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November 2011

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**PINK FLOYD'S**

# NICK MASON

**ON DARK SIDE, WISH YOU WERE HERE, THE WALL, AND MORE**

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At present, I am using a Gretsch kit for recording and I have been using a set of 8 tunable Rototoms and a pair of small electric drums.

DISCOGRAPHY:

-THE PIPER AT THE GATES OF DAWN

Pink Floyd (Columbia)

-A SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Pink Floyd (Columbia)

-UMMAGUMMA

Pink Floyd (EMI-Harvest)

-ATOM HEART MOTHER

Pink Floyd (EMI-Harvest)

-RELICS

Pink Floyd (Starline)

-MEDDLE

Pink Floyd (EMI-Harvest)

-DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

Pink Floyd (EMI-Harvest)

-OBSCURED BY CLOUDS

Pink Floyd (EMI-Harvest)

-MORE

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-ZABRISKIE POINT

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Pink Floyd (MGM)

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FO 602

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E 20" Ride, 2002

F 36" Symphony Gong

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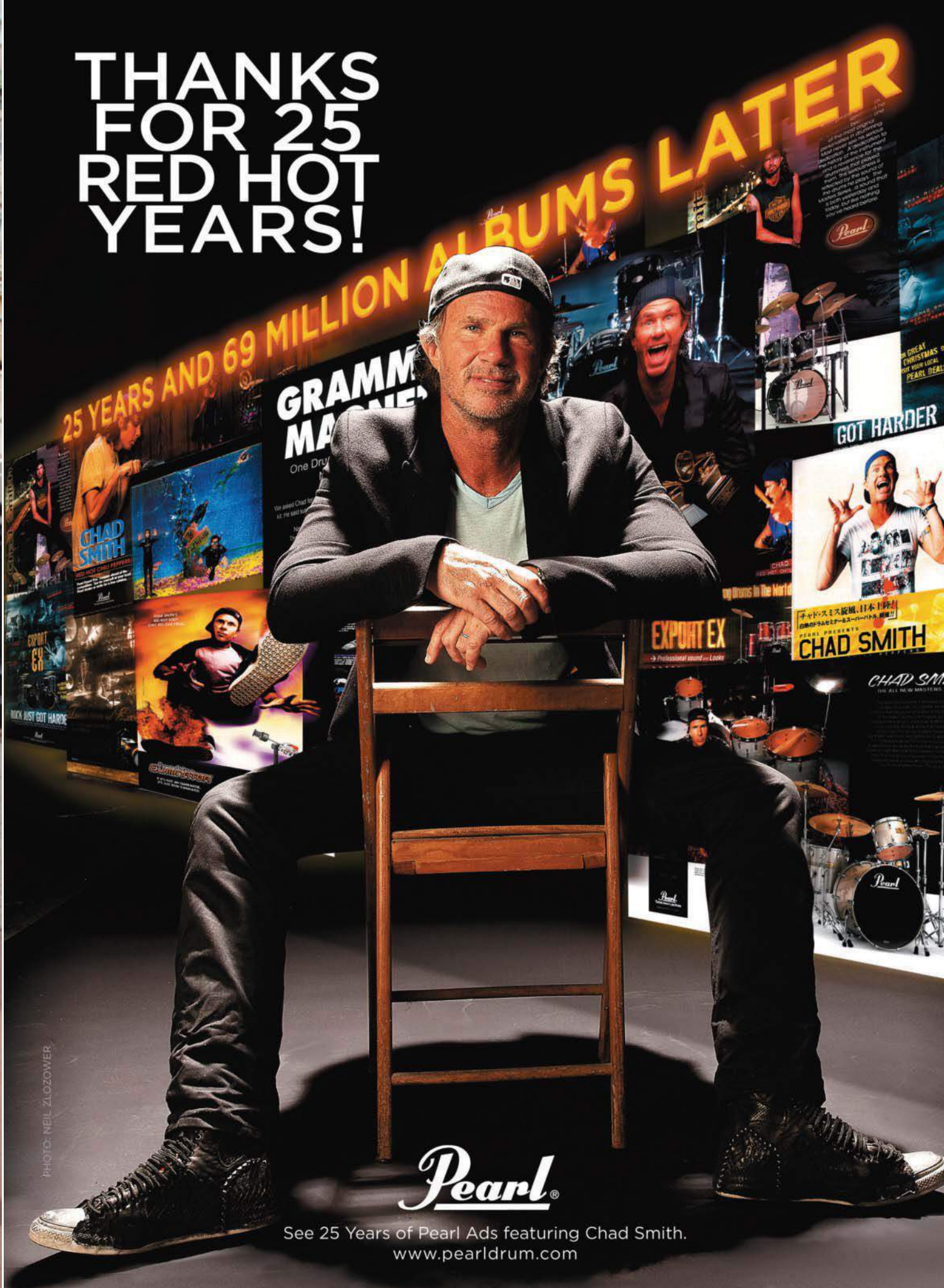
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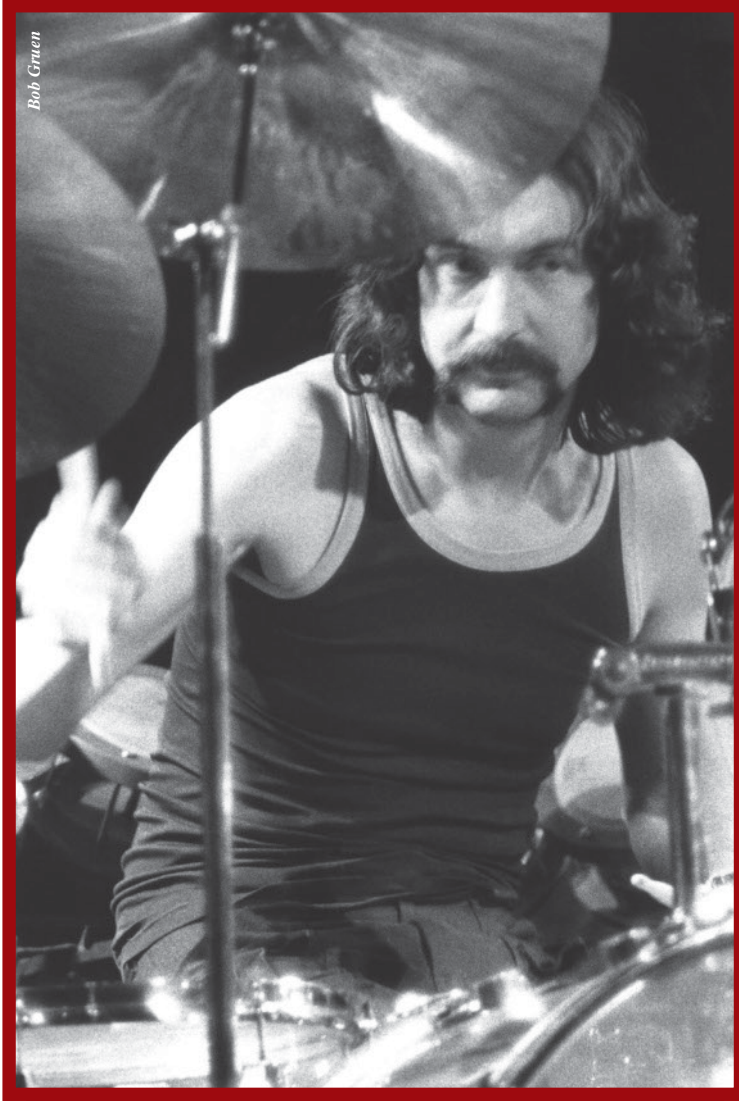
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# C O N T E N T S

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Ash Newell



## 32 JOHN FRED YOUNG

Black Stone Cherry's super-animated sticksman isn't above pushing his playing over the top to add fuel to the band's already fiery shows.

by Rick Mattingly

Kevin Packard



## 56 JAY LANE

More than two decades ago, he helped Primus find its sea legs. He made the difficult choice to move on, and kept honing his craft in funk, jazz, hip-hop, rock, and jam bands. In a rare example of second chances, the Primus ship circled back Jay's way, and he's at the wheel again, on the ride of his life—earning and owning the gig down to the last tickle of the hi-hats.

by Michael Parillo

Paul La Rata



## 62 BARRY ALTSCHUL

The differences between straight-ahead and avant-garde, melody and rhythm, and straight and free time become intriguingly unclear when you're studying the work of this jazz-drumming great.

by Rick Mattingly

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## NICK MASON

On the occasion of a monster Pink Floyd reissue campaign, we detail the drummer's many sonic charms and chat with him for his first-ever *Modern Drummer* cover story.

by Adam Budofsky

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- Battles' **JOHN STANIER**
- **PAUL STANLEY-MCKENZIE**
- The Flecktones' **ROY WOOTEN**
- Drummer/Percussionist **DANNY FRANKEL**



Courtesy of Solid State Records

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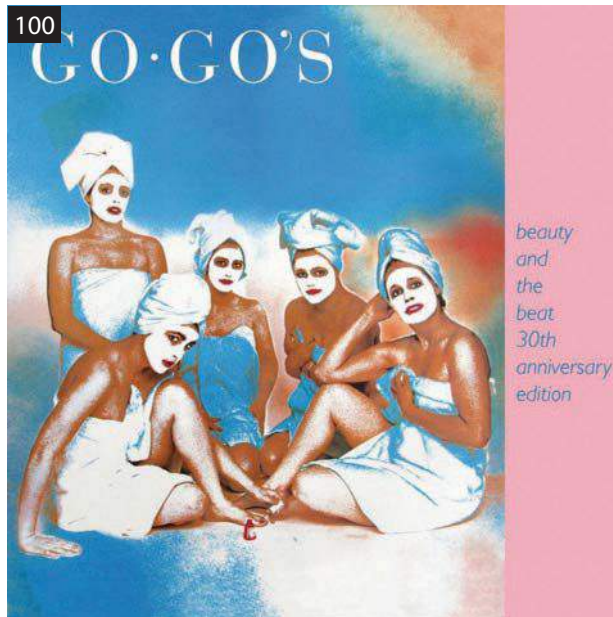
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# Your Mama Don't Dance and Your Daddy Don't Rock and Roll...or Do They?

**H**i, everyone, I hope you all enjoyed your summer. Thank you for the kind responses to my last editorial (June 2011 issue). They were very much appreciated. The subject for this month's Overview was inspired by conversations I've had with friends over the past few months. Several told me that their child has either recently shown an interest in playing drums or has already started studying—and that's *always* music to my ears. My first response to them is, "Congratulations for being supportive!" Trust me, I know how hard it is to have drums banging away in your child's room/basement/garage—even if you're a drummer yourself. So I salute you all.



When I became a parent, I began to really appreciate what my parents went through when I was growing up. The band always seems to end up practicing at the drummer's house (it's usually most convenient), so you have to listen not only to the drums but to the whole kit and caboodle. Still, I have to admit that I do get a bit annoyed when I hear a parent react to a child's request with, "Oh, no, not the *drums!*" Yes, I know it's expensive, and I know it's loud—but I want to tell these people, "At least *try* it. You might have a budding drum star in your house!"

If you were to ask most professional players about their early drumming experiences, they would agree that they'd never have gotten where they are today without the support of their parents. And that includes me. My band practiced at my house throughout my childhood, while my dad worked in the back of the basement. He was a jeweler, which was intense work—he'd be putting little tiny pieces of watches back together while we blasted Led Zeppelin through a stack of Marshall amps! Then we'd all be driving my mom crazy—running up and down the basement stairs, taking meatballs out of the pot, acting like typical wild teenage boys with girls running in and out....

Sadly, my dad passed away at a relatively young age, over thirty years ago. But he'd played trombone in the big band era, so when he was alive he was very supportive of my being a musician. As for my mom, it's her eighty-fifth birthday this September 30, and she still enjoys reading my articles. So happy birthday, Mom, and thank you for everything!

For all the young drummers reading this, think about the sacrifices your parents are making so you can play your instrument, and please don't forget to show your appreciation.

This month's cover artist, Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, is certainly the product of a supportive family. Mason's dad was a well-known documentary filmmaker, and he passed his affection for automobiles and audio equipment on to Nick, who's found similar enjoyment from the mechanical aspects of artistic creativity in the drums. This year Pink Floyd is releasing greatly expanded, remastered versions of its entire catalog, and to commemorate that we're featuring Nick on the cover for the very first time. Pink Floyd's masterpiece *The Dark Side of the Moon* still holds the title of the longest-charting record in history, and Mason offers little-known insights into the making of that classic album and many others.

Our November issue also features the talented John Fred Young of Black Stone Cherry, whose family knows a thing or two about what I've been talking about here. (I won't give it away. You'll have to read the article.) And if school's your thing—remember, after parents, teachers are often a young drummer's biggest influences—check out our Backbeats report on the new Drummers Collective in New York City.

Enjoy the issue. I'll see you next time!



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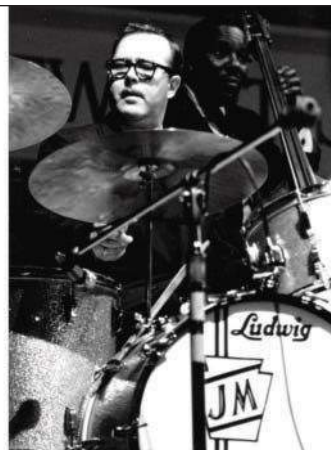
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## READERS' PLATFORM

### Product Close-Up

In the review of Attack drumheads in the July 2011 issue, J.R. Frondelli says that Aquarian, Evans, and Remo use a glued-hoop design. While that's technically true, I must point out that Aquarian's hoop design is radically different from any hoop on the market. Although the Safe-T-Loc hoop does employ resin, the similarity to other hoops ends there. No cracking from the resin. The Aquarian "T" Channel locks the head in place and prevents detuning. It is the only patented hoop in the industry. It prevents slippage inside the hoop, which is the main reason for heads to detune, and helps to prevent pullouts. I just wanted to clarify the point that Aquarian's hoop design is not only effective but unlike any other.

