored him. He worked with Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, and Sarah Vaughan, and he cited his touring years with Nancy Wilson as one of his favorite gigs.

Although Roker humbly downplayed his sophistication, claiming he was a musician who "just played," he was at ease with complexity and experimentation. His stint with Lee Morgan, as heard on *Live at the Lighthouse* (1970), shows him pushing the straight-ahead envelope while exploring odd meters. And on *Speak Like a*

Child—a classic Herbie Hancock disc that Roker cited as another favorite—he wields his swinging pulse within a progressive framework. Among his other recording credits are titles by Horace Silver, Sonny Rollins, Phil Woods, Tommy Flanagan, Zoot Sims, Bobby Hutcherson, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Roy Ayers, Frank Foster, Herbie Mann, Oscar Peterson, Blue Mitchell, McCoy Tyner, Harold Vick, Cedar Walton, Joe Pass, and Gene Harris.

Throughout the '90s, Roker was a fixture at the Philadelphia nightclub Ortlieb's Jazzhaus (he had relocated to his hometown in the mid-'70s) as a member of Shirley Scott's trio and also as a bandleader. And, as heard on the 2005 album *Revelation*, he continued to swing strong into his mid-seventies with Joe Locke and the Milt Jackson Tribute Band.

Asked in a 1985 *MD* interview if he had a drumming trademark, Roker responded, "Certain drummers will play a certain lick, and you know it's them. But people can *feel* my playing, and they know it's me. That's what I want. A good solo is beautiful, but if people feel good when they leave there, they come back for more." **Jeff Potter**





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SIMMONS[®]

Collective Soul's Johnny Rabb

GEARING UP ON STAGE
AND UP CLOSE

Interview and photos by Sayre Berman



Drums:

Mapex Saturn V in custom white finish

A. 5.5x14 snare

B. 5.5x13 snare

C. 10" Johnny Rabb UFO snare

D. 9x12 tom

E. 16x16 floor tom

F. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals:

1. 15" Byzance Traditional Medium hi-hats

2. 17" Byzance Brilliant Medium-Thin crash

3. 20" Byzance Dark ride

4. 18" HCS China with 16" Classics Custom

Trash crash on top

5. 20" MB20 Heavy crash

6. 10" Candela Percussion splash

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX multi-pad and BT-1 trigger pad

Hardware:

Mapex Falcon series double pedal, hi-hat, and stands and T750A throne

Percussion: Meinl Slaptop cajon

Sticks: Johnny Rabb 5B Straightneck model

Heads: Remo Coated Ambassador snare batters, Clear Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador resonants, Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and custom Drumstatic LED logo head on front

Miscellaneous: ProLogix Ostinato signature practice pad, Maxonix Zero-G stick holder, Great Leather stick bag

Whether he's developing new drumsticks, cymbal combinations, or electronic instruments, Johnny Rabb, who's currently playing with the platinum-selling rock band Collective Soul, likes to remain on the cutting edge of innovation. "I had just graduated from Berklee and moved to Nashville," Rabb says when asked about his first venture into product design. "I was waiting tables at Red Lobster, when suddenly this stick idea came to me. I drew it out on a napkin, and in that instant the RhythmSaw was born."

The RhythmSaw is a drumstick with teeth-like ridges in the middle. When scraped along drum rims or other surfaces, these teeth allow a drummer to create unique sounds. "I wanted to be able to make sounds similar to a DJ scratching records," Rabb explains. "I had a prototype made and then created new playing techniques. The possibilities are endless, and once you start adding these elements to full grooves, a new musical vocabulary is born."

Rabb has a knack for converting what's in his head into real-life, playable gear. "Meinl was always cool about considering my ideas," he says. "I showed them a concept that I developed by using a combination of other cymbals that already existed. I wanted a cymbal that would do more than just crash or ride. I was focused on replicating the sounds of drum 'n' bass, house, and other electronic music. So we developed the Safari ride, which comprises a small splash that sits on top of a flat ride. This combination produces a trashy, staccato sound with a decay that can be

controlled by the amount of tension applied to the wing nut."

Rabb was also responsible for Meinl's Generation-X Drumbal. "It's a splashy cymbal with waved edges and a handle," he says. "Its versatility has exceeded my expectations. I can press it down on the snare to create a vacuum-type clap, or I can hit it for a white-noise sound."

For electronics, Rabb is exploring some new ideas. "I had an opportunity to work with NFUZD," he says. "Their pads easily convert an acoustic drumset into an electronic kit. The NSPIRE module comes with preset kits, but they encourage users to utilize the many choices of drum software libraries. The pads can fit on any drum in an instant. Simply press them on like a food container lid. I like the simplicity of their concept, and the open platform is intriguing to me because I have plans to create my own library of sounds. NFUZD is distributed by KHS, the U.S. distributor of Mapex, and that's what prompted me to check out their drums. I'm impressed with the consistency of Mapex drums and the quality of the hardware. I also love the support I get from their team when I'm on the road with Collective Soul."

While Rabb continues to develop his NFUZD setup for clinics and other events, the electronics he uses with Collective Soul are relatively simple. "On the last Collective Soul tour, I used a Roland SPD-SX pad to trigger in real time," he says. "I'm able to control intros, solo sections, loops, and keyboard parts. But we don't play to any tracks, which I love."



5

4

3

6

E

F

D

A

2

1

C

B

Embellished Jazz Time

Pushing Beyond the Standard Ride Pattern

by Joel Rothman

In this lesson we'll explore embellished jazz phrases between the ride cymbal and snare. First let's look at a standard jazz ride pattern.

1

While the ride hand plays the previous pattern, comping figures are often played on the snare using 8th-note-triplet partials. The following patterns demonstrate some possibilities. While practicing the exercises in this lesson, play the hi-hat foot on beats 2 and 4, and experiment with any bass drum figure that you feel is appropriate.

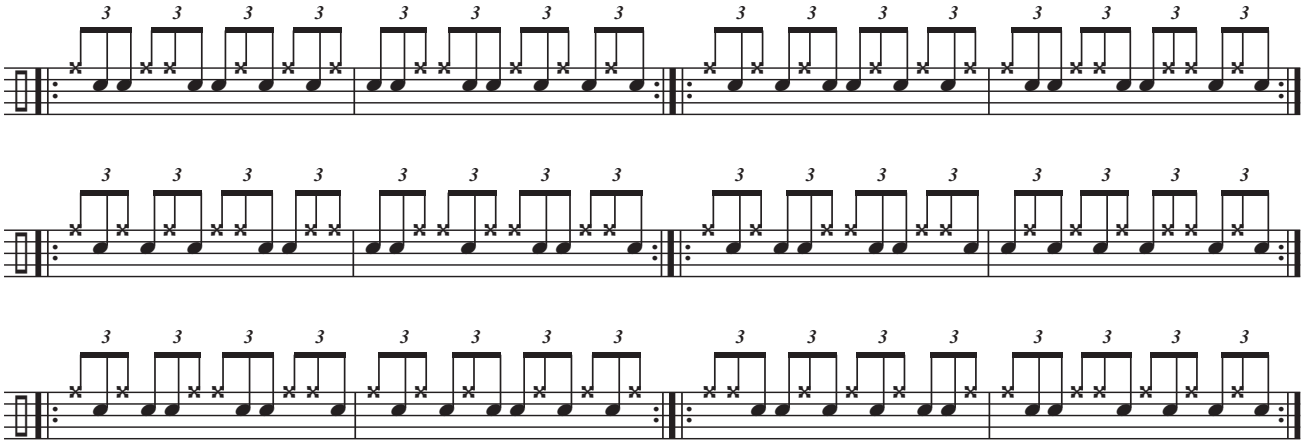
2

Let's think imaginatively about the previous examples by integrating evolving triplet figures while avoiding a consistent ride pattern. This results in a more exciting and complex combination of 8th-note triplets between the ride and snare and produces a rounded sound. The interplay between the snare and cymbal is linear, meaning two voices aren't played together at the same time. However, there's nothing to stop you from playing both surfaces in unison. Make these ideas your own by adjusting the concept in whatever ways you like. These exercises represent only a handful of possibilities. Practice them at moderate tempos.