**Roy Burns,**  
**Aquarian Drumheads**



### Joe Morello

Thank you for the excellent job you did concerning the Joe Morello tribute in the July 2011 issue. Joe was an amazing player and teacher as well as an incredible person. He made a huge impact on anyone lucky enough to come in contact with him. Also, thank you to Sabian for the very classy ad on page 41.

**Allen Gentry**

### Rudimental Symposium

Jim Riley's article in the June issue on updating the rudiments ("Revising the Standard Drum Rudiments") was spot on! There are way too many roll variations in the current set. Thanks for publishing his article.

**Mike Kolesar**

### Floyd Sneed

Thanks so much for the "What Do You Know About...?" article on Floyd Sneed in the June issue. I've always felt that he is one of the most overlooked and underappreciated drummers in rock history. I'm betting that many of you my age who listened to AM radio and bought albums at Kmart back in the day may realize the veiled influence that Floyd had on our decision to take up drumming. His unique and tremendously diverse style, trendsetting drumkits, and sheer physical presence (the dude was and is cut!) were as much of a trademark of Three Dog Night as the three singers up front. Your article affirmed Floyd's humbleness and class over the years. And it's great to hear that he holds no grudges from the past and is only looking forward. Bob Girouard's article provides a great retrospective and a much-appreciated update on one of my first drumming heroes.

**John E. Boyden**

### Dropped Beat

The photo of Dino Campanella on page 82 of the September issue was taken by Stephanie Cabral.

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# MATT GREINER

**August Burns Red** aims for a more soulful place with its latest album—starting with the drums.

**A**ugust Burns Red has come a long way—in sound and stature—since its inception eight years ago. This year's *Leveler* sees the group using its metalcore foundation as a springboard into new combinations of deeper groove and heightened melody. Drummer Matt



Courtesy of Solid State Records

Greiner says, "We hope that even people who don't like metal will like some of our songs."

*Leveler* shows particular growth on Greiner's part. "Fifty percent of the drums for the record were written in the studio," Matt says. "While I'd be warming up to prepare for the tracks, Jason [Suecof, producer] would just start recording, insisting, 'If you're gonna play, I'm gonna record.' He'd say, 'Just make it happen—the best stuff is from your heart.' I was really stressed over the four days, but when it was all done I was giddy as a kid at all the new stuff that came out of the woodwork. It's a lot groovier and less mechanical."

Whereas Greiner's early playing was very double bass oriented, the drummer says that his heart is not in the same place now. "I don't like playing the same stuff—which is cool. Playing double bass at 200 bpm and doing blast beats is a lot of hard work, and these days I'd rather practice something that helps me be more versatile. Whereas seven years ago August Burns Red was all I could do, now I try to write drum parts that would work in church, pop, wherever."

August Burns Red will spend the remainder of 2011 on the road, a commitment about which Greiner insists, "You have to love playing drums. It has to be in your heart and blood." **Billy Brennan**

# JOHN STANIER

The highly regarded heavy hitter is taking a streamlined approach on **Battles'** latest.



Jason Frank Rothenberg

**J**ohn Stanier has been Battles' masterful rhythmist since the group's inception in 2002. While he's highly regarded for his work with the seminal alt-metallers Helmet, Stanier draws a line in the sand between the two bands. "At first," he says, "Battles was portrayed as some kind of supergroup—featuring the guitarists from Don Caballero and Lynx and the drummer from Helmet." But the label didn't stick—probably because we were playing for four people. But Helmet and Battles are totally different worlds."

Battles' 2007 album, *Mirrored*, cemented that fact. Its strange vocal effects, endless shifts, and trancelike riffs, set within songs Stanier describes as "schizophrenic Frankensteins," could make listeners feel as if they were losing their mind—and enjoying every carnival-esque minute of it. But the long-awaited follow-up, this year's *Gloss Drop*, takes the band in a more streamlined direction, at least in part due to the recent departure of vocalist Tyondai Braxton.

"Becoming a trio has definitely led us to feel more focused," Stanier says. "Not that I'd want to have always *been* a trio, but right now in the life of Battles it feels more to the point. With three people on the same page it's a lot easier to write, whereas before there was fighting for musical real estate. We've done that record where every song tries to say everything, and we don't want to do another like that." **Billy Brennan**

# PAUL STANLEY-McKENZIE

Pushing the boundaries of multimedia performance arts, this young gun can still make your head bob.

**I**t isn't enough that U.K. drummer Paul Stanley-McKenzie, aka the PSM, wickedly whips out hip-hop and funk patterns in a variety of intriguing groups. The 2005 U.K. Young Drummer of the Year contest winner (at age sixteen) is also something of a computer whiz. Having worked at an Apple Store, where he'd deliver presentations to customers on how to incorporate Macs into their live music setups, Stanley-McKenzie went on to provide the beats for the neo-soul singer Tawiah, the freewheeling rap

duo MLKnCRL ("milk and cereal"), and, his highest-profile project yet, Gorillaz Sound System, the audio/visual live remix project of the cartoon band's music.

"We developed a whole series of ways that the drums could trigger animated clips and visuals," Stanley-McKenzie says. "Along with a percussionist, a DJ, and a video director, we were able to make the show multidimensional and magical."

Never resting, the drummer appears in Lexus commercials and is currently prepar-



Courtesy of Lexus Europe

ing a "performance cinema" drum clinic project. The PSM is also featured in a short documentary (check [psmthepsm.com](http://psmthepsm.com)) that chronicles a festival appearance and a solo drums/electronics improv filmed in the woods. "Our instrument is made from natural, breathing sources," he says, "so it was meaningful to take the drums there and see nature react to the music—and vice versa."

**Ilya Stemkovsky**

# ROY WOOTEN

"Futureman" continues to apply science in startling ways, with **the Flecktones** and in his own ambitious projects.

"It feels good coming back to the original scene of the crime," says Roy "Futureman" Wooten regarding the new Béla Fleck and the Flecktones recording, *Rocket Science*. It's been nearly twenty years since the group's original lineup—Wooten, his bassist brother Victor, harmonica player/keyboardist Howard Levy, and banjoist Béla Fleck—last recorded together. The quartet reunited with a refreshed, exploratory mindset, blending European, African, and Eastern approaches within modern odd-meter rhythmic settings.

"I have a unique way of feeling odd and even times," Wooten says. "I feel it as either even time or lopsided time. Eight is even. Seven would be a 'lopsided' four. The shuffle is a lopsided two, which is also a universal rhythm. The lopsided three produces jazz. The lopsided four produces a jazz waltz. After a while, it all starts to feel natural."

Futureman continues his hybrid acoustic/electric approach on *Rocket Science*, employing live acoustic drums as well as a new Drumitar, from which he triggers his own organic sampled drum sounds (created with help from Brad Bowden of Toontrack). On record it's hard to hear the difference between the instruments, which is the way Wooten likes it.



Roy's electronic explorations extend to other instruments of his own invention, including the Dorothy Graye and the RoyEl. (The latter is also a name that the drummer employs as a creative alias.) The RoyEl in particular, which has sensitive triggers that fire different notes based on velocity, can be heard to great effect in Wooten's Black Mozart Ensemble. "I use the RoyEl to create the melody," Wooten says. "I'm expanding the Max Roach melodic concept in my own way, using dynamics as a tool to

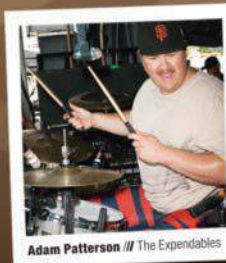
find the melody."

Beyond the fresh ideas these new instruments inspire, Wooten says, "The sweat equity, the boldness, and the courage to get the work done, and to take the criticism and the misunderstanding of what you're doing, is a whole different thing. That's when you dream the impossible dream. That's the type of encouragement we want to give people when they see and hear the Flecktones."

**Mike Haid**

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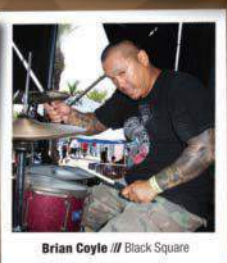
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Vinnie Fiorello // Less Than Jake



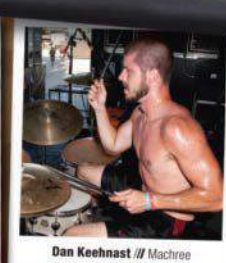
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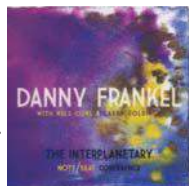
## OUT NOW

## NEWS

## ON TOUR

### DANNY FRANKEL on *The Interplanetary Note/Beat Conference*

On his latest disc, *The Interplanetary Note/Beat Conference*, drummer/percussionist Danny Frankel assembles fellow visionaries Larry Goldings (organ) and Nels Cline (guitar) to run through a variety of '60s lounge tunes, mood jazz, and hip percussion pieces. Throughout the album, listeners can hear unconventional instruments like electric sitar, as well as interesting overdubs such as Frankel playing a bass drum with a mallet. Meanwhile, the three-part "Nefarious" suite features clay pots and bongos. "Bongos would always catch my ear on the radio," Frankel says. "Sometimes I'll set up a hybrid kit where I'll put them where a small tom would normally go. Bongos always sounded badass to me." Frankel, who has studied with Paul Motian and whose credits include Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, and Rickie Lee Jones, also has a series of entertaining bongo solos on YouTube.



On "Gypsy Cabster," Frankel suggested the musicians pretend they were taking a car ride in Israel, circa 1967. The tune also includes a solo break where Danny tries to sound like a "drunk poet."

"I was just sent a one-minute video of a spider jumping on a piece of glass," the drummer says, illustrating yet another unexpected source of inspiration. "I'll compose some music to that. I dig the idea of being open and keeping your personality intact."

Ilya Stemkovsky

## Also Out



**Terri Lyne Carrington** *The Mosaic Project* (Terri Lyne Carrington) ///

**Cymbals Eat Guitars** *Lenses Alien* (Matt Miller) ///  
**The Kooks** *Junk of the Heart* (Paul Garred) ///  
**Lindsey Buckingham** *Seeds We Sow* (Walfredo Reyes Jr.) ///  
**Lisa Hilton** *Underground* (Nasheet Waits) ///  
**Fleet Walker** *Morning Void* (Matty Amendola) ///  
**Noel Gallagher** *Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds* (Jeremy Stacey) ///  
**Leslie West** *Unusual Suspects* (Kenny Aronoff) ///  
**Status Quo** *Quid Pro Quo* (Matt Latley) ///  
**311** *Universal Pulse* (Chad Sexton) ///  
**Antigone Rising** *23 Red* (Dena Tauriello) ///  
**Dream Theater** *A Dramatic Turn of Events* (Mike Mangini) ///  
**Anthrax** *Worship Music* (Charlie Benante) ///  
**Trivium** *In Waves* (Nick Augusto) ///  
**Arch/Matheos** *Sympathetic Resonance* (Bobby Jarzombek)



### DVDs

**Bad Co.** *Live at Wembley* (Simon Kirke) ///  
**Deep Purple** *Phoenix Rising* (Ian Paice) ///  
**Rudder Live**: *Rockwood Music Hall NYC* (Keith Carlock) ///  
**Miles Davis** *Highlights: Live at Montreux 1973-1991* (Al Foster, Vince Wilburn Jr., Ricky Wellman, James Mtume Foreman, Steve Thornton, Marilyn Mazur) ///  
**The Doobie Brothers** *Live at the Greek Theatre 1982* (Keith Knudson, Chet McCracken, Bob LaKind)

## NEWS



Legendary *Tonight Show* drummer **Ed Shaughnessy** recently played three shows with the 250-piece University of Wisconsin band, directed by Mike Leckrone.

This past July, the flagship Art of Drums collection featuring former Guns N' Roses/Velvet Revolver drummer **Matt Sorum** was premiered, introducing a new method of capturing music on canvas. For more, go to [theartofdrumsproject.com](http://theartofdrumsproject.com).

## ON TOUR



**Jack Lawless** with Ocean Grove ///  
**Michael Licata** with Rhino Bucket ///  
**Nia Lovelis** with Cherri Bomb ///  
**Mark Price** with Archers of Loaf ///  
**Walfredo Reyes Jr.** with Lindsey Buckingham ///  
**Wayne Salzmann** with Eric Johnson ///  
**Mark Castillo** with Crossfade ///  
**Kelly Keagy** with Night Ranger ///  
**Ben Smith** with Heart ///  
**Rick Allen** with Def Leppard ///  
**Mark Schulman** with Foreigner ///  
**Danny Lamagna** with Sworn Enemy



# GIMME 10! GENE LAKE

Interview by Ken Micallef

Lake at the 2001 MD Festival

Alex Solera

The groove master, who's worked with Steve Coleman, D'Angelo, Maxwell, Meshell Ndegeocello, and Tricky, offers tips on improving your own funk playing.

**1 CENTER THE BEAT WITH QUARTER NOTES.** Depending on the song, sometimes I'll accent the quarter note on the hi-hat to give the groove a driving feel. And that helps it settle and be in sync with that medium funk tempo. Over the years it's also gotten to be about becoming comfortable with the click. I didn't grow up playing with a click; I had to teach myself.

**2 DON'T GRIP TOO HARD.** To play hi-hat 16ths in funk, I made a conscious decision not to hold the stick real tight. Old-school funk players would play fast and hit the drums real hard. You needed a good grip. I'm also looking for evenness in my strokes, so I adopted more of a jazz sensibility with the grip. That helped me keep the strokes real even, and it allowed me to get to those delicate hi-hat figures.

**3 SHED THE CAMEO/P-FUNK FEEL.** It's not ahead of or behind the beat. It's spot on, dead center—that Jerome Brailey thing. I want everything to feel in sync.

**4 THINK IN HALF.** With Steve Coleman and M-Base, everyone tackles those rhythms differently. If Steve wrote something in seven, I might subdivide it and call it three and a half. I'm already dealing with quarter notes, so I break those down. I don't think 8th notes with Steve—it goes by too fast. And I would latch onto phrases within the music and internalize those.