3

Once you're comfortable with the previous examples, group two or more of the figures into longer phrases. By combining the exercises, the ride pattern becomes more difficult to discern. Feel free to drop out some of the notes, accent others, or incorporate ghost strokes as you see fit. Also, try combining them into four-bar phrases or create your own combinations. Have fun!

4



Joel Rothman is the author of nearly 100 drum and percussion books, which sell worldwide through his company, JR Publications. For more info, visit joelrothman.com.



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1,000 Ways to Practice a Single Page

Part 8: Paradiddle Applications

by Libor Hadrava



This month we'll play a paradiddle ostinato and explore several different approaches and orchestration ideas while interpreting a single page of rhythm. Here's the rhythm we'll be using in this lesson.

1

Play continuous 16th notes on the snare using a paradiddle sticking while reading the written rhythms on the bass drum. For now, avoid accenting the paradiddles.

2

Once you're comfortable with Exercise 2, add an accent pattern to the paradiddle ostinato. Here's an example with an accent on every second note of the paradiddle. Practice accenting the first, third, and fourth notes as well.

3

Now let's play the paradiddle ostinato with the right hand on the hi-hat and left hand on the snare. Again, experiment with accents. In the following example, we'll accent the first note of each paradiddle.

4

You can combine both of the previous accent variations into a one-bar paradiddle ostinato by accenting the first note on beats 1 and 2 and the second note on beats 3 and 4.

5

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

For another variation, move your right hand to the ride and your left to the hi-hat. Play any right-hand accents on the floor tom and any left-hand accents on the snare. Here's an example with accents placed on the first note of each paradiddle.

6

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

And here's an example with accents on the second note of each paradiddle.

7

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

You can also combine the accents on the first and second paradiddle partials. Experiment with other variations—there are plenty to explore.

8

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

Strictly Technique

In this next example, move the paradiddle to the feet while reading the rhythms in Exercise 1 with the hands.

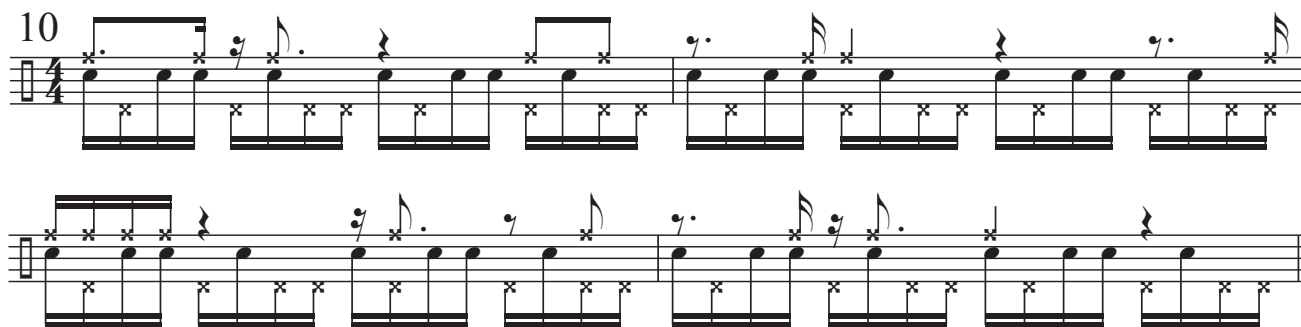
9



Exercise 9 consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The top staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including rests. The bottom staff contains a paradiddle ostinato pattern, represented by 'x' marks on a double-line staff, indicating a specific rhythmic sequence.

The paradiddle ostinato can be played between any two limbs. Exercise 10 splits the pattern between the left hand and left foot. Try reading Exercise 1 with the right hand on the ride cymbal or any other voice you prefer. Then experiment with other limb combinations.

10



Exercise 10 follows the same format as Exercise 9, with a melodic line on the top staff and a paradiddle ostinato on the bottom staff. The ostinato pattern is different from Exercise 9, reflecting the instruction to split the pattern between the left hand and left foot.

Libor Hadrava is the author of the book *In-Depth Rhythm Studies: Advanced Metronome Functions*. He also plays with Boston metal band Nascent and is an endorsing artist for Evans, Vater, Dream, Pearl, and Ultimate Ears. For more info, visit liborhadrava.com.



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Faux Double Bass Drumming

Ten Single-Pedal Variations

by Matt Starr

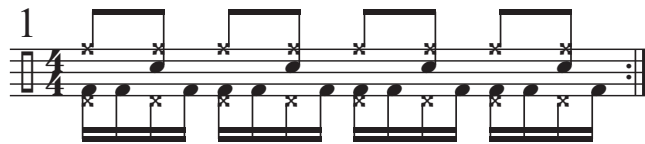
I grew up in the '80s, as the double bass pedal rose in popularity, and it was a game-changer. Drummers didn't have to buy, store, or transport two bass drums to play double bass anymore. I had a friend back then who could play anything with his feet—doubles, paradiddles, and more. I sought to differentiate myself from him and other players at the time, so I decided to play a single pedal exclusively.

There were a few guys, including Jimmy D'Anda (BulletBoys), Clive Burr (Iron Maiden), and Troy Lucketta (Tesla), who were playing single kick, but many of the records I listened to included double bass. This presented a challenge: How do I play along to these songs as a single-pedal drummer? I stumbled onto some unique solutions for mimicking double bass that I'd like to present in this lesson.

Playing double bass licks on a single pedal can require exceptional speed. To play fast doubles, try skipping or sliding your foot on the pedal. Play the first note with your foot placed a little farther down on the pedal, and slide up an inch or so to play the second hit.

To practice speed on a single pedal, I used to use Ted Reed's book *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. I would play the written rhythms with my right foot while keeping steady quarters or 8th notes with the hi-hat pedal. This routine helped my reading skills as well as my foot speed. I'd practice each line until I could play it ten times in a row without making a mistake.

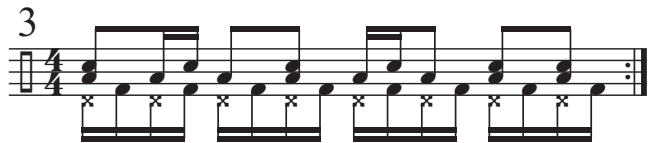
I came upon this first groove after trying to play along to the Mötley Crüe song "Red Hot." I realized that if I left out the kick when I hit the snare, listeners couldn't really tell the difference. Since discovering this pattern, I've used it many times on songs that require 16th-note double bass. Play the hi-hat with your foot to balance the lower half of your body.