**5 TO PLAY ODD-METER-SOUNDING GROOVES, THINK LIKE A LINE-BACKER.** On "RedZone" from my album *Here and Now*, there's forward motion, but sometimes the beat is turned sideways.

Steve Coleman and I would compare odd-meter grooves to linebackers in training: One minute they're moving in one direction, the next they're sticking their feet in tires and moving in a different direction.

**6 MATCH THE MACHINE.** When I cut drums on records, often all the parts aren't there, so I lay down percussion and different parts after the fact. I've learned to internalize the click like it's part of the music. I don't fight it—it's there and I stay with it. I read the click as part of the percussion part.

**7 LET INSPIRATION INTO YOUR PRACTICE.** For things like blazing bass drum/snare drum 16th-note fills, there's work and there's inspiration. Some things just jump out. In practice you have to let the spirit move you.

**8 FOCUS ON CONSISTENCY.** I always work on single-stroke rolls, and I focus on where I hold the sticks. Sometimes I pull back on my right-hand grip to match the left. And I work on double bass.

**9 RECORD YOURSELF FOR NEW IDEAS.** I always tape myself to hear things back and to add new things to my repertoire. Then I'm getting ideas from myself.

**10 TAKE A "HEAVY HANDED" APPROACH.** To learn to play something fast, I practice it slowly and use really big sticks. That gives my muscles and brain a memory of the movement so it all soaks in.

Gene Lake's latest solo offering is *Here and Now*.



Back  
Through the  
Stack

HARVEY  
MASON



In July 1981, *MD* asked the studio heavyweight how he managed to keep sounding so fresh on records with artists like **Herbie Hancock**, **George Benson**, **Quincy Jones**, and **Henry Mancini**.



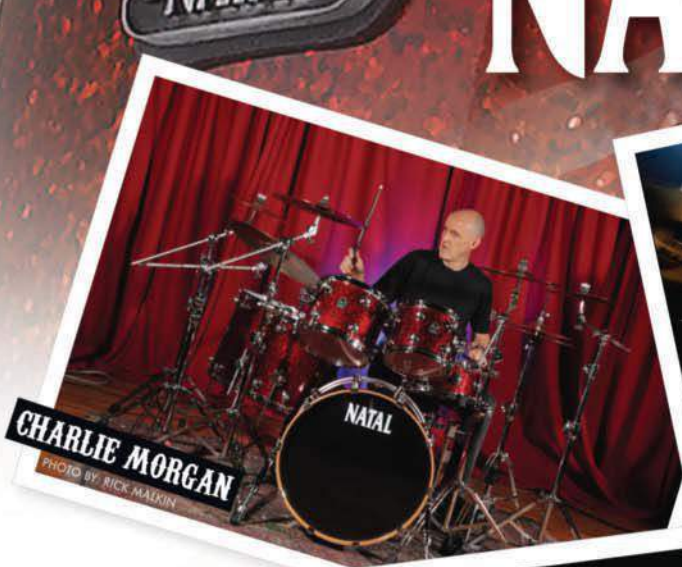
"You have to listen to yourself. If you're playing the same things, that's not going to be too pleasant to hear. You just have to keep going for different things and not be afraid to try stuff. The style a lot of people know me for is jazz-rock, but there are a lot of records I've played on where people wouldn't know it's me, unless they were really heavy listeners. In some situations I'll purposely try *not* to sound like myself, because it doesn't call for that sound. So maybe I'll play the ride cymbal with the left hand instead of the right, or use a different set of drums. I'm always trying to come up with something different."

To read the entire interview with Harvey Mason, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).





# NATAL



**CHARLIE MORGAN**  
PHOTO BY: RICK MALKIN



**SWISS CHRIS**  
PHOTO BY: MARSHALL AMPLIFICATION



**BRIAN TICHY**  
PHOTO BY: TORRY FINDERGRASS



**TOM ROADY**  
PHOTO BY: RICK MALKIN

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# Who Played on "The Boxer"?



I noticed in a recent issue of your *MD Wire* e-newsletter that you credited Hal Blaine as the drummer on the Simon and Garfunkel song "The Boxer." Gary Chester takes credit for the same song in his book *The New Breed*—in addition to the song "So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright." As a former student of Gary's, I'm curious: Who really played on "The Boxer"? Peter Wallack

We dropped Hal Blaine a line to relay your inquiry, and here's what he had to say: "I'm the guilty party! We did that track at CBS New York, and I was set up in front of the elevator doors on the sixth floor. I was

wearing my headset, and the building was empty. I was set up for my overdub, and each time I heard 'Lie-la-lie,' I created explosions on my two floor toms. This giant explosion seemed to have rocked the entire building. As I came crashing down on the toms, the door opened to an elderly security man, who turned white. I guess he thought that he got shot at, because the door quickly closed and we never saw him again! Roy Halee was the engineer/producer along with Paul Simon. Great memories!

"By the way, we recorded 'Frank Lloyd Wright' in the living room of my house in the Hollywood Hills. Paul and Artie wanted to record in one of Frank Lloyd's houses,

but no one would allow it. Out my French windows, across the street, lived Beverly Johnson, the art editor/critic for the *L.A. Times*, and she had the last of Frank's houses. Her house was full of multi-million-dollar paintings. I told Paul that we could record in my living room while looking at the house from across the road. It worked perfectly. I actually have some of it on video somewhere. Now, that's not to say that Gary—whom I respected very much—didn't do another version of that tune at another time. That happened often."

## Mind Matters

### Overcoming Common Mental Barriers in Music

by Bernie Schallehn

## I'm Cheating

**Long story short, I'm having an affair with a fan. I've been with this woman several times after gigs, and I have really strong feelings for her. She's single, but I'm married (twelve years) with two young sons, and I have a decent relationship with my wife. I didn't plan for this; it just happened. It's not that I don't love my wife, it's just that this other woman is... different. I'm a big ball of guilt, but in a weird way I've never been happier. Something's going to happen soon—I can just sense it—and I was hoping you might be able to help me out. S.C.**

Oscar Wilde once wrote, "I can resist everything except temptation." S.C., you've created a scenario that could have life-changing consequences for you and your family. That's where we'll begin, by your owning this situation. You have to take responsibility for your actions. You say "it just happened." But that's not true. When you felt the romantic chemistry starting to flow, you *acted* on it. You took the gazes and words

that passed between you and this woman to the next level, and fantasy became reality.

All of us are faced with temptation on a daily basis. The difference is whether or not we act on it...and you did.

There are two types of illicit affairs: the one-night stand and the romance that lingers on. Since yours is of the ongoing variety, let's focus on that, beginning with context.

#### CONTEXT

Nightclubs, bars, and cocktail lounges can be erotic, exotic, and surreal environments where the humdrum routine of everyday life ceases to exist. Dimmed or colorful lighting, music, pretty bottles of liquor, and a waitstaff clothed in alluring outfits are all elements of escapism and transcendence that are often kept front and center when a club owner designs the physical structure of his or her business.

Plus, the hours of operation—for you, anyway—are in the evening. There's something mysterious about the ink-black hours of night. They're often scary for a child but enticing for an adult. In the J.J. Cale song "After Midnight," the lyrics allude to the sometimes boisterous

nature of night. Most of the musicians I spoke to while writing this response, however, think of night as holding a mystical or sometimes quiet or laid-back vibe. Whatever the case, it's a universe away from the harsh light of day and the usual nine-to-five workday.

Now let's add the fact that as a performing musician you have distinguished yourself in this environment. You're not a patron; you're an *entertainer*. Whether you're flailing away behind your kit on a huge stage with rows of suspended lighting or you're squeezed onto a two-foot swatch of carpeting, you're different. Sure, you want to connect with your audience, but you're indeed separate and special in a positive way. Consider that your lover may have been attracted to you, partially or in whole, simply because of your status as the drummer in the band.

#### ANTHROPOLOGY

You were born with hormones that, when you reached a certain age,



inspired you to become attracted to the opposite sex with the intent of mating. Right now, because you're in the honeymoon period of your affair, these hormones are running hot and high. I know I'm stripping some of the romance out of your situation, but you need basic, accurate information before you make a move.

### WHAT TO DO

Okay, so you're in this adulterous situation where you have liaisons with a fan after your gigs. Of course you feel happy. The forbidden fruit is always the sweetest. I'm sure she looks absolutely gorgeous to you when she sashays into the club. The two of you have a secret and a standing appointment for a rendezvous that will bring mutual physical pleasure. But, understandably, you're feeling guilty. There's no way you can continue these escapades and stay true to your marital vow of fidelity. Speaking of marriage, consider this: I'm guessing your lover has never awakened next to you in the morning to see you with your hair fuzzed out like Bozo and burned with a lethal case of dragon breath. In a nutshell, the two of you don't really know each other very well, and this clandestine caper you have going on doesn't live in the real world.

You basically have three options. If you really think there's potential for a legitimate long-term relationship with this other woman—and you think you want that rather

than your current marriage—you should meet by the light of day. When you're with her, try to get a sense of who she is above and beyond a fan who found you attractive at a gig.

The second option is to keep the same routine. My guess is that eventually you'll tire of this woman, she'll tire of you, or she'll demand more from your relationship. Most mistresses want to be a legitimate girlfriend or wife.

Your third option is to end the affair and consider marriage counseling. Your relationship with your wife may need a tune-up. You

termed your marital relationship as decent. I'm not sure how to assess that, but it doesn't carry the connotation of anything outstanding.

Keep in mind that in this love triangle you don't have complete control. Regardless of what you decide to do, your femme fatale may go to your wife and expose the whole deal. Consequently, your wife may immediately file for divorce.

One last thing: Rent DVDs of *Fatal Attraction* and *Play Misty for Me*.

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- B. 9x13 tom
- C. 16x16 floor tom
- D. 10x18 gong drum
- E. 14x22 bass drum

"There's one song I play only acoustic drums on, 'Can't Get You Out of My Head,'" Meadows says. "That song is in a big rock style now; they've taken it away from the original dance thing. There's another song where I do a big band thing on acoustic drums at the beginning, but by the end it's a full electronic drums dance thing. The toms are used quite a lot, and the hi-hats and cymbals are used all the way through the show. But otherwise, electronic drums are the gig."

**Cymbals:** Istanbul Agop

- 1. 15" Om hi-hats
  - 2. 17" Traditional Dark crash
  - 3. 18" Traditional Thin crash
  - 4. 20" Traditional Medium ride
  - 5. 18" Traditional Dark crash
- "This gig is about using stuff that doesn't get in the way. The crashes have to get in and out, so I'm using smaller models. Hi-hats are the opposite, so the bigger they are, the less they get in the way."

**Electronics:** Yamaha DTX-MULTI 12 (used as a patch changer), TP100 pad, DTX900 series kick pad (left side), and TP65 pads; Alternate Mode Pole pads and Fat pedals; ddrum triggers on all drums; Ultimate Ears in-ear monitor system; ButtKicker

attached to throne

"The great thing about Yamaha is that all the drum sounds go onto a memory stick, which goes into the DTX900 brain. The only hard bit is assigning sounds to pads, which is all about geography. Any pad can be anything. It's about making it as easy as possible for me to get to different sounds. Sometimes I'm playing kick with my left hand, sometimes with my right hand, and sometimes with my foot."

**Heads:** Aquarian Focus-X snare batter, Response 2 Coated tom batters and single-ply Texture Coated bottoms, and Full Force bass drum heads

**Sticks:** Pro-Mark SD2 maple

Interview by Dave Previ • Photos by Paul La Raia



# GRETSCH

Renown57 Drumset

by Michael Dawson





As one of Gretsch's professional-grade lines coming out of the company's facility in Taiwan, the Renown series is designed especially for touring drummers looking for classic Gretsch tones and features plus a bit of contemporary punch, all in a reasonably priced package. (Street prices for Renown Maple kits are often under \$2,000.) The Renown57 is a limited configuration available in two finishes—Motor City blue and Motor City black—inspired by the slick streamlined designs of American car companies from the 1950s. For our test run, we were sent a five-piece Renown57 shell pack (18x22 bass drum; 8x10, 9x12, and 16x16 toms; 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x14 snare; and matching Gibraltar drum throne) in Motor City blue.

### HOOD ORNAMENT

Each Renown57 drum features a white chevron shape with three-dimensional aluminum edges and matching chrome Gretsch script logos. Vintage car enthusiasts will likely recognize this kit's crisp, clean two-tone finish, as it's a spot-on tribute to similar looks found on iconic '50s models.

For some background on how this unique kit came to be, we reached out to Gretsch drum product manager John Palmer. As he explains, "The idea for the Renown57 stems from a powder-blue tom sample that [KMC Music director of percussion marketing] Ken Fredenberg and I saw during a factory visit in 2010. The color felt fresh, but at the same time it had this great retro vibe to it, which is a combination that works well for Gretsch drums. We knew we wanted to explore the retro vibe by creating an iconic design that would convey a vintage car theme. We are fortunate to work with some vintage car buffs, who, when they saw the blue color, pointed us in the direction of the 1957 Chevy Bel Air and Nomad. The design of the Renown57 was conceived by Bob Crelin, who's an experienced creative designer with an uncanny ability to work his art onto drums and hardware."

The pointed-teardrop chevrons are sized proportionally to the dimensions of each drum. These eye-catching details are placed on the audience side of the snare and toms and on the player's side of the kick drum. Although I doubt this was Gretsch's intention, I found it nice to know that if I ever wanted to go for a less stylized look with these drums, I could simply turn the toms and snare 180 degrees so that the ornaments faced me, leaving solid blue or solid black sides facing the audience. That said, everyone who saw these drums set up as intended commented on how great they

looked. I personally prefer the sleeker appearance of Motor City black to the sock-hop vibe of Motor City blue, but both versions are trimmed gorgeously.

### PIECE BY PIECE

The 18x22 Renown57 bass drum comes with the tom mount going directly through the shell. For gigging/touring drummers, ease of setup is often priority number one when choosing a drumset, so I was glad to see that Gretsch kept its intended customers in mind when designing this kit. You would likely notice a slight boost in sustain if the shell were undrilled, especially if you prefer a wide-open kick sound. But most working drummers end up muffling excessive bass drum resonance anyway, so it's worth it to sacrifice a touch of tone in order to have a quick, simple, and consistent setup night after night.



The included Evans EMAD bass drum batter head wouldn't be my first choice on a '50s-inspired kit—I was hoping for something a little less modern-sounding. But with the EMAD tuned relatively slack, the drum produced a fairly fool-proof kick tone with a lot of punch, which would be great for most contemporary musical applications. I preferred to place at least a couple towels on the inside for muffling, because the unmuffled sound had a bit too much "boing" for my tastes, especially when close-miked. If you want to play this drum wide open, or if you prefer higher tunings, I'd suggest trying a different batter head, like a coated EQ3, to bring out a rounder, warmer sound.

Per Gretsch's standards, the 8x10 and 9x12 Renown57 rack toms have just five

lugs. As a result, even tiny tuning adjustments to a single tension rod made a big impact on the pitch and the decay of the tone. These toms, along with the 8-lug, 16x16 floor tom, had a wide tuning range, and I found that they excelled at either extreme—low and deep or tight and bright—and that medium tension produced a classic, warm tom voice with a lot of body and sustain. The 30-degree bearing edges helped bring in more of the shell, which kept tight tunings from sounding thin and added extra thump at lower tunings.

I experienced an interesting phenomenon when playing these toms. Rather than feeling as if the sound was bouncing back up to my ears after I struck the head, I found that it seemed to shoot straight through the length of the shell, making a beeline out toward the audience. This laser-like projection gave the drums a very focused yet lively feel—perfect for louder gigs where extra presence is a plus.

I also noticed that the resonant heads of the Renown57 toms played a much greater role in the overall tone than they do on most other toms; I could clearly hear the bottom skins vibrating—either sympathetically or discordantly—for the duration of the sustain. As a result, I had to be extra careful not only that the heads were balanced individually but also that I maintained a consonant pitch interval between the top and bottom in order to keep the overtones sounding smooth and balanced.

Although this basic tuning concept should be employed with any tom, it proved to be a necessity for maximizing a pure pitch from the Renown57s.

The 10-lug, 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x14 matching maple snare was a great complement to the rest of the kit. Its tone was controlled and "woody" yet lively and dynamic. The drum spoke most comfortably at higher tunings and produced a strong and cutting rimshot sound, thanks to the firm die-cast hoops. The Renown57 snare drum comes with rubber washers under each tension rod to help with tuning stability, and it has a smooth, simple throw-off. The five-piece Renown57 shell pack with matching Gibraltar throne lists for \$3,010.

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

## BUILT TO SPEC

All Renown57 drums feature USA rock maple shells (7-ply bass drum and toms, 10-ply snare) with 30-degree bearing edges on the toms and kick and 45-degree edges on the snare, plus die-cast hoops, the GTS suspension system on the rack toms, chambered floor tom feet for enhanced sustain, Silver Sealer interior finishes, heavy-duty 12.7 mm tom arms and floor tom legs, and Evans drumheads (coated G1 tom and snare batters, EMAD bass drum batter).

# MEINL

## Byzance Additions

by Michael Dawson



**MODERN DRUMMER**  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

Up for review this month are a few eclectic pieces from Meinl's hand-hammered Byzance Vintage, Dark, and Traditional series, each of which offers unique sounds within the company's already ultra-diverse lineup.

### 22" VINTAGE SAND RIDE AND 14" VINTAGE SAND HATS

We reviewed MD Fest alum Benny Greb's 20" Vintage Sand ride back in January 2010, and the cymbal has since gone on to become one of Meinl's all-time best sellers. Due to customer demand, the company decided to add a 22" version. Like the 20", the 22" Sand ride (\$715) has a partially lathed bottom—the bell and outer ring are unlathed—and a sandblasted top. The

sandblasting not only gives the cymbal a well-worn appearance but also helps tamp down some of the higher overtones for a drier, more controlled voice. The 20" proved to be a diverse, dark-sounding cymbal, but it could be a bit too dry and restrained for drummers who prefer bigger, wider crash options, which the new 22" version offers with aplomb while still maintaining control for quick, articulate stickings. This is a quintessential fusion

cymbal, as it can be easily coaxed to sound like a smoky post-bop ride one minute and a washy Bun E. Carlos/Ronnie Vannucci-style crash/ride the next.

The 14" Sand hi-hats (\$650) are also "fusiony," in both construction and sound quality. The bottom cymbal is very heavy and is lathed on both sides, with light sandblasting administered to the top surface. The top cymbal is very thin—it bent easily in my hands—and features a lathed

## BYZANCE BREAKDOWN

**Meinl's Byzance line of cymbals is made in Turkey from B20 bronze alloy and hand hammered into shape,** which gives each piece its own distinctive sound.

Byzance models include the Traditional series, which is finished and lathed to achieve warm, smooth tones; the Dark series, which is unlathed for earthy, dry characteristics; and the Vintage series, which features innovative designs and unconventional sounds. Other offerings in the Byzance line include Brilliant, Extra Dry, and Jazz cymbals.

bottom and a raw sandblasted top with a combination of wide and tight hammer marks. The top cymbal also has a fairly steep profile, with the outer 1/2" of the edge curving down rather sharply. The result of such incongruent cymbals was an unmistakable hi-hat sound that was simultaneously crisp, dark, and slightly trashy.

Tip strokes on the top cymbal of the Sand hats produced dry, low-pitched closed sounds and breathy, dark open tones. Shoulder strokes brought the heavy bottom cymbal into play for a denser, chunkier vibe. Foot chicks and splashes were dry and super-quick—great for intricate, articulate hi-hat foot patterns. Employing a weightier touch with these hats, a la Steve Gadd, seemed to produce the most satisfying results.

### 16" AND 18" VINTAGE TRASH CRASHES

Meinl is known for its innovative and unconventional cymbal designs, especially when it comes to otherworldly sounds like those found in the company's Generation X series. With the 16" (\$419) and 18" (\$498) Vintage Trash crashes, the company combines some of those quick, trashy effects with the warmer sound of B20 bronze. Both models are paper thin and feature four 1 7/8" circular cutouts and four 4 1/8" by 3/4" oblong cutouts evenly spaced around the circumference of the cymbal.

While these cymbals ended up being my least favorite of the bunch—the extensive cutouts seemed to remove a bit too much tone—they did have a distinctive sound with a wide spread and a flashy, trashy attack. They are intended for quick accents, and they were good for that, especially when I wanted to make a strong punctuation while maintaining a lighter touch. They also responded well to mallet strokes, opening up with a touch of wind-gong-like flare.

### 22" DARK RIDE AND 15" DARK HATS

The 22" Dark ride (\$715) and 15" Dark hi-hats (\$775) have raw, unlathed surfaces (top and bottom) and hundreds of hammer marks across the main body of the cymbal. The outer 1/4" of each cymbal is unhammered, and the bell has more sporadic impressions. There's also a dense ring of hammering surrounding the bell. The ride is medium weight, while the hi-hats feel a bit heavier.

Because of their heavier weight and untreated finish, the 15" Dark hi-hats were fairly slow to respond, especially when played with the foot, and they had a broad, chunky sound that took up a lot of sonic real estate. There was a strong contrast between the dry, clicky attack I got

from tip strokes and the wide, husky bark achieved by striking with the shoulder of the stick. If you like the roaring hi-hat sound of late-period Tony Williams, you'll appreciate what these big boys have to offer. There's also a bit of classic '70s R&B flavor in them, which proved to be mighty tasty once I got used to their somewhat plate-like feel.

Despite its rough, aggro appearance, the 22" Dark ride had a fairly soft feel, and it opened up nicely with a dark yet shimmering sustain that sounded great when I struck the cymbal gently with the shoulder of the stick or smacked it full-on at the edge. The bell had a complex, murky tone that elicited multiple pitches at once, while tip strikes to the bow gave off a warm, defined "tah." This ride could stand tall next to just about any "jazz" cymbal, but it would truly stand out in situations where the goal is a darker, low-pitched texture that can withstand more aggressive playing styles.

### 20" TRADITIONAL EXTRA THIN HAMMERED CRASH AND 16" TRADITIONAL MEDIUM HI-HATS

My hands-down favorite cymbal in this review was the 20" Traditional Extra Thin Hammered crash (\$590). It's not very versatile; it essentially produced one sound no matter how I hit it—a quick, trashy crash with a wide spread and long sustain. But, boy, was it glorious! This is *the* cymbal to go to for big, emphatic phrase-ending crashes. Although it's very thin, this model could take just about anything I could give it. The challenge with a cymbal that has this much personality is resisting the urge to hit it too often. It's the exclamation point of crashes; use it judiciously.

The 16" Traditional Medium hi-hats (\$860) are fully lathed and hand hammered. The bottom cymbal is heavy, and the top is medium in weight. I often use two 16" crash cymbals as hi-hats in the studio, but that combo never seems to translate well to live gigs; the pair of crashes is just too soft and gushy to cut through amplified guitars. These 16" hi-hats didn't have that problem. In fact, I was able to easily articulate some quick double-stroke patterns during a full-volume gig with a band that had three guitarists and a bassist who was cranking a five-string through an Ampeg SVT with eight 10" speakers. Now, if you usually play on 13" hi-hats, you'll need some time to get used to the response of these over-size cymbals, which have a lower pitch and a heavier foot feel. But it can be a lot of fun to have such a large target with such a full, rich sound.

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

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# TAYE

## MetalWorks Double Bass Drum Pedal

by Ben Meyer



The California-based Taye Drums has added exciting new MetalWorks single and double bass drum pedals to its long list of hardware. I've had the opportunity to review several pieces of Taye gear in the past, and the MetalWorks double pedal up for review this month continues the company's trend of building solid, player-friendly equipment with a very reasonable price tag. Let's explore some of the specifics.

### HEAVY METAL!

The first thing that struck me about the MetalWorks pedal was the great zippered case that it comes in. Featuring room for both sides of the pedal and the double universal-joint rod, this is the kind of case that you have to buy separately with most double pedals, and it definitely adds to the overall value.

Upon opening up the case, I was struck by how beefy the MetalWorks is. This is no lightweight model, but that's a good thing, as I've always had trouble with light-duty pedals that slip and slide on the bass drum hoop. I didn't experience any slippage when using this heavy-duty beast on a variety of gigs.

### ADJUSTABLE TO ABSURDITY

Everything, and I mean *everything*, is adjustable on the MetalWorks pedal. It offers such a level of control over every aspect of operation that nearly any playing style can be accommodated. I tend to

like medium spring tension, a heavy-feeling footboard, and a long beater throw. Luckily for me, this is precisely how the pedal was set up out of the box. I did experiment a bit with tweaking the spring tension, the base-plate length, and the unique adjustable cam to see how the feel of the pedal was affected. What I found was not only that everything can be fine-tuned to perfection, but also that any negative effects that might be caused by various changes can then be dialed out by adjusting other elements of the pedal. The only limit to how much the MetalWorks can be tweaked is your willingness to tinker with it.

On the gig I didn't have any trouble adjusting the pedal's features using the Allen wrenches, but I would make an argument for using a standard drum key bolt to change the beater height. I always have a key on hand for quick adjustments between songs, and I'd rather not have to fumble around for the Allen wrenches if the beater comes loose in the heat of battle. That said, I didn't experience any loosening of parts while playing.

There are far too many uniquely

adjustable aspects of the MetalWorks pedal to list here, so check out Taye's website for a full description and a cool promo video.

### MY FAVORITE KIND OF RESEARCH

I was able to use the MetalWorks double pedal in several different situations, including jam-band dates, low- and high-volume country cover gigs, loud rock cover gigs, and church services. I was pleased by the way the pedal responded to low- and high-volume playing and to heels-up and heels-down techniques.

The included two-sided Taye beater features two shapes of hard felt. While I did hear a difference between the two sides, I felt the need to swap out the included beater for my usual hard plastic model on a few of the louder jobs, to enhance the attack of the bass drum. This is a matter of personal preference, and it's an issue I often have with any felt-type beater, but I think it deserves to be pointed out.

I was impressed by the similarity of feel between the main and secondary pedals. Given the extreme adjustability of the

## HEX RODS GALORE

Nearly all of the adjustments on the MetalWorks pedal and the universal-joint rod are made with one of two sizes of hex bolts. To make these adjustments, Taye includes two Allen wrenches that fit into holders on the base plate of the main pedal. This thoughtful detail helps you keep the tools handy when you need them. The only exception is the beater-head angle adjustment, which is made with a standard drum key.

MetalWorks, those of you who require a different feel for the second pedal could easily find what you need. Also, kudos to Taye for including a drumstick caddy on the left side of the satellite pedal. What a cool idea!

#### HOW DOES IT MEASURE UP?

I've owned several of the top manufactur-

ers' high-end bass drum pedals over the years, and the MetalWorks double pedal gives all of them a run for their money. Speaking of money, the MetalWorks carries a street price of around \$380, which is especially sweet considering the included case. Great value coupled with endless customizing options makes this pedal a worthy choice for those who are always

searching for just the right feel, as well as for guys like me with more of a "set it and forget it" mentality. The Taye MetalWorks double pedal is a winner in our book. [tayedrums.com](http://tayedrums.com)

# GMS

## 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Super Vintage Snare Drum

by Michael Dawson



**MODERN DRUMMER**  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

It seems as if the "modern vintage" tag gets used a lot these days when describing a company's latest, greatest offering. But rather than simply relying on the marketing power of such a trendy term to help sell some product, GMS's new Super Vintage snare drum personifies the phrase to a tee—visually, structurally, and aurally.

For modernists, this 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 maple drum features the company's swiveling Special Edition lugs, sturdy 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops, and an extra-sharp bottom bearing edge for increased sensitivity. Vintage-drum enthusiasts will love the old-fashioned lacquer duco finish, which is painstakingly applied to have the same look and thickness (thinner than most modern lacquers) as GMS co-owner Tony

Gallino's prized World War II-era Ludwig & Ludwig snare. To re-create the fat, warm sound of a vintage snare, the 6-ply maple shell with 8-ply reinforcement rings is cut with a very round top bearing edge and outfitted with just eight lugs to allow for a more sonorous, open tone.