The Cult song "Bad Fun" inspired this next groove. When I first listened to this track, I thought I heard double bass in the intro and the chorus. But then I noticed that there weren't any cymbals in the pattern, and I realized that drummer Les Warner was splitting the double bass part between the floor tom and the single bass drum pedal. You can put a pretty funky swing into this pattern. The hi-hat foot and floor tom anchors the groove. If you want to crash on beat 1, hit the cymbal with your left hand while playing the floor tom underneath.



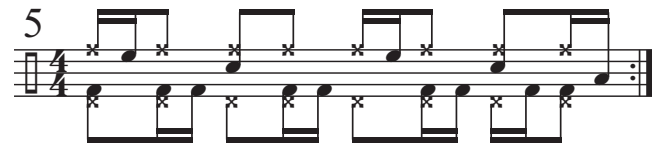
Try playing a crash on beat 4 and the "&" of 4 instead of the floor tom at the end of this variation.



Here's a single-pedal workaround for a standard double-bass lick. Try using the rack tom instead of the floor tom for a more aggressive sound, à la Rough Cutt drummer Dave Alford.



This is my version of the groove for Love/Hate's song "Tranquilizer," which I had the opportunity to play with the band in 2011. The group's original drummer, Joey Gold, had a wild Keith Moon-type approach. Try playing the rack and floor tom notes on the snare for more excitement.



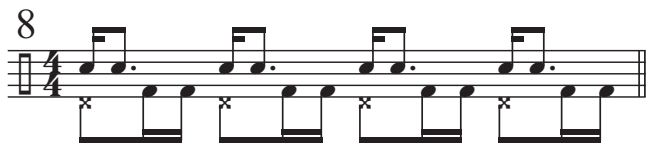
This groove was inspired by Steve Smith's solo on Journey's *Captured: Live*. This example has a 6/8 feel. Again, playing the hi-hat foot throughout the beat adds stability to the groove. For a variation, try moving the left hand between the rack tom and floor tom.



Here's a very powerful Cozy Powell-style lick that you can play with the previous example.



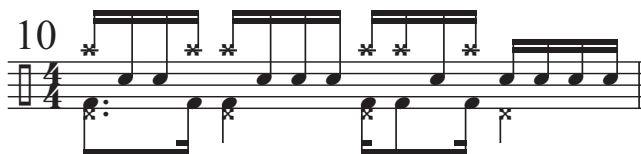
Classic double-bass quads can be played on a single pedal using the skipping technique described previously.



Now add four consecutive notes and notice how the pulse of the fill flips. Move your hands to various drums. Also, try leading with either hand for more orchestration options.



Terry Bozzio's performance on Missing Persons' *Spring Session M* was very inspiring to me. Here's a Bozzio-type fill, which is a more sophisticated version of Exercises 8 and 9.



Hopefully these exercises get you thinking about fills and grooves in a different light. Some great single-pedal drummers to check out are Vinny Appice, on any of the records he made with Dio; Jimmy D'Anda, on the BulletBoys' self-titled debut; Clive Burr, on Iron Maiden's *The Number of the Beast* (especially "Gangland"); Jack Irons, on the Red Hot Chili Peppers' *The Uplift Mofo Party Plan*; and, of course, everything by John Bonham.



Matt Starr is the current touring drummer with Mr. Big. He's played with Ace Frehley (Kiss) and Joe Lynn Turner (Rainbow), among others, and is an active producer and career coach.



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The Importance of the Offbeat

Tracing Its Use in Rock, Pop, and Jazz

by Peter Erskine

Different styles of music often share much in common, including the same grooves. In this lesson, we'll take a look at offbeats and explore how they've been used in jazz and other genres.

Often when teaching jazz, I emphasize the importance of the "&" of beat 4. If your imagination fails, playing a snare or bass drum on this swung offbeat—which is also the pickup to the following bar's downbeat—is a safe and reliable comping choice. Here's an example.



We hear jazz drumming's founding fathers utilize this rhythmic destination point among their other signature phrases and innovations. For example, Kenny Clarke might elongate the previous figure with an accent on beat 4 of the following bar.



In pop and rock music, the "&" of beat 2 is a structurally important part of many grooves and was commonly used in surf rock. Panama Francis, Gary Chester, Earl Palmer, and Hal Blaine also utilized this idea.



Here's an example from the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand." Note the use of the "&" of both beats 2 and 3.



Is there something we can learn from that rock and pop rhythmic device that we can apply to jazz? Let's first acknowledge that jazz was the popular music of the day during the swing era, and people danced to it as much as they listened to it. While figures that emphasize the "&" of beat 2 are prominent in some songs from that period, such as the Glenn Miller hits "A String of Pearls" and "In the Mood," the rhythm section's playing was pretty much quarter-note based. Here's an excerpt from "A String of Pearls."



And here's an excerpt from "In the Mood."



More modern jazz compositions, including "Killer Joe" and "Ping Pong," employ what's known as the Charleston rhythm, which emphasizes the "&" of beat 2.



Art Blakey, who recorded both of the previous tunes, is one of the few jazz drummers who played a swung surf-rock groove with accents on the "&" of beat 2. An excellent example of this phrasing can be heard on "The Egyptian" from the Jazz Messengers' *Indestructible* album.

Jazz drummer Don Lamond also played this groove, and he would often use it in place of a traditional shuffle.



Peter Erskine is a two-time Grammy Award winner and an *MD* Readers Poll Hall of Famer who's played on over 600 recordings. He is currently a professor at University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, and he teaches an online jazz drumming program at ArtistWorks.com.



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Quintuplet Madness

Superimposing Odd Groupings

by Aaron Edgar



In this article we'll play quintuplets within the space of three 16th notes. This concept can create some unique rhythmic statements, such as subtle hi-hat embellishments or twisted double-bass grooves.

Exercise 1 sets up a framework that places the bass drum on every third 16th note in a measure of 4/4. We'll play alternating 16th notes on the hi-hat and the snare on beat 4.

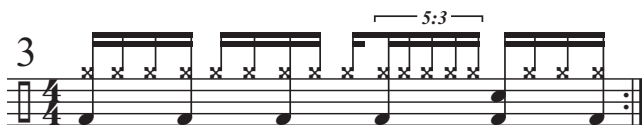
Playing the kick on every third 16th note sets up a four-over-three polyrhythm over the first three beats of the bar. Count the 16th notes out loud, and focus on feeling the quarter-note pulse while keeping the bass drum even.



This next example places five notes over the first three 16th notes of Exercise 1. Try to keep the same flow in the bass drum as you did previously. It should still feel like an even four-over-three polyrhythm, except we're squeezing a quintuplet between the first two bass drum notes. Go slowly, and make the switch between subdivisions precise. Avoid accelerating into the quintuplet and sliding back into the 16th notes. Try to make the rhythms start exactly on each bass drum note while keeping the kick evenly spaced.



Once comfortable with Exercise 2, move the quintuplet to the other 16th-note partials. In this next example, the quintuplet starts on the "e" of beat 3 and resolves on beat 4 on the snare.



In the previous exercises, the quintuplets fit within a single beat. The next two examples stretch the quintuplet over the quarter-note pulse. In Exercise 4, the quintuplet starts on the "ah" of beat 1 and ends on the "&" of beat 2. Focus on the four-over-three polyrhythmic pulse, and try to space five notes evenly between the second and third kick hits.

Make sure not to trick yourself into feeling the 16th notes as triplets. To be able to use these rhythms, you need to feel them comfortably in 4/4.



Exercise 5 places the quintuplet on the "&" of beat 2 and finishes on the "e" of beat 3. Again, focus on the four-over-three pulse.



Alternate between Exercises 2–5 and Exercise 1 to make sure the bass drum pattern sounds identical regardless of the hand pattern. You should be able to clearly perceive the four-over-three polyrhythm in each version. Try to internalize how the five-over-three figure feels starting on each bass drum note.

Now we'll explore more musical grooves based on this concept. Try each of these beats with a solid 16th-note hi-hat pattern before inserting the quintuplets. The goal is to make the kick, snare, and tom phrasings sound identical with or without the quintuplets. Be patient, and work to make the rhythms feel comfortable. If it doesn't feel good, it won't sound good.



Next we'll explore these rhythms with double bass. Play every third 16th note on a stack or China cymbal while playing an aggressive embellishment on beat 4 on the snare. Although the four-over-three polyrhythm fits evenly in a measure of 3/4, staying in 4/4 helps you feel the quarter-note pulse without hearing the stack and bass drum pattern as triplets.

As we did with Exercises 2–5, alternate between playing straight 16th notes on the bass drum and the quintuplet variations. The hand pattern has to feel even regardless of which bass drum rhythm you're playing.



11

12

13

This final example combines the four quintuplet placements into a hypnotic two-bar groove. It's based on a nine-note pattern with quintuplets played over the first three 16th notes of the phrase. Practice this with straight 16th notes on the bass drum first before adding in the quintuplets one at a time.

14

It's important to feel a strong 4/4 pulse in these exercises. The goal is to be able to freely substitute quintuplets in the space of any three 16th notes.



Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. He teaches weekly live lessons on Drumeo.com. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for private lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.



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Drum Design Knowledge

Part 1: Hoops

by Russ Miller

I get many emails about equipment issues. Some are related to what gear to choose for different gigs, some are about why I use certain pieces, and some concern tuning. I've been involved in the design of gear for more than twenty-five years, and in the next few articles I want to clear up some confusion about the function of certain parts of the drumset. This month, I'm discussing the five different types of hoops, and what they're designed to do, so you can determine which would be best for your personal needs.

"The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."
— Audre Lorde (American poet)

Drum Hoop Styles

Each type of hoop has a specific purpose and creates a different sound from the drum. Here's a rundown of the various options.

Triple-flange. This is the most common type of hoop. The term "triple-flange" refers to the number of bends in the frame. The lower bends provide stability, and the outward bend at the top helps improve rimshot and rimclick tones. Triple-flange hoops allow drums to resonate more fully than other types, and they aren't very heavy. The drawback



with these hoops is that they can bend out of round pretty easily. They also don't provide as much attack as die-cast hoops, and they can be harder to tune. Some companies offer thicker 3.0mm triple-flange hoops. Those improve rigidity, but they also mute the drum slightly because of the additional mass. All triple-flange hoops have some resonance, which adds to the overtones in the drum's sound.

Die-cast (aka double-flange). These are single-piece hoops that are cast in molds. They are generally much stronger than triple-flange varieties. They usually weigh more as well, and they won't bend or go out of round over time. Die-cast hoops help with tuning by forcing the drumhead down evenly. The cast-metal design adds attack to rimshots, and the extra weight



and rigidity mutes the drum slightly. Die-cast hoops help the sound project more, especially when playing rimclicks. A die-cast hoop has little to no resonance, so it doesn't add any overtones. Some companies offer die-cast aluminum hoops to minimize weight, but they can be expensive.

Single-flange. This straight hoop helps give the drum a more

open, resonant tone. It also produces a more metallic-sounding rimshot. Single-flange hoops often utilize small claws for mounting, which gives the drum a classic look. They also produce superb rimclicks, but they can lead to more broken sticks if you play a lot of rimshots. (Single-flange hoops are often referred to as "stick choppers" for that reason.)



Inward-flange. These classic-style hoops are triple-flange, but the top flange angles toward the center of the drum instead of outward. The inward flange focuses the sound of the drum downward, which helps control the tone, especially on larger drums. The inward flange also gives rimshots a punchy attack. This type of hoop is commonly used to create a dry sound. They are often called "stick savers" and are found on many vintage drums. (Slingerland, which first introduced inward-flange hoops in 1955, called them Sound Kings.) Mapex recently revised this design with its Sonic Saver hoops, which are 3.0mm thick. Sonor uses a similar inward-flange hoop on its Vintage series.



Wood. Wood hoops have been used since the beginning of drum building. In the early 1990s, Yamaha released a new style of plywood hoops with inset tension-rod holes. These also featured a flattened section to allow drums to be positioned closer together. Wood hoops expand the chamber of the drum shell to create a more open sound and fuller rimclicks. And they won't bend, which makes the drum easier to tune. The downside of wood hoops is that they can dent or crack from hard hits, and they can be expensive to replace.



I hope this discussion clears up some details about choosing the right hoops for your drums. Remember that the goal of experimenting with gear is to make the instrument present your personal voice more effectively. The key is to make well-informed decisions. See you next month.



Russ Miller has recorded and/or performed with Ray Charles, Cher, Nelly Furtado, and the Psychedelic Furs and has played on soundtracks for *The Boondock Saints*, *Rugrats Go Wild*, and *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, among others. For more information, visit russmiller.com.



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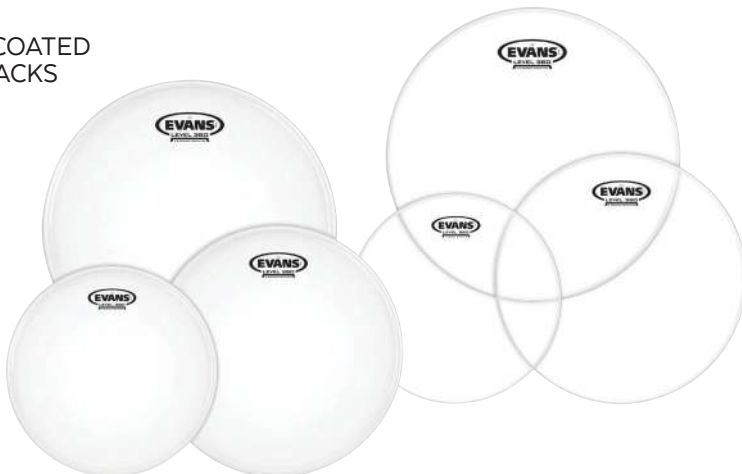
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attack-drumheads.com