As Gallino says, "This drum sounds fat, no matter *what* you do to it." Even at a very high tuning (around 90 on a DrumDial), it had a thicker-sounding voice than most maple snares I've played. Jazz players will really love that quality, plus the sharp bottom edge kept the snares talking quickly and crisply, and the 8-lug design allowed for very melodic timbale-style rimshots. For comparison, I played the Super Vintage next to a 1950s Slingerland

Radio King that I often tune higher for jazz playing. The increased presence of the GMS drum made the Radio King sound surprisingly dull and dark.

My personal favorite tuning for the Super Vintage was medium to medium-loose (83–85 on a DrumDial). There, the drum had a great soft feel, and the tone really opened up with pure, round overtones and a big, punchy attack. Studio great Steve Jordan often uses this type of snare sound for boomy mid-tempo beats, like what he plays on Tomo Fujita's "Driving in Texas" and during the chorus to John Mayer's "Assassin." I've been chasing that vibe for several years. The search is finally over! List price: \$795.

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

# TIGHTSCREW

## Non-Loosening Tension Rods

by David Ciauro

**D**etuning is a bane of our collective drumming existence. Carl Scott, TightScrew creator and fellow drummer, offers a solution that's said to provide consistent results night after night without altering the aesthetics of your drum.

Installing TightScrews is easy, but be sure to read the directions first, because these tension rods feel different from the standard version. TightScrews aren't greasy, so drum key turns are purposefully stiffer. According to TightScrew's website, "Lubricants will deteriorate the polymer inserts in TightScrews and reduce the friction necessary to keep them from backing out."

You will also want to measure your current tension rods and use equal length or slightly longer TightScrews to ensure proper functioning. The rods come in 30, 35, 42, 52, 65, 68, 90, 95, and 110 mm sizes, which will outfit most drums on the market. Be sure, however, to check the FAQ section of [tightscrew.com](http://tightscrew.com) for specific caveats.

TightScrews have a thirty-day money-back guarantee, but their packaging boldly states that they are 100 percent guaranteed to work. Optimum results are said to be achieved when an entire hoop is outfitted with TightScrews. I opted to install them on one of my beloved yet fickle 8-lug snare drums, replacing only the four lugs that faced me. Over the course of a month I didn't have to retune the drum for any reason other than the desire to change up my sound for a particular project. For hard-hitting drummers, these tension rods are a blessing. Prices for TightScrew four-packs range from \$11.95 to \$15.95, depending on size.

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



## NYLON INSERTS

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**TAMA**

# BLUE MICROPHONES

## Drum Kit Kit

by Mark Parsons

Most major microphone manufacturers offer some sort of drum miking pre-pack, typically consisting of a large dynamic mic for the kick, smaller dynamics for the snare and toms, and a pair of small-

diaphragm condensers for the cymbals. The packages work great, and that type of mic setup is typically how most drumsets are recorded today.

But there's another way to capture a

complete drumset sound that involves using three high-quality large-diaphragm condensers—usually some variation of two overheads and a kick mic. Such a setup was employed on classic rock records by Led Zeppelin, the Who, Jimi Hendrix, and others. Many contemporary recording engineers use a similar technique when they're looking to capture that "drumset in a room" vibe. Blue Microphones (Baltic Latvian Universal Electronics) has assembled a kit of three large condensers, designed to record drums in exactly this fashion.

### THE MICS

Blue's Drum Kit Kit consists of a Mouse mic and a pair of Dragonfly models, each selected for its strengths in recording a specific element of the drumset. The Mouse and Dragonfly are large-diaphragm cardioid condensers and are not all that different in terms of sonics and ergonomics, although you'd never know that from looking at them.

The Dragonfly has a long, thin, rectangular body, with the capsule contained in a pivoting ball held by a C-shaped yoke. The included (and very effective) shock mount consists of a U-shaped bracket that's connected to the body and the capsule with elastic bands.

The Mouse has a short and squat cylindrical body. The pivoting-capsule housing is connected to the body via a yoke, and the microphone ships with a high-quality shock mount.





Aesthetically, these mics have very interesting designs, with a vintage yet futuristic vibe. (A singer who spotted the Mouse in my studio said, "That's the coolest-looking mic I've ever seen.") More important, their build quality is first rate.

### SONICS

Before trying various setups using all three microphones, we did a couple of quick tests with the mics individually to get a handle on where they're coming from. First we put up a Dragonfly side by side with the Mouse, placed in front of the drumset, and had a listen. Even though the Dragonfly is ostensibly meant for the overheads and the Mouse is for the kick, they had pretty similar responses.

Physically, the actual capsules appear to be identical, but the electronics are different. (For one thing, the Mouse uses an output transformer, while the Dragonfly is transformerless.) Sonically, the Mouse was a hair fuller on the bottom end, and while both mics had a presence peak in the higher frequencies, the peaks were in slightly different places. The sound captured by each mic in this initial brief comparison was very promising: full range, warm on the bottom with air on top, and no harshness.

For our next test, we swapped out the existing overheads (also large condensers) from our fully miked studio drumset with the Dragonflies and then tracked an indie-pop band. The Dragonflies acquitted themselves very well, doing a great job of capturing the entire kit. These mics weren't necessarily flat sounding, but they were very "real." Instead of having a deep scoop in the mids (like many non-linear mics), they were fairly smooth through the midrange, but, as noted above, they had a roundness to the bottom and a little sheen on top that added just enough excitement to sound really good without seeming unnatural.

### THREE BY THREE

Now it was time to put these unique-looking mics to their intended use—in three time-honored three-mic arrangements. First, we placed the overheads in the common A/B (spaced pair) configuration. The Dragonflies were positioned above the kit and spaced evenly on either side, with one roughly over the hi-hat and the other over the ride/floor tom. Both were pointed down and panned left and right in the mix. After some experimenting, we ended up with the Mouse placed approximately 16" in front of the kick. (It remained there for all three setup tests.) This configuration gave us a very nice rep-

resentation of the drumset, with a good stereo spread. Unprocessed, the Mouse produced a natural, round thud. Using equalization—cutting some lower mids (500 Hz) and adding a little beater slap at 7.5 kHz—gave us a more modern sound.

Next, we moved the overheads to an X/Y (coincident pair) position, where the Dragonflies were placed close together, above the center of the kit, with the capsules pointing away from each other at 90 degrees. This gave us a balanced spread that wasn't as wide as the A/B setup (especially on the toms) yet still yielded surprisingly good separation at the higher frequencies. The ride and hi-hats were clearly delineated from left to right. (The Dragonfly's polar chart shows a significantly tighter pattern at 16 kHz than at 125 Hz, which explains the good separation between the cymbals.)

Finally, we moved to my favorite of the three-mic methodologies—the isosceles technique (often referred to as the Glyn Johns method, having been popularized by the famous engineer/producer when working with seminal rock bands like Led Zeppelin and the Who). This position involves placing one mic directly over the center of the kit, pointing straight down. The second mic is placed to the drummer's right, a little above and beyond the floor tom. Both mics are pointing at the snare and set the same distance from the center of the drum, to keep the signals in phase, and then panned hard left and hard right.

This isosceles-triangle setup resulted in a solid snare sound and big, full tom sounds, with better separation between the toms than with the A/B or X/Y method. The cymbals had a little sheen without being splatty. What we heard was an excellent rendition of the entire kit.

In all three cases, using only the three mics in the Blue Drum Kit Kit, we were able to get a great-sounding, big and full, drums-in-a-room tone, which could be tweaked to fit a variety of musical genres. My take on the character of these mics is that they sound natural, with a little attitude. The controlled high-end lift helps offer a little cut without getting glassy, and the mics' full range is able to capture the entire spectrum of the drumset, instead of the cymbal-centric tone you often get from small-diaphragm condensers. The clever pivoting-capsule design of both of these models made it a snap to fine-tune placement.

The Blue Microphones Drum Kit Kit lists for \$1,999 and comes with a high-quality flight case.

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# JOHN FRED YOUNG

Story by Rick Mattingly  
Photos by Ash Newell

**Black Stone Cherry's** super-  
animated sticksman isn't  
above pushing his playing  
over the top to add fuel to  
the band's already fiery shows.



**T**he city of Edmonton, in south-central Kentucky, has a population of 1,586. It is the seat of Metcalfe County, which is primarily farmland. Among its residents are two bands with international reputations: the Grammy-winning Kentucky HeadHunters and Black Stone Cherry. The HeadHunters include two brothers, guitarist Richard and drummer Fred Young. Richard's son, John Fred, is the drummer in Black Stone Cherry.

When they're not on the road, the Youngs live on a 600-acre farm originally purchased by John Fred's great-grandfather. After Richard and Fred started their first band, their dad gave them an abandoned house on the property to practice in. When Black Stone Cherry formed a decade ago, the group took advantage of the fact that the HeadHunters were usually on the road and moved into the practice house.

You don't want to try to find the place without a guide, unless wandering for days in a backwoods Kentucky "holler" is your idea of a good time. But if you do find yourself standing in front of the practice house, the bucolic scene—complete with grazing cows—might lead you to expect the sounds of bluegrass music to emit from the weathered two-story structure with the rusted tin roof.

If the HeadHunters were in there, you might detect a pinch of country flavor, but they've always been more of a blues-rock band than a country act. Black Stone Cherry is heavy rock all the way. The pictures, posters, and old LP covers on the walls attest to the music the members learned from: Cream, Led Zeppelin, Albert Collins, Mitch Ryder, John Mayall, Jimi Hendrix. There's a lot of HeadHunters memorabilia too, reflecting the musical guidance and career advice that the boys have received from Richard and the gang. But however grounded in classic rock BSC might be, the band's sound has a contemporary drive that infuses even the ballads (of which there are very few) with aggression. Where some groups sound angry when they play with such force, Black Stone Cherry sounds triumphant. They aren't ranting, they're partying.

Live, John Fred Young, guitarist Ben Wells, and bassist Jon Lawhon are in perpetual motion, and so is guitarist/vocalist Chris Robertson when he's not singing. With his mane of curly hair flying in every direction, Young seems to use his entire body to play every note. As he lays down grooves on his stripped-down kit, often driving a song with toms rather than with hi-hats or cymbals, every bit of his energy is contributing to the excitement, conviction, and momentum of the music.

Since the release of its debut album five years ago, Black Stone Cherry has

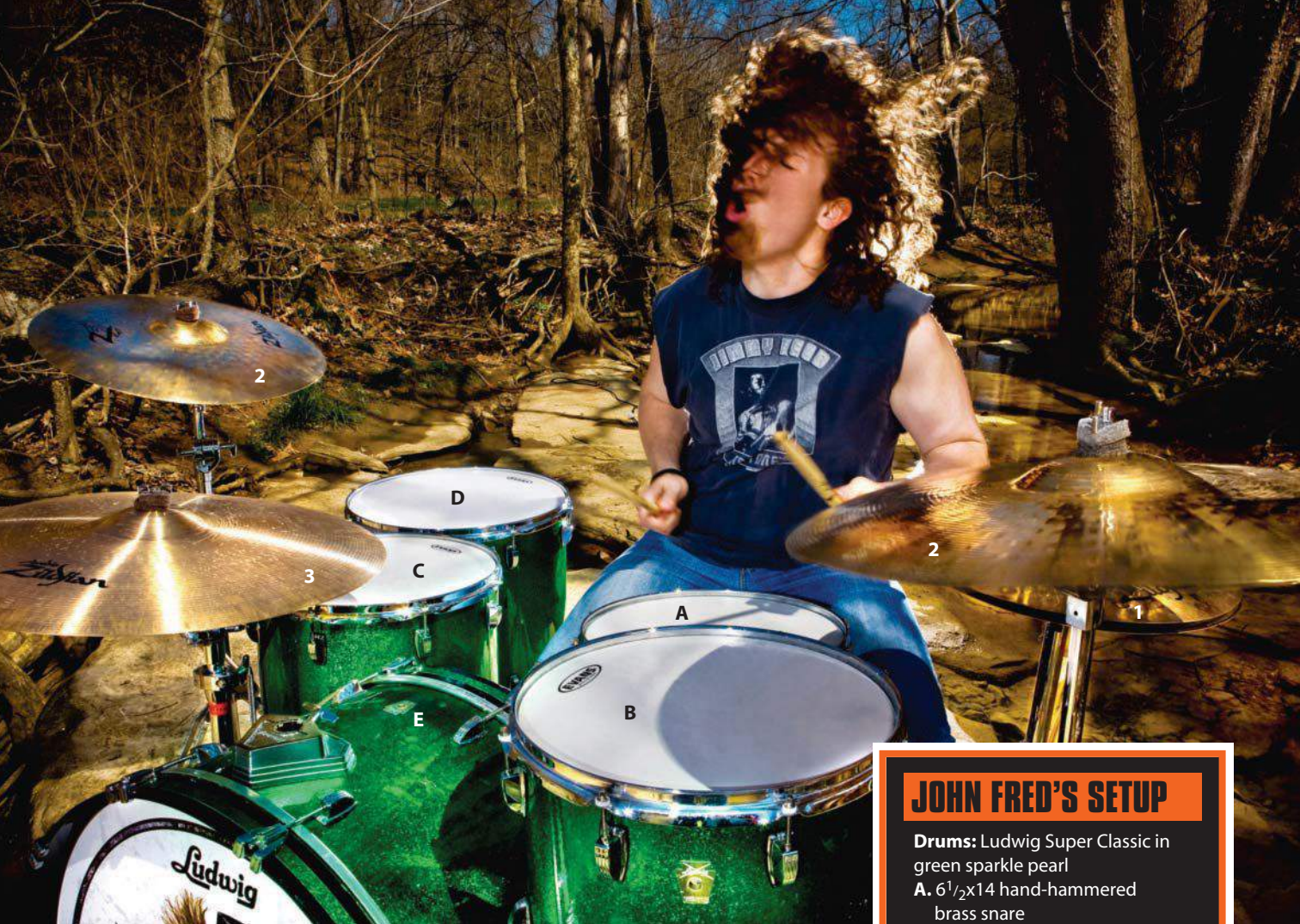
And when the group's third album, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, was released this past May, the official release party and concert were held at a prime gathering location for that region of Kentucky: the Walmart in the nearby town of Glasgow. The next day, BSC flew to England to begin another tour.