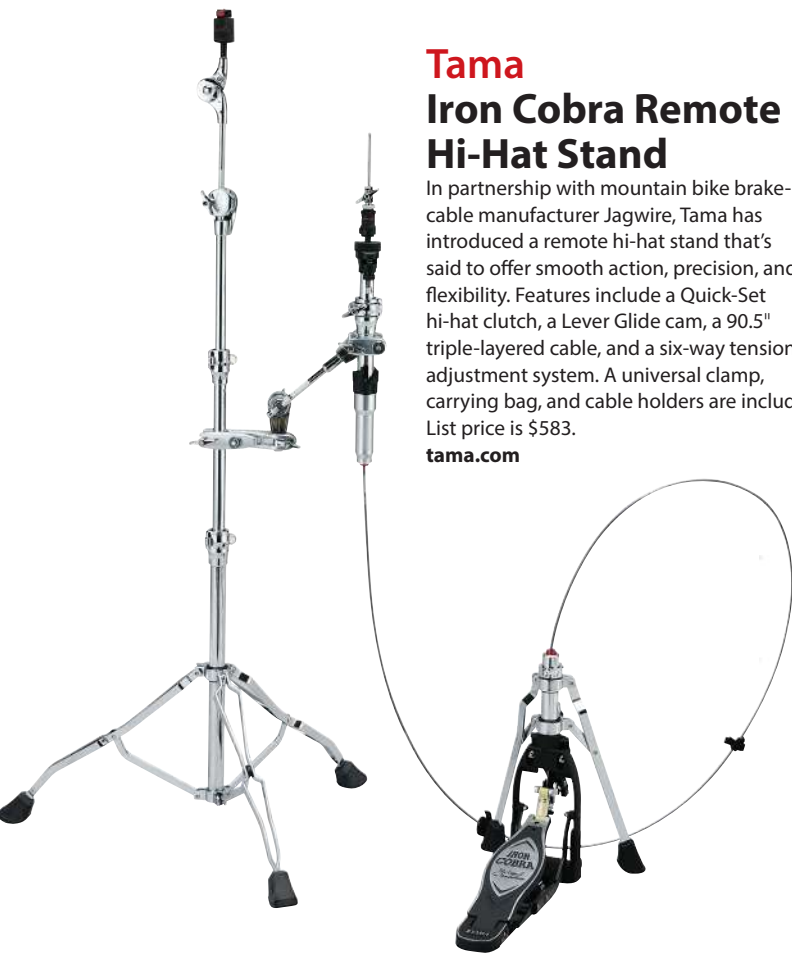


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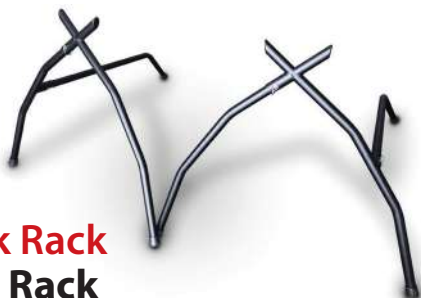


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attackrackusa.com



Steve Maxwell Vintage and Custom Drum Shop

Glendale Heights, Illinois; New York, New York

With a stellar worldwide reputation and first-call regulars, you'd think Steve Maxwell had been in business since the days when the beautiful vintage kits featured in his suburban Chicago and midtown Manhattan locations were brand new. Truth is, he's been in the retail game a relatively short time—since 2001 in Illinois (first in Chicago before settling in the suburbs) and since 2007 in Manhattan. Aided by his wife, his two sons, and some trusted employees with whom he doesn't share a last name, Maxwell has seen his business evolve to include custom drum making and cymbal repurposing. And his responsibilities go beyond owning and operating the two shops and online business. Maxwell joined Craviotto drums as a partner in 2009 and has been "steering the ship," as he puts it, since founder Johnny Craviotto's passing in 2016. Maxwell has also managed the vintage collections of Joe Morello and Charlie Watts.



"I started playing when I was around twelve. I was a jazz drummer at heart. When I got older I studied with Papa Jo Jones for a while. I played in bands through school, then traveled on the road in the '70s when hotels would hire show bands. I moved to Chicago in the mid-'70s and was going to school for music. I said to myself, *I gotta get a real job with a real income*, and I put the music career on the sideline. I spent about thirty-two years running companies that were credit-card-processing businesses, but I always played part time and always had a passion for collecting. When I turned fifty-five, I already had the Chicago store open for a while. So I thought, *Let's start phase two of my career*, and I opened in New York. It's been a fun second phase of a second career.

We're not like a regular pro drum shop. We only carry select lines. And we don't carry everything within the select lines. So we're always looking for differentiators. Some

of that is our reproduction-parts business. We always have these cymbals coming in, really well-made Zildjians and the like from the late '60s and early '70s. But they're just so heavy and clang-y. I thought, *What if we put a lathe in here and we take some of these down?* You can buy them inexpensively, and some of those cymbals turn into masterpieces. We started that up last year in the Illinois store. And we're gradually rolling that out. It's what we call the Genesis by Maxwell line. And we're also testing the waters on doing some re-hammering of some of those older cymbals. It becomes a service that we can offer to customers: 'You got a really lousy, heavy cymbal? Before you punt it, pay us to do the work, and in the end you might have a fantastic cymbal.'

We don't make a huge number of custom drums. We still do a little bit here and there. We're not pretending to be drum manufacturers. We're more a drum assembler. We'll get nice Keller shells, we'll make you a nice little kit—like the nesting kit we did. We can also put an entire set of hardware for a kit in a bongo bag. We do lightweight, small-footprint stuff that guys in the city are thrilled to get because it's easier to transport.

Everybody comes through when they're in town. There's a great scene in both places, but you've got a greater pool of people in the New York area. Jeff Hamilton will come in. For Vinnie Colaiuta's birthday a few years ago, he and I just sat on the fourth floor and played sets back and forth



Steve Maxwell has been a leading dealer of Craviotto drums for many years, and now he's the de facto CEO. "I'll be doing it for the foreseeable future, until we figure out a few other things," Maxwell says. "The passing of the founder doesn't mean the business has to go as well. Johnny's team of people are master craftsmen, but their skill is building those incredible instruments. So I picked up the mantle and donated my services just to keep those guys running and keep things moving."

together for three or four hours, and people would wander in. And you've got the local guys. Kendrick Scott will come in, Kenny Washington.... Steve Jordan is there all the time. He's a huge vintage fan—vintage Rogers and Ludwig. The black Rogers he was using on tour with Robert Cray and Hi Rhythm, and the wine-red ripple Rogers he uses live with John Mayer during the acoustic set, he bought them both from me.

The people buying the more historical, vintage pieces vary from hobbyists to professional musicians to individuals who aren't in any way, shape, or form musicians. They certainly aren't gigging with them. They're collectors. It's usually people who have a really strong connection with wanting to preserve the legacy and the story behind all of this."



Buddy Rich's last endorser road kit from Slingerland, and a Slingerland kit that once belonged to Rufus "Speedy" Jones, are crown jewels of the showroom at Maxwell's Illinois location. "Ninety percent of our business in Illinois is done through our website," Maxwell says. "For walk-in customers we have hours on Fridays and Saturdays. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday we're in there doing photos, videos, sound files, packing, shipping, and re-lathing of cymbals."



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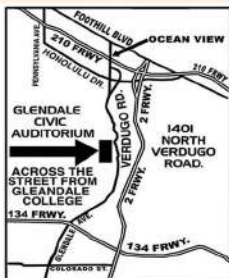


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RECORDINGS

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Three discs of previously unreleased sessions capture jazz giants swung by drumming greats.

It's not uncommon for "unearthed" recordings issued long after an artist's passing to be shoddy affairs. But three recent jazz releases take the high road, offering quality audio with beautifully designed and informative packaging.

The prize nugget among this gold panning is Bill Evans' **Another Time: The Hilversum Concert** (Resonance). A fine addition to the great pianist's catalog, this June 1968 trio session was recorded live before a radio studio audience in the Netherlands. Featuring bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer **JACK DEJOHNETTE**, the performances are sterling.

There's special historical interest for drummers here. DeJohnette's stint with the trio lasted only six months. Until recently, his contributions had been documented on just one Evans disc, the Grammy-winning *At the Montreux Jazz Festival* (Verve). Last year, Resonance Records released the studio recording *Some Other Time: The Lost Session From the Black Forest*, featuring the same trio. This new live companion disc—recorded only two days following that studio date—offers a more spontaneous perspective.

It's intriguing to hear DeJohnette's impact on the classic trio, favoring a more aggressive approach than previous drummers. On *The Hilversum Concert's* cooking opener, "You're Gonna Hear From Me," Jack frequently takes charge; suggesting direction, he prods Evans and alternates between laying it down and freely opening things up. And on "Nardis," he seizes the day with a four-minute-plus solo, building a thrilling free-time mini-suite that leaves the distinctive DJ stamp on the concert.

Another laudable Resonance release is **Smokin' in Seattle: Live at the Penthouse** by the Wynton Kelly Trio and Wes Montgomery. Taken from a nightclub radio broadcast, it's an upbeat, seriously swinging affair. Pianist Kelly and guitarist Montgomery were an ideal matchup, as immortalized on the 1965 classic *Smokin' at the Half Note* (Verve), recorded seven months before this April 1966 Seattle date. The pair—who phrase as one—deliver their joyful swing with a bluesy edge. And their rhythm mates, legendary drummer **JIMMY COBB** and new bassist Ron

McClure, are deep in that same groove.

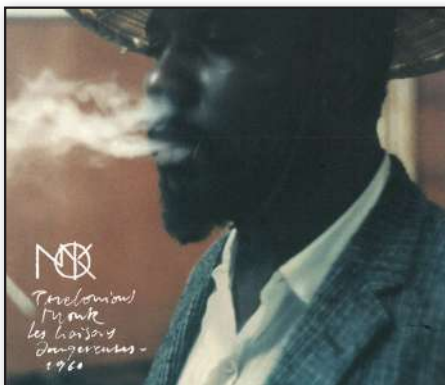
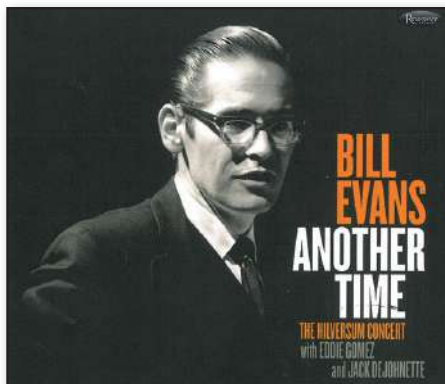
Cobb wields his iconic, straight-ahead, mile-wide cymbal ride, hitting cracking accents in all the right places. Check out the Montgomery-penned blazer "Jingles," where Cobb transports the quartet to its popping edge. It's all good feel and taste with this kit master.

Not as substantial but still historically significant is **Thelonious Monk's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses 1960*** (Sam/Saga). The two-CD set features Monk's sole soundtrack venture from the controversial French film directed by Roger Vadim. Included is the complete thirty minutes of film music plus outtakes, all previously unreleased on disc.

Pianist Monk was known for his musical genius but certainly not for reliability: He arrived at the film session with no new material or any regard for specified cue lengths. Instead, he blew through repertoire tunes, mostly culled from his Riverside LPs. On the Monk-o-scale, it's a middling effort. He did, however, bring top-flight sidemen, including tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Sam Jones, and swing master **ART TAYLOR**. French tenor saxophonist Barney Wilen also guests admirably on several tracks.

The recording's capture of Taylor's drumming with Monk is a plus, as the pair has a limited recorded output together. On this set, the drummer's percolating swing power is especially strong on "Rhythm-a-Ning." Throughout the date, Taylor determinedly swings with lean authority, leaving plenty of space for Monk to freely explore his quirky, asymmetric piano phrasings.

The outtakes are primarily of interest to completists. Yet even in that context there is one downright head-scratcher. A "making of" track of the tune "Light Blue" is torturous for casual listeners and confounding for fans. Monk dictates to Taylor an oddly stark, mechanical, repeated six-note drum part. Perhaps intended to be ultra-quirky, the part is just plain bonkers. A dark cloud of frustration gathers—maybe because of Taylor's misunderstanding of the pattern, or because he's peeved ("The bass drum starts on the '&' of 1!" Monk stresses repeatedly). The awkward ordeal stretches over fourteen minutes. Wherever the mystery lies, the inclusion of the track is questionable on multiple levels. Most jazz fans can pass on this, but Monk and Taylor devotees will find much for the digging. **Jeff Potter**



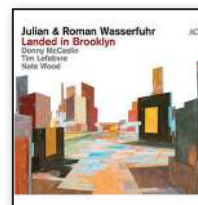
Julian & Roman Wasserfuhr *Landed in Brooklyn*
Kneebody *Anti-Hero*
Dan Tepfer Trio *Eleven Cages*

With **NATE WOOD** behind the kit, the “rules” of jazz are out the window, and it’s a glorious thing.

The brothers Wasserfuhr (Julian on trumpet and Roman on piano) employ a slew of hot sidemen on their latest album of acoustic fusion, including saxophonist Donny McCaslin and bassist Tim Lefebvre. Nate Wood grooves like mad on “Tutto,” laying back just enough to make things flow before moving to his ride beautifully. Check out Wood’s take on a cover of Sting’s “Seven Days,” which finds the drummer respecting Vinnie Colaiuta’s original vibe but owning the odd-time pulse with his own involved cymbal work and superb touch. A couple of swingers also show that these players can spang-a-lang with the best of them.

Wood sounds at home in Kneebody, a collective that’s the very definition of contemporary electric jazz. That group’s latest, *Anti-Hero*, allows Wood to rock out often but also play the most intricate rhythms while always supporting the song structure. “Drum Battle” skips from a spacious hip-hop pattern to an aggressive odd-time backbeat section during which Wood switches his ride sources and snares at will. The solo over the vamp is a study in controlled phrasing and killer accents.

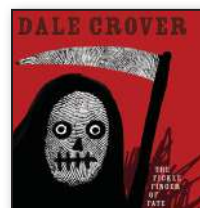
Pianist Dan Tepfer’s *Eleven Cages* is broadly acoustic piano trio fare, but it’s no less adventurous. Along with upright bassist Thomas Morgan, Wood coaxes the mystery out of Tepfer’s dark compositions with fresh ideas. Dig the off-kilter punctuations in the middle of “547,” with Wood working the dynamic spectrum between his ride, snare, and toms, and the way he dresses the insistent propulsion of “Roadrunner” with snare ghosting and technical smoothness. Wood has long been a player to watch, but now he’s a player to study. **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Dale Crover *The Fickle Finger of Fate*

The heaviest drummer on earth shows his lighter side.