**MD:** You've been on the road pretty solidly since the first album came out five years ago. Before that, you were mostly playing in the practice house. How has all this live playing changed your drumming?



toured the States and Europe almost nonstop. But the band always comes back to Kentucky and has maintained close ties with the community. Every Thanksgiving weekend, BSC and the HeadHunters perform in nearby Cave City to benefit the Toys for Tots program that provides Christmas presents for local children whose families can't afford gifts. Last year BSC played in the Edmonton town square as part of the 150-year anniversary of Metcalfe County.

**John Fred:** I try to play my best live, but I'm also trying to be a great showman. I always keep in mind that I have to play these songs to where people can really lock in. Spontaneity and improvisation are awesome, and sometimes I get bored with playing the same thing over and over again, so I'll throw in fills that maybe don't need to be there. But you can lose people if you get too far away from what the song was when you made it. I feel I've grown, because now I'm



## JOHN FRED'S SETUP

**Drums:** Ludwig Super Classic in green sparkle pearl

**A.** 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ×14 hand-hammered brass snare

**B.** 10×14 tom

**C.** 16×16 floor tom

**D.** 16×18 floor tom

**E.** 14×26 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

**1.** 14" A Mastersound hi-hats

**2.** 20" Z3 crash

**3.** 24" A Medium ride

**Heads:** Evans, including a coated ST snare batter and Hazy 300 bottom, coated G2 tom batters and clear G1 bottoms, and an EQ3 bass drum batter and Ludwig logo front head

**Sticks:** Pro-Mark 747B Super Rock

*After these photos were taken, Young switched to DW 9000 series hardware and stopped using his 16×18 floor tom.*

playing more for the song than I am for myself.

**MD:** With all of the energy you put into your live playing, do you ever have trouble controlling the tempo?

**John Fred:** We've just started playing with a click live. We've always used clicks on our records, but we never wanted to use them live because we didn't want to take away the energy of the show. But playing with a metronome live allows me to not worry about the time. I don't use that *beep* sound; I programmed a shaker, tambourine, and cowbell, and it feels like I'm playing with a great percussionist. I can play more for the song, and it feels good. At first we were scared to use a click live, but now I can see people in the audience moving in time with us and with each other.

**MD:** Give us some background on *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*.

**John Fred:** We wrote for a whole year at the practice house. Then we went to Los Angeles to do the record with a producer named Howard Benson. Howard said that we needed to be ourselves and not hold anything back. Howard has produced Daughtry, My Chemical Romance, Creed, Three Days Grace, Papa Roach—that's a lot of great rock. He was a big help to me. He told me to play what I wanted to play in the

verses, but on the choruses I should lock in on a bass drum pattern that people can sink into. And that's what you hear on some of the greatest records of all time. They'll have a chorus that's easy to remember. So I got to play some fills and things that I wanted to do, but I made sure that what I played complemented the vocals and the bass.

**MD:** Do you play as physically in the studio as you do on stage? Do you have to move like that to get your feel?

**John Fred:** I do. Live, there's obviously more people there and more energy, and you have to put on a show. I do a lot of spins with the sticks, and it's become like an involuntary muscle action, so I was doing that in the studio too. But I try to play with as much passion in the studio as I do live—the same energy and volume and power. Before we went in to do this record, Ben told me, "Don't worry about playing perfect. Just go in and hit those things as hard as you can." And I was thinking, *Yeah*.

The engineer told me that I was hitting my bass drum, snare, and cymbals at a volume that was almost beyond need, but he said I played my toms very dynamically. I don't know if that's because of the position they're in, where I have to stretch my arms out. But I got rid of my 18" floor tom because I was only using it for a couple of

notes at the end of fills, and I was having lower-back trouble from having to spin around to reach that drum. I love the sound of an 18" floor tom, but it's impractical to have to twist so far to hit it.

The biggest difference in my playing in the past year and a half is my posture. I'm



carmine appice



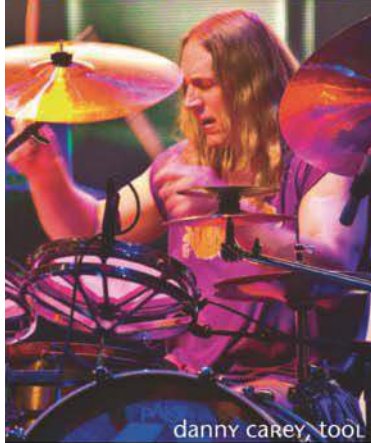
vinnie appice



sterling campbell - david bowie



jeff campitelli - joe satriani



danny carey - TOOL



scott crago, THE EAGLES

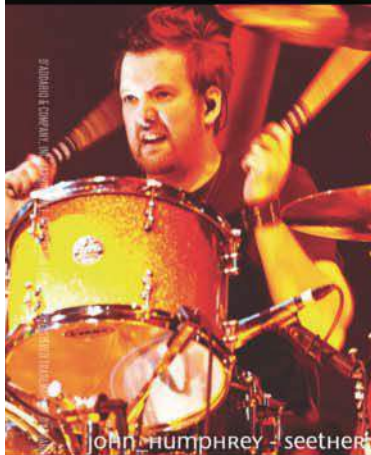


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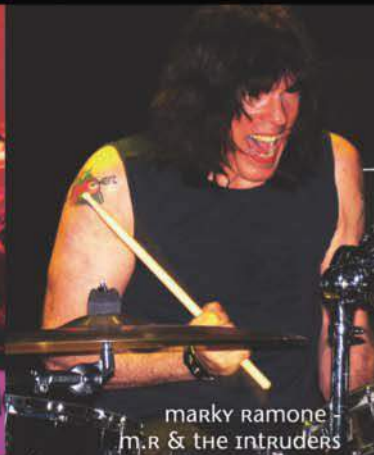
john humphrey - SEETHER



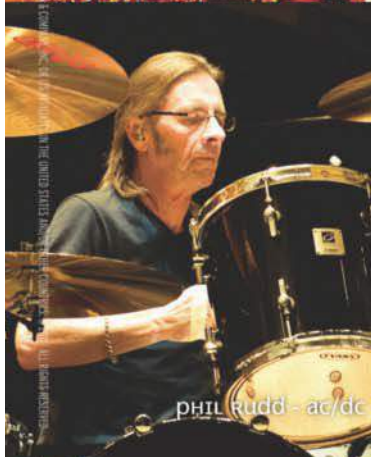
pat mastelotto - KING CRIMSON



john miceli - MEATLOAF



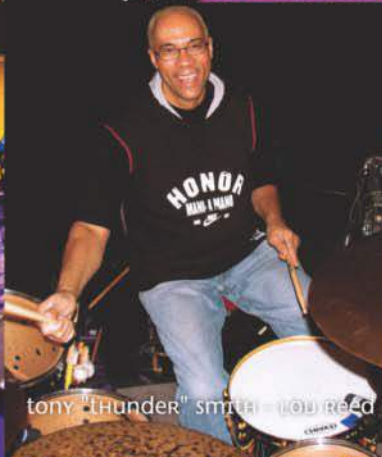
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phil rudd - AC/DC



mark schulman - FOREIGNER



tony "thunder" smith - YOU'RE DEAD



mike terrana - TARJA

## JOHN FRED YOUNG

not sitting as high as I once was, because my back started to hurt. I try to sit fairly high, because I like to play heel-up and toe-down. I've lowered my throne to where I'm sitting at almost a 90-degree angle, but my butt is a little bit higher than my knees. If my butt is lower than my knees, then I have to lift up my whole leg to play the bass drum pedal. I think that's one of the most important things a drummer needs to learn. When kids take music lessons, teachers show them how to hold their sticks, but they need to also talk about posture. I've been playing since I was in the eighth grade, and I'm just now learning correct posture. You can really hurt yourself playing drums if you don't sit the correct way.

I see drummers who put their cymbals way up high or way far out. Wherever you sit, things need to be comfortable, no matter what it looks like. I mean, yeah, it can look cool to have your cymbals way up in the air, but looks are nothing. If the look of the kit allows you to play your best and have good posture, great. But if the way you set something up hurts you physically or makes it harder to play, it's not worth it. If I raise my cymbals too high, then I'm lifting my arm so that my elbow goes above my shoulder, and that wears me out. I don't mean to sound like an old man, but you've got to take care of your-

self if you want to do this forever.

**MD:** You might be a little better schooled in the history of this music than a lot of people your age, thanks to your uncle Fred.

**John Fred:** He's taught me a lot. He's my biggest idol on drums.

**MD:** Fred told me that you and he like to sit in the practice house together with a couple of drumsets and listen to records and figure out how certain drum parts were played.

**John Fred:** We used to do that all the time. And when we're both home, we'll still go up to the practice house and hang out. It's fun to listen to those records and figure out what someone is doing and how they did it. That's the way I learned. Fred and I would go up to the practice house, put on headphones, and play stuff back and forth. Fred has such eclectic taste in music. He'll find things on YouTube and send me emails: "Hey, check this out." I'm very fortunate to learn stuff from him. I got all that "tribal" stuff I do on the toms from Fred.

**MD:** Can you remember specific drummers that you and Fred studied together and things you learned?

**John Fred:** I remember studying Bernard Purdie. Fred wanted me to learn to play the Purdie shuffle. I remember listening to Ginger Baker and all the Bonham stuff, but I was mostly listening to Fred. I was learn-

ing a lot of stuff from these guys, but you never play something exactly the same as the person who's teaching it to you, because you have your own personality and your own heartbeat and soul. It's cool learning stuff from other drummers. You might not get the exact, correct groove or fill that you're trying to learn, but what's fun is that you might stumble upon something else that's an alteration of that beat.

**MD:** Has anyone tried to tell you guys that you need to move to L.A. or New York?

**John Fred:** People ask where we live, and when we say Edmonton, Kentucky, they're like, "Where the heck is that?" People ask us why we don't move, and the reason is that there's no need to. We're happy here. We can play in the practice house whenever we want, without having people call the cops because we're too loud, and we don't have to rent a place to practice. We went to New York when we were eighteen or nineteen, and we needed to do that to get a record label, but it happened. We're proud to still live here. We're so fortunate to do what we do, especially being from Edmonton, which is not even 2,000 people. We get homesick on the road and miss everybody, but we keep doing it because every time we get to play it's another day in paradise.



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A photograph of Mike Portnoy, a drummer, performing on stage. He is wearing a black bandana, sunglasses, and a black vest over a dark shirt. He has extensive tattoos on his arms and is holding a drumstick in his right hand, raised. The background is a dark stage with blue lighting and a large window with vertical bars.

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*- Mike Portnoy*

Two wooden drumsticks are shown in the foreground, crossed. They are Pro-Mark 420 Millennium II sticks. The text on the sticks includes 'pro-mark 420 MILLENNIUM II' and 'Mike Portnoy MIKE PORTNOY'.







# NICK MASON

## Delicate Thunder

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**Pink Floyd's** discography is among the most revered in rock's history, and Nick Mason has been there for each and every chapter of the group's storied career. On the occasion of a monster reissue campaign, *MD* editorial director Adam Budofsky details the drummer's many sonic charms, then chats with Nick for his first-ever *Modern Drummer* cover story.

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**P**ink Floyd could be the ideal group for the kind of person who would labor over carefully assembled "mix tape" collections of a favorite band. You could imagine such a person dividing Floyd's 150-odd studio tracks into compilations with titles like "Pink Floyd: Proto Metal Mix" or "Pink Floyd: Mellow Sunday-Morning Songs." Other discs one might make could be titled "Twisted Pop Gems," "Psychedelic Soul Tracks," and "Late-'60s/Early-'70s Avant-Garde Explorations." As common as it is to see Pink Floyd slot-

ted into the "space rock" category, in reality the band's recordings have never been easily pegged. Consequently, the drumming of Nick Mason has not been easy to define.

### TEARING DOWN THE WALL

The Pink Floyd catalog is deep, its influence wide. As instigators of London's '60s underground revolution, Floyd exploded the boundaries between pop and art music and tapped directly into the times' spirit of adventure, melding imaginative sonic and visual elements like



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Bob Gruen

no other outfit that came before. Founding singer-songwriter-guitarist Syd Barrett had a magical skill for crafting odd and detailed pop songs and, along with Mason, keyboardist Richard Wright, and bassist Roger Waters, showed an equally strong tendency toward extended improvisational freakouts. This resulted in the band's immediate arrival at the top of the British pop charts with songs like "See Emily Play" and "Arnold Layne"—and a quickly gained reputation as the pace-setters of experimental British rock music. In 1967, no one, not even the Beatles, held the underground credentials and cool factor that Pink Floyd possessed.

After losing Barrett to drugs and mental unhealth, the remaining band members, including Syd's replacement, David Gilmour, beat all odds and, after a series of wildly searching albums, forged a new, perhaps even more influential path. Taking studio perfection and conceptual sophistication to previously unexplored levels,

mid-'70s albums *The Dark Side of the Moon* and *Wish You Were Here* were awe inspiring in their architecture and invention, tapping into the growing "hi-fi" movement and establishing a perfect balance between futuristic music technology and deeply personal, humanistic lyrical themes. Once again, Pink Floyd was at the very pinnacle of its chosen field of musical endeavor.

At decade's end, Floyd somehow topped even its own gargantuan accomplishments with the hugely ambitious album/film/theater piece *The Wall*, which set the bar for what a rock band could accomplish in a live setting. All the special effects, lasers, and giant puppets in the world, however, couldn't hide the internal strife that had been growing for several years. After one more studio album, Pink Floyd dissolved, only to return several years later without Waters, who publicly excoriated his former bandmates at every opportunity.