Playing in the mad-science Melvins for more than three decades, Dale Crover has seen his fair share of studio experimentation. But his success with the limited edition 2016 twelve-sided-vinyl solo release *Skins*—full of short, strange pieces he calls “drum haikus”—encouraged him to keep making his own music. Now he’s released his first full-length solo album. *The Fickle Finger of Fate*, on which Crover supplies most of the instruments and vocals, pulls some tracks right from *Skins* and expands on others, alternating these psychedelic drum showcases with longer, more pop-oriented verse/chorus-type songs. One of the album’s main thrills is its constant shifts in sound and style. Along with coproducer Toshi Kasai, who’s a longtime Melvins conspirator, Crover explores drum tones from tight and dry to big and resonant. Sometimes drums are manipulated sonically to the point where they don’t sound like drums, and that’s a lot of fun. It’s no surprise that you can hear the Melvins at times in Crover’s solo material, but *Fickle Finger* also shows a fondness for the straightforward charms of a good, simple song. (Joyful Noise) **Michael Parillo**

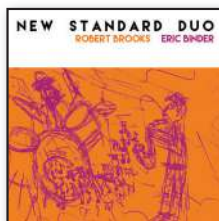


New Standard Duo *New Standard Duo*

This drums-and-sax duo does its best to fill in the space and the imagination.

Inspired by John Coltrane’s sax/drums duet album with Rashied Ali, *Interstellar Space*, this disc from a pairing of University of Illinois doctoral students glides along similar terrain in instrumentation only. Not to say that the standards cut by tenor saxophonist Robert Brooks and drummer **ERIC BINDER** aren’t inspired. Binder’s solo in 7/8 on “Night and Day” has space and melody, and “Resolution” is swinging and urgent, with some nice cymbal and tom work. The arrangements have thought in them, and Brooks and Binder are clearly listening to each other, though at times it simply sounds as if there’s a bass missing. *Interstellar Space* was a conversation on the fringes, with Trane fully “out” and Ali’s rumbling chatter meeting the saxophonist in the land of the “free” (jazz). Here, the music is so straight-ahead that one’s ear occasionally yearns for an anchor. But if extended drum solos and strong interplay are your thing, check out Binder’s solid playing. (Ropeadope)

Ilya Stemkovsky



TAKING THE REINS

MEM3 *Circles*

On its second album, this piano-based trio balances tunefulness with technique.

MEM3’s *Circles* finds a trio elaborating on its knack for incorporating an array of diverse influences into modern jazz. While the melodic textures would be at home in a variety of contexts, **ERNESTO CERVINI**’s drumming here is especially noteworthy for its ability to blur the lines between swung jazz pattern and chill backbeat, creating a pulse that draws as much from experimental electronic music as from traditional jazz drumming. Album opener “Central” finds Cervini highlighting the myriad tonal possibilities of delicate snare brushwork before exploding into a propulsive, shoe-gazing rock groove without ever picking up sticks. On “Shire Song,” an impressively manic snare-ride pattern plays against moody piano improvisations to great effect. All in all, *Circles* proves an interesting playground for the trio’s seemingly limitless ability to blend the tuneful with the technically impressive. (mem3.com)

Keaton Lamle



Cuban Rhythms for Percussion and Drumset: The Essentials by Aldo Mazza

by Stephen Bidwell

Aldo Mazza is best known through his work as a clinician and founder of the KoSA workshops, and as a longtime member of the Canadian ensemble Répercussion. Born in Italy and raised in

Canada, Mazza has called Montreal home for some time, but performing and teaching has led him all over. He has made Cuban music a particular focus, traveling to Cuba and leading study programs there

several times a year since 2001. His new method book/video package is a concise resource for Cuban rhythms as he learned them from the masters.

Cuban Rhythms for Percussion and Drumset covers the country's most popular dances, and is focused around an understanding of clave and conga technique from which the pulse in Cuban music is derived. "The way I designed the book and the way I teach my students," Mazza explains, "is to first understand the idea of clave. Once that is understood, the next thing, for any musician, is to learn basic technique of the conga, just to know where it is coming from and why. Changuito used to call it 'la mano secreta,' the secret left hand. Once that is understood, all musicians have to know the rhythms and what the percussion does."

Mazza believes that the clave is a more universal concept than some might initially think. "Whatever melody you are singing or composing," he explains, "that tells you what the clave is, and not just in Cuban music. In Cuban music it's of course extremely strong. In Brazilian music it's also strong—not *as* strong, but it's there. Most other music—pop, rock—there's a clave in there as well, and it all has to do with oral architecture. In music composition you have themes, question and response, tension and release—the basic building blocks for a melody, and that is the clave. The clave is part of the melody."

The video portion of *Cuban Rhythms* focuses on conga technique, and Mazza believes that after understanding the basics of the instrument, learning other parts in a Cuban ensemble should be simple. "One of the most famous errors in studying congas in North America," he says, "is playing heel-toe—it's *palm*-toe. That basic action is fundamental. This idea is really essential, but it's the most complicated one to have under your belt. Once you get that, though, the rest comes a lot easier."

The book presents Cuban rhythms in progressive order of difficulty and distills them to the essentials. "It is what it is, and that's *the music*," Mazza says. "Things like

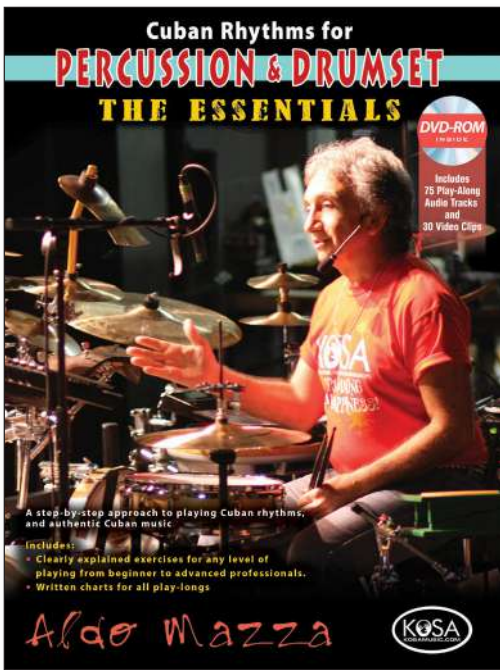
"These sticks are an extension of me. They are an essential element of any encounter I have with drums, cymbals, songs, stage, sweat, energy, audience... the list is endless! My musical experience on all fronts depends on these drumsticks."

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In tackling the mozambique, for example, the congas are written first with only the clave, then the bell is added, and then two bombo—or folkloric Cuban bass drum—parts complete the ensemble. The drumset prep exercises begin with a tom and snare pattern, then the bell is added, followed by a full-kit pattern for either a 3:2 or 2:3 clave. For some of the rhythms (son montuno, mambo, salsa) Mazza includes drumset parts that work with a bongo, conga, or timbale player so as not to double parts.

The patterns are mapped out simply enough that a proficient reader could work through *Cuban Rhythms* as a traditional method book. But to communicate authentic feels, seventy-five play-along tracks are included on the DVD. For the rhythms with full ensemble tracks, there's a track each for the verse and chorus pattern, and a track with an AB form alternating between the two. Full-band play-alongs include charts by Giraldo Piloto of the Cuban timba group Klimax, with full written parts for bongo, conga, and drumset with timbales.