#### ANY COLOR YOU LIKE

Through all of Floyd's jolting upheavals and glacial concept albums, Mason has been the very definition of the supportive drummer, skillfully enabling some of the most enduring music of the modern age. Returning to our Floyd mix tapes, a wide range of Nick Masons emerges—from tribal warrior to meticulous beat maker. The handful of singles and one full album (*Piper at the Gates of Dawn*) that the group produced with Syd Barrett's involvement are quite a different animal from the "classic" Floyd sound that fans of *The Dark Side of the Moon* or *Wish You Were Here* would recognize. Among Barrett's strengths were his compellingly rhythmic wordplay and ingenious arrangement ideas, and a number of these *Piper*-era songs provided Mason with an opportunity to make unpredictably fun drumming statements. Dig his back-and-forth switches between straight and double time on Barrett's "Lucifer Sam" and "See Emily Play," his weird snare/bass



intro on Waters' "Take Up Thy Stethoscope and Walk," or his timbale-like overdubs on Wright's "Paintbox."

Post-Barrett, Floyd's early-'70s "pop" moments tended to come in the guise of slower, often acoustic-styled numbers like "Cymbaline" and "Green Is the Colour" from the soundtrack to *More* and "Fat Old Sun" from *Atom Heart Mother*, on which Mason is clearly in touch with his inner Levon Helm and Ringo Starr. "Fat Old Sun," in particular, is reminiscent of George Harrison's "Long, Long, Long" from the Beatles' *White Album*, and Nick's booming snare/tom punctuations help the song achieve a similar yearning feel to Levon and Ringo's mellower moments. And on "Country Song," a fantastic track unearthed for the expanded reissue of the *Zabriskie Point* soundtrack, Mason can be heard double-tracking two distinct drumkit takes, creating a cool ping-ponging effect between the two snare drums.

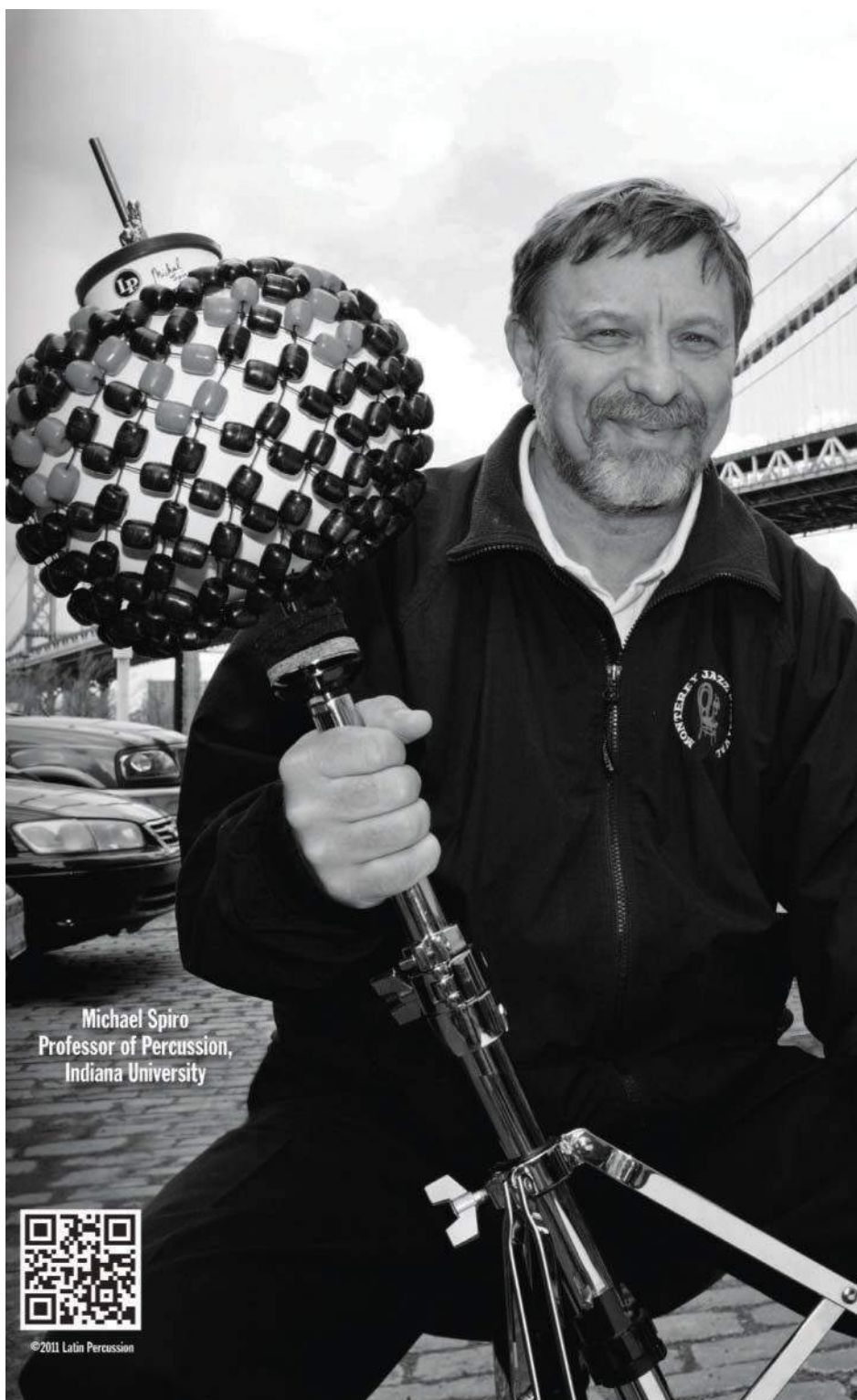
During this phase of the band's career, gigantic, grungy, guitar-riff-driven tunes like "Interstellar Overdrive" and "The Nile Song" were still an important part of the Floyd repertoire. On these tracks and others, Mason gets to tap into the playing of heroes Ginger Baker and Mitch Mitchell, with spacious but continuous tom fills and big, washy cymbals. Years later, on *The Wall* and *The Final Cut*, Floyd came back to blatantly heavy ideas on cuts like "In the Flesh?" and "Not Now John," and Mason responded with a more streamlined approach, not unlike Tony Thompson's bottom-heavy wallop with Power Station.

Nick's playing on the early near-metal Floyd tracks is less flashy than that of his colleagues in the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Cream, and his Phil Spector-meets-AC/DC beats in the later period don't have roots in funk, like Thompson's or Phil Collins' '80s beats do. This "non-drummy" approach makes sense, as throughout its catalog Pink Floyd was often on a mission to present unique and thoughtfully unfolding mid-tempo tracks, not to create platforms for million-note instrumental displays,

reimagined dance grooves, or chattering musical conversations. Mason's sometimes tumbling, sometimes sparse drum performances routinely provide just the right amount of nudging. To that end, rather than mark transitions with witty rhythmic devices, he'd more likely employ a simple hi-hat chick on 2 and 4 or overdub a well-chosen tom or hi-hat part to slyly adjust the hue or intensity of a

new section.

Indeed, if you were to immerse yourself in Floyd's albums for a day, you'd be able to identify half a dozen distinct variations of the *chick...chick...chick* effect, including the choral passage from the title suite on *Atom Heart Mother*, the middle section of "A Pillow of Winds" from *Meddle*, and the intro of "Brain Damage" from *Dark Side*. Mason's subtle use of overdubs is espe-



Michael Spiro  
Professor of Percussion,  
Indiana University



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cially effective during David Gilmour's guitar solos on "Have a Cigar" from *Wish You Were Here*, on which the double-handed overdubbed hi-hats allow for tom rolls and offbeats on the snare to tweak the beat without breaking the groove, and "Dogs" from *Animals*, where the rumbling toms at 13:26 boost the song's energy just enough.

Still, for those who are looking for

some drumming drama from Mason, it's there to be found. Check out his playing throughout the unique *Live at Pompeii* video, which, as Nick explains later in this piece, is practically a showcase for his more active drumming proclivities. Highlights here include his glorious outbursts in the second half of "One of These Days" and accelerating linear approach to "A Saucerful of Secrets." Anyone who has ever labeled

Mason laid-back surely hasn't witnessed these clips.

Yet another aspect of Nick's playing comes to the fore on our imaginary "Psychedelic Soul Tracks" comp. Dig the locked-in feel he and Roger Waters fall into at 7:02 on the epic *Meddle* track "Echoes," which, if you listen carefully, is actually two superimposed drum passes, fattening up the groove. (It's no crutch, though; watch the way-heavy live version of "Echoes" on *Pompeii* to see that "one" Nick Mason had no trouble bringing it home.) A slightly slower take on the beat appears two years later on "Any Colour You Like" from *Dark Side*, a wonderfully playful and important segue into the album's famous "Brain Damage/Eclipse" closing segment.

#### FEARLESS

Few bands that have sold as many albums as Pink Floyd has—more than 200 million worldwide—have gone as far *out* on record, and Mason has hardly been a passive onlooker when the band has set its controls to exploratory mode. The 1969 double album *Ummagumma* represents the peak of Floyd's experimental phase, and though various band members have downplayed the value of the album's tracks, the music does highlight an important aspect of the group.

As architecture students at Regent Street Polytechnic in London, Mason and his mates were exposed to cutting-edge visual and musical efforts at a fairly young age, including modern jazz and classical music. As early as 1963, the band members had taken up residence in the home of Mike Leonard, a teacher at the school who, as Nick says in his book *Inside Out: A Personal History of Pink Floyd*, "was fascinated by ethnic percussion and the interplay between rhythm, movement, and light." When listening to Mason's solo contribution to *Ummagumma*, the three-part "Grand Vizier's Garden Party," it's not hard to imagine modern art and experimental film feeding the drummer's early use of loops, effected percussion, and tape manipulation.

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Nick's artful leanings, as well as the fondness for mechanical things like cars and tape recorders that he inherited from his filmmaker father, could be detected at various points later in his career as well—in his artwork for the cover of Floyd's popular early compilation *Relics*; in his use of electronic percussion on the 1972 soundtrack album *Obscured by Clouds*; in his assemblage of *Dark Side of the Moon* themes on the album's opener, "Speak to Me," as well as his and Waters' creation of the famous "Money" intro loop; and in his work outside Pink Floyd, with modern jazz musicians like Michael Mantler and Carla Bley.

## THE SOUND RESOUNDS

This past July, *Modern Drummer* was invited to Electric Lady Studios in New York City to listen to some carefully chosen cuts from EMI's gigantic Pink Floyd reissue series, which, in addition to featuring newly remastered versions of each of the band's studio albums, will include two different multi-disc versions of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, *Wish You Were Here*, and *The Wall*, as well as a box set of Floyd's studio catalog and a new best-of comp. The following day we spoke with Mason about the reissues and other aspects of his fascinating career. We began by asking Nick how he feels about his drumming on the many classic Pink Floyd cuts.

**Nick:** I've always been a bit disparaging of my own playing. I tend to listen to things and wish I'd done it differently. But

I'm becoming more forgiving in my old age.

**MD:** Do you allow yourself to be proud of influencing subsequent drummers? Have you ever heard younger players and thought they might have been influenced by you?

**Nick:** I've never really noticed anyone I could claim to have influenced, but of course it's nice when anyone does refer to a part I've played that they have taken on board.

I still really like the drum parts on "Comfortably Numb," with particular thanks to producer Bob Ezrin. They are probably the sparsest of all, where even the odd obvious bass drum beat is left out. I always like the idea of fills where the actual number of strokes played is limited to far less than would seem necessary initially—say, maximum six strokes on a two-bar fill!

**MD:** You said in a previous interview that compared with some other bands, Pink Floyd did a lot of overdubbing. But it seems that one of the reasons why your music has stood the test of time is the spaciousness of the mixes.

**Nick:** We did do a lot of overdubbing, but they tended to be what I'd call light washes. In fact, I can remember occasions when we've totally overdone the overdubbing and had to go and strip it back again. The trick is to keep it really simple to kick off with and then just very gradually layer up little extra bits on it.

## EMPTY SPACES

**MD:** Something you've done effectively over the years is accompany the music with a sparse ride cymbal beat or a simple chick on the hi-hats on 2 and 4. We drummers seem to have a tough time allowing so much space in the music, but you treat these opportunities so artfully. Was this ever a conscious decision, or do you think it's just a natural element of your playing?

**Nick:** I think it became necessary. Originally I wanted to be Ginger Baker, Keith Moon, or Mitch Mitchell, but the nature of the music, with those constant light washes of sound being added, requires a far lighter touch—particularly in the studio. One can always add more, but if the basic drum track has too much going on, it's impossible to filter it out later.

This business of overplaying...that was sort of brought home on the last tour. We'd played the whole *Dark Side* album live one night and then had a listen back to it, and it was truly dreadful. It took a little while to work out why, and the answer was just because everyone was playing far, far too much. After thirty-odd years there are so many extra beats you can put in, but it's entirely the wrong thing to do.

**MD:** What are some of the most challenging songs you've played? The looped drum section of "Saucerful of Secrets" live, like on the *Pompeii* video, seems particularly demanding, given the speeding-up nature of it.

**Nick:** Curiously not. Once you get started on it, it's so repetitive that you get to the point of being able to move it around different drums fairly easily.

**MD:** When you listen carefully, you can hear a surprising number of drum overdubs on Pink Floyd songs.

**Nick:** For many years I thought drum overdubs were more or less impossible. I always found it very, very hard to capture the feel on the parts when you're taking the time from some-

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thing you've already done. It's one of those things that undoubtedly you get better at, and it eventually becomes quite a nice way of working. In fact, we ended up doing something that we might release one day: We actually redid some of the drums on *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*. We had a load of people come in and add extra drums and percussion on that album. But we went back and tried stripping some of it back down to much simpler patterns. It's interesting whether one likes it or not, but it does give a very different feel to any given track when you do that.