Study Suggestions

Mazza's suggested approach for drumset players is to first learn all the ensemble parts to each rhythm, followed by independence exercises, then eventual integration into full drumset patterns. "The second step for the drumset player [is to work through] the preparatory exercises, to be able to attack and play these rhythms effectively," Mazza explains. "They're independence exercises, very similar to, if you're going to play jazz, you work with the [Jim] Chapin book or *Syncopation* to understand the medium. The third step is, having learned the traditional rhythm, then the independence exercises, the drumset player takes all those things and adapts them to the drumset. Now it makes sense. You're not learning a rhythm—you're working *in the concept*. If it's approached like that, you can learn it quickly, and it opens up a better way to play that music more comfortably."

Mazza has high hopes for the future, envisioning the book becoming part of Cuban school curriculums. "I think *Cuban Rhythms* will become a new reference point," he says, "and that others will discard the old incorrect language and way of teaching and learning. I feel it's part of a solution in learning this music in a more structured way."

the cha-cha-cha would be quite easy to get together, but there are different levels. For instance, some of the mozambique and conga comparsa ideas for the drumset are quite advanced, but they're easily put together because we do it step by step."

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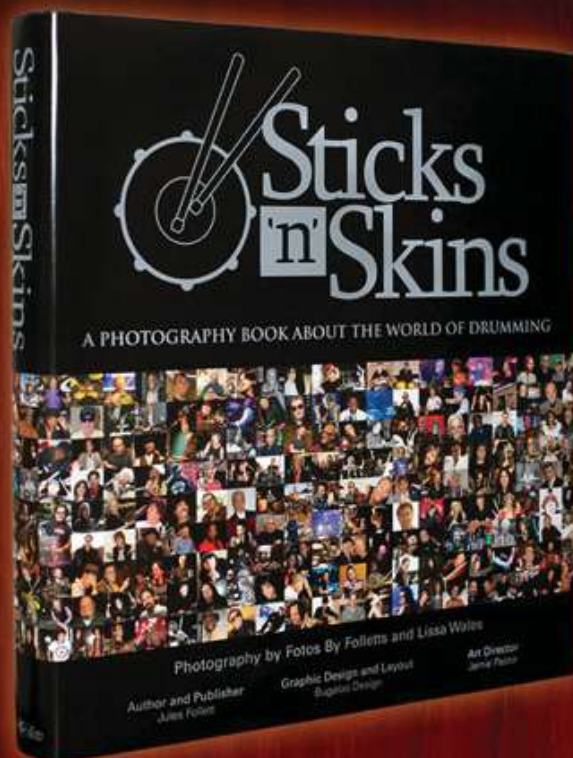
Since 2012, drummers David Parks and Tom Hurst, along with guitarist Chris Nix, have hosted the biannual Nashville Drummers Jam benefit concert. The event began as a one-off show to raise money for King's X drummer Jerry Gaskill after he suffered a debilitating heart attack. Following on the success of the first benefit, Parks, Hurst, and Nix held NDJ shows for other musicians in need. For each edition, the organizers would dedicate the concert to an accomplished drummer—such as Jeff Porcaro, Stewart Copeland, or Alex Van Halen—and create a set list around that player's music. This past May 15, the tenth edition of the event paid homage to the late funk pioneer and James Brown alumnus Clyde Stubblefield, at Mercy Lounge's Cannery Ballroom in Nashville.

Seventeen pairs of drummers took the stage over the course of the evening—a welcome performance setting for Keith Urban sticksman Seth Rausch, who played James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's Man's World" with Easton Corbin's drummer, Gregg Lohman. "Drummers don't typically get to have the experience of playing together," Rausch said before the performance. "It's a slow 6/8 tune, and we found a great live version that we tried to replicate. It's a straight-ahead groove, but we'll probably sneak in some ghost notes."

Tyler Farr's Mark Poiesz and Craig Morgan's Russ Whitman played Brown's "Get on the Good Foot," which pushed both drummers out of their comfort zone. "I'm excited about playing this song with Russ, because it's one of the classics," Poiesz said. "Folks might think we have a heavy touch, so it'll be fun to demonstrate our ability to play something a little bit crispier. This style has a lot more snap, crackle, and pop, and a lot more relentless head bobbing. It's pocket the whole way through."

One of the more anticipated pairings of the show was Korn's Ray Luzier and Steven Tyler's Sarah Tomek, who teamed up to play "Soul Power." "It isn't one of Brown's giant hits," Luzier told *MD*, "but all the grooves are really hip and funky. Clyde was one of the funkier drummers on the planet—and I always felt like we had a lot in common. I'd heard that James was really demanding and tough to work with, and I worked with David Lee Roth for eight years, who was very demanding. With Roth, you had to constantly be on alert. If he dropped his finger





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**Box**

you had to immediately drop your volume. Brown did a lot of that as well, and I'll be envisioning James staring and yelling at me while I play." [laughs]

Among the show highlights, Brothers Osborne's Adam Box played Brown's "Mother Popcorn" with Little Big Town's Hubert Payne. "I wasn't familiar with the song when Hubert suggested I join him," Box said. "But when I listened to it, I realized that the groove is my go-to when I sit down at a kit. If I'm demoing drums at a shop or anything like that, this is the groove I play. So this song felt very natural for me."

Reflecting on his standout performance of Brown's "Funky Drummer" with Chase Rice's Jeremy Roberson, Marcus Finnie (Keb Mo, Taj Mahal) explained how the pair considered tackling the song. "At first I thought we'd just play the tune and keep it funky," Finnie said. "But once I saw the liberties that other performers were taking, we decided to really go for it." The two played off each other while building the groove, before seizing the audience's attention with a series of improvised fours. "Marcus definitely started it," Roberson said with a laugh after they played. "He laid down this funky groove with his own twist, and then I came back with a similar groove with my own thing on it. We were building blocks with no agenda—having a conversation back and forth on the drums." Finnie clearly enjoyed himself immensely. "We should go all out for any drummer we pay homage to," he said. "And I believe we all did just that!"

Other drummers performing at the event included Ben Sesar (Brad Paisley), Nick Buda (Taylor Swift), Chris McHugh (studio), Matt Billingslea (Taylor Swift), Kent Slucher (Luke Bryan), Lester Estelle (Kelly Clarkson), Rich Redmond (Jason Aldean), Angela Lese (the Dead Deads), and Caleb Gilbreath (Brett Eldredge). Funds raised from the event went toward purchasing a headstone for Stubblefield.

Story and photos by Sayre Berman

**Tomek****Rausch**

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According to Deniston, the toms were made in 1967, while the bass drum was completed in 1968. The drummer finished the setup with a matching 1962 Ludwig snare that he acquired separately. "The drums are in mint condition, with no fade or any of the usual issues that drums of this era have," Deniston says. "The cymbals are mostly Avedis Zildjians from the 1960s and '70s, along with a modern Zildjian K Dark crash." For his throne, Deniston combined a SoundSeat top with a Pearl base, and DrumART provided the band-logo resonant bass drum head.

"This beautiful kit is a blast to play and has that great, recognizable Ludwig bark," Deniston says. "And it never fails to draw plenty of comments at our gigs. I got really lucky with this one!"



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