**MD:** A particularly cool drum overdub is the hi-hats on "Have a Cigar." The way that changes the mood is worth a thousand drum fills.

**Nick:** I suppose that's why one puts in these sorts of details. You've jogged my memory now. It's one of those things where it wasn't thought out to the point of coming up with alternatives. It was just, "Why don't we put a double hi-hat on it here." It's funny how there's not always some sense of being able to intellectualize how each section was done.

**MD:** The cool thing is how subtle it is. Most non-musicians would never pick up on that sort of thing.

**Nick:** Certainly you don't want people, on the first few hearings, to think, *There's a lot of drums there*, or, *That's a very loud guitar*. What you want to do is have listeners hear the piece as a whole.

#### MORE BLUES, MORE PINK

**MD:** What was the thought behind this reissue campaign? Was it a matter of the band members knowing there were

unreleased tracks that you wanted to have out there, was it prompted by the record company...?

**Nick:** It was prompted by a record company, and I think we were sort of slightly dragged kicking and screaming, but then we found that it was a worthwhile thing to do. It became more interesting as more and more stuff became visible. To be honest, initially there's a sense that we couldn't possibly release yet another version of this album or that. But it's a different landscape now; there really is an interest in how things were done and in hearing other versions of the songs. Listening to it, you begin to understand why, because there are some fairly major differences in how things were done.

**MD:** The live version of "Money," perhaps simply due to the mix, had me focusing on elements of the song that I hadn't really thought of before. There's the often-mentioned fact that it's sort of a blues that's in 7/4, which is unusual for a hit record. But it's also a shuffle, which jumps out because of the fills that you do at various points, which are sometimes swung and sometimes straight. How did you view the idea of playing things live versus in the studio?

**Nick:** Well, it's a curious one, because there's very little actual thought that goes into it. "Money" was one of those songs that was developed in the studio. If you do that you tend to end up with more sparse drum parts, because you only have to listen back quite quickly to realize if you're playing too much, which is the great problem—well, it tends to be a problem for everyone except the bass player. But the interesting thing about the drum part for "Money" is that it has changed a bit over the years, the feel mostly. You talking about it makes me think I might have a listen of the live version on *Pulse* from '95 and the live '74 version [on the "Experience" and "Immersion" reissues of *Dark Side*] back to back.

With any track—and in my case I've been playing some of them for thirty-five years or longer—what's so interesting is that there still is that interest in whether you can redefine it, to change it fractionally or play it in some way better or differently. There are parts that become refined, then there are particular breaks or fills that feel like they must be played in exactly the same way every time. But I think there's always room to recheck them in terms of the dynamics with which they're played or whether there is actually another way of doing the part that would work better.

**MD:** We were recently talking here in the office about how important EQ is to the way a drum track feels. When you experiment with changing various frequencies, it gives the impression that the groove changes too. I was reminded of this when I was listening to that live "Money" recording from '74. When you were listening to tracks for the reissues, was there anything that surprised you from a sonic angle or that you had forgotten you had done?

**Nick:** There was quite a lot. One thing is the sound of the drums. Unfortunately I can't always remember which kit was being played at any given time. I do remember that around the *Dark Side* period I moved from the Ludwig kit to a Fibes kit and then back to the Ludwig again. I know when we did Radio City Music Hall it was the Fibes kit, which was a very live, tanky sound compared to the Ludwigs. I think I always felt the Fibes were wrong in the studio. But I'm also

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interested in what you suggest about the EQ. I can see why you'd get the emphasis at a different frequency, which might shift it a nanosecond, and of course that is what matters.

I don't recall whether we talked about it when we spoke before [MD last interviewed Mason in the July 2005 issue], but you know this thing that people seem to be talking more and more about, the differences between the English school of drummers and the American school, with English drummers sort of pulling it back slightly? I met this guy who's a profes-

sor at one of the London music colleges, and he's actually done some research into this, and it does seem to be true. I think it sort of brings something home, which is that the length of a beat is actually quite a big space that your notes can fall within without being out of time. I'm afraid to say it's completely changed the way I listen to a lot of drummers now, because you're always listening to see if you can actually hear how they're approaching it.

**AMASSED GADGETS**

**MD:** Over the years, have there been

particular cymbals that you've gravitated toward?

**Nick:** I always have aspirations to try all sorts of new and different sounds, but I'm incredibly conservative. I've used the same sort of setup since this really nice guy from Paiste came up to me at the Montreux Jazz Festival in '69 or '71. He said, "We'd like to give you some cymbals." I've sort of carried on copying that first set, with later developments—the 602s and the 2002s, and then the Signatures. But there's always that thing of feeling that you should have the basics covered, which for me is that sort of perfect 20" ride and a 16" or 18" crash. From there you have maybe two or three other crashes just so that you've got very different sounds, and maybe a second ride and a Chinese or something like that for walloping during the long guitar solos. Everything else is extra. After forty-odd years I've got 200-plus cymbals, of which I keep meaning to try and use the other 187!

The most interesting cymbal development I've seen recently is this

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business where you mount two sets of hi-hat cymbals on one pedal. It's a bit complicated to set it up, which I can tell you from the bitter experience of trying to set it up in front of a television camera. But you run a pair of 14s as the base part and then a couple of little 8" cymbals as the top set. That's a really nice thing because you can get double-time hi-hat things going.

I love all that sort of fiddling in technology. Once a year or so I manage to get out to the Drum Workshop factory, and it's always an absolute delight. There's always some wonderful new piece of engineering that they've invented to make it easier to do something.

**MD:** You've used a double bass kit since the late '60s. Do you tend to use the drums in certain ways musically? And how do you tune or dampen each drum in relation to the other?

**Nick:** Frankly the double bass drums get used fairly un-musically! They tend to simply add extra strength to live shows, and sometimes they make a slightly complex bass drum part easier to hear if the drums are tuned differently. I usually use different-size drums to increase that difference. And I almost never record with the two.

#### IN THE FLESH?

**MD:** Many fans aren't familiar with it, but the *Pompeii* video seems to represent a lot of what you're about as a player.

**Nick:** Absolutely. I rather like the lost stick and the recovery on "One of These Days."

**MD:** Right, that's perfect! You get a lot of really good camera

time on that one.

**Nick:** My understanding is the director, Adrian Maben, lost the reels of Roger and David for that section. I also think he'd probably spent quite a lot of the budget on the camera railway track to go around the drumkit. I think he probably felt that was God's way of telling him he was meant to concentrate on me.

**MD:** After the half-live, half-studio 1969 double album *Ummagumma*, how come the band never released a proper live album in the '70s?

**Nick:** With the studio half of *Ummagumma* very much being everyone doing things on their own, the live album complemented it well. But I think our feeling, particularly in that period, was that the studio was preferable in terms of being able to do something that was completely different. A live album felt somehow not as good as a studio album. It was almost too easy in some ways. And a concert was a show, so a record of that was somehow half a show.

#### REMEMBER A DAY

**MD:** What was the first music you recall hearing that blew your mind?

**Nick:** Chico Hamilton in the film *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. Watching him playing a solo with mallets was the influence both for "Pow R. Toc H." and "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun."

**MD:** What other drummers did you emulate back in the day?

**Nick:** The drummers I went to watch before I was in a band were frequently jazz players. I was a regular at Ronnie Scott's and the Flamingo, the jazz clubs in Soho, watching the English drummers and occasionally the bebop drummers that came over from America to Jazz at the Phil, which was brought over to England as Jazz at the Festival Hall. But once I got involved in playing for real, I was surrounded by an absolute galaxy of star drummers who to this day are still seen as being authoritative in terms of their playing.

Whether it's Keith Moon, Ginger Baker, Mitch Mitchell, you couldn't have asked for a better group of people to emulate.

**MD:** Was it daunting to play on the same scene as them?

**Nick:** Well, it would have been, except that in general they were enormously friendly and supportive, particularly Mitch, who was just the most delightful character. If you get a lot of support from the people you admire, it makes a hell of a difference. And I think that drummers are an oppressed minority. They do have a tendency to draw together in adversity.

#### THE SHOW MUST GO ON

**MD:** Speaking of adversity, you've mentioned before that your favorite Floyd album is *Dark Side*, essentially because of the way that the band worked in the studio as a team. It must have been very difficult when the relationships began to change. You probably wanted to keep that earlier mood in amber.

**Nick:** And you can't do it. You just have to live with it. Drummers tend to be sort of team players by choice, if only because we simply can't function without the rest of them. There's a limit to how many people want to hear an entire



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## NICK MASON

concert of just the drum parts of *Dark Side*. I think one would have trouble selling tickets.

**MD:** *The Wall* brought out some new elements in the Pink Floyd sound, including something close to a disco beat on “Another Brick in the Wall, Part 2,” which even dance stations embraced at the time. Was this due to recording in the cavernous glass-roof room at Britannia Row, or was it influenced by the dance music of the time?

**Nick:** It was influenced by dance music. This had a lot to do with producer Bob Ezrin, who was desperate to have a disco hit and I think was responsible for setting the tempo.

**MD:** In your book you mention that *The Wall* represented the first time the drums were kept intact throughout the recording process. Could you elaborate on that?

**Nick:** The drums were recorded on 24-track and then saved for the mix by copying a 2-track mix to another 24-track tape for all the overdubs to go on. That way we didn’t lose quality by running the drum tracks over the tape heads a thousand times.

**MD:** You’ve been very up-front in the past about certain Floyd cuts featuring other drummers. Carmine Appice and Jim Keltner, for instance, are listed in the credits for *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*. Jeff Porcaro is said to be on “Mother” from *The Wall*, but there isn’t anything specific about that in the album’s credits. Can you clarify Jeff’s role on that album?

**Nick:** To be honest I simply can’t remember what he did. I suspect it was tidying up the odd track when the mixing was going on in L.A. and I was in Woodstock working with Carla Bley and Mike Mantler. I really don’t have a problem with other people playing drum parts—the only trouble is that in the end I have to learn them to play live, which is harder than playing them in the first place!

**MD:** What is your average day like now?

**Nick:** I’m very pleased to be able to say that I don’t have an average day. My time is so taken up with a number of different things. Apart from cars and flowers and flying and things like that, there’s a certain amount of time I spend working with a group called FAC, the Featured Artist Coalition, which is a lobby group with the idea of getting more musicians to have a voice in dealing with copyright and digital issues in the twenty-first century. There is a certain element of self-interest in it, inevitably. But it’s also interesting to have a look at the industry as it is now and the changes that make it so different for younger bands starting off. It’s interesting how difficult it is to make a living unless you’ve been in the music business for years and years, in which case it seems to be okay.

**MD:** Do you stay involved in music?

**Nick:** Yeah, absolutely. I’m not doing much playing at the moment, but I still really enjoy it, and when there is the opportunity I’ll do it.

**MD:** You’ve done some interesting projects away from Pink Floyd over the years, producing musicians like Gong and Robert Wyatt, playing with Michael Mantler and Carla Bley....

**Nick:** And I’m still interested in working with other people and in production. I’ve always enjoyed doing that. I’m just very wary of getting involved with something that turns into a six-month project, working every night when I actually want to go to bed earlier!







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# JAY LANE

More than two decades ago, he helped **Primus** find its sea legs. He made the difficult choice to move on, and kept honing his craft in funk, jazz, hip-hop, rock, and jam bands. In a rare example of second chances, the Primus ship circled back Jay's way, and he's at the wheel again, on the ride of his life—earning and owning the gig down to the last tickle of the hi-hats.

by Michael Parillo

**A**bout five minutes into *Green Naugahyde*, Primus's first full-length studio album since 1999, "Last Salmon Man" signals a new era in the band's drumming. At first the track, like "Hennepin Crawler" before it, sounds a lot like classic Primus, but pretty soon Jay Lane begins working his own brand of mischief. Over a four-on-the-floor beat with an implied 6/8 polyrhythmic feel, Lane starts sliding into slippery 16th-note double strokes on the cymbals and snare rim. These slick embellishments, which fade in and out and up and down, add a chattering sense of propulsion that really excites the song.

*Naugahyde* is packed with drumming highlights. Here, we find that Lane, who was briefly part of Primus in the late '80s and played on the trio's original *Sausage* demo cassette, was the originator of the two-handed hi-hat trills that have long been a staple of the band's timekeeping. Jay, with his roots in funk—he first left Primus to focus on his hard-grooving Minneapolis-style group the Freaky Executives—plays a bouncy, buoyant beat on the heavy P-Funk-type workout "Tragedy's a' Comin'," using multirods, no less. "Eyes of the Squirrel" was built from the drummer's complex rolling-and-tumbling groove, which provides much of the track's movement beneath leader Les Claypool's throbbing bass line. Throughout the album, Lane plays with a sense of humor, bringing in unexpected accents and oddball sounds that complement Primus's rubbery, dark yet witty funk-rock.

Claypool could be talking about "Squirrel" when with a laugh he says, "Jay will just pull these things out of his ass, and it's kind of like graceful falling. You go, 'Where the hell did that come from?' That's when you get some amazing things out of Jayski, when he sort of takes it to the edge and starts to fall over and does something crazy to keep himself from hitting the ground."

At this point, though, Tim "Herb" Alexander is probably

still the drummer most closely associated with Primus. He played on the band's most popular songs, including "Harold of the Rocks" (on 1990's *Frizzle Fry*), "Tommy the Cat" (1991's *Sailing the Seas of Cheese*), "My Name Is Mud" (1993's *Pork Soda*), and "Wynona's Big Brown Beaver" (1995's *Tales From the Punchbowl*). Alexander's creative big-kit orchestrations and heavy double bass punctuations set the tone for the Primus drum chair to feature a capable foil for Claypool's bass and vocals. When Alexander left after *Punchbowl*, Bryan "Brain" Mantia stepped in handily, with a smaller kit, a more direct approach, and a huge, open tone, playing on *The Brown Album* (1997), the *Rhinoplasty* EP (1998), and *Antipop* (1999) before departing for Guns n' Roses.

Lane, who spent seventeen years playing Grateful Dead songs in Bob Weir's RatDog and then in 2010 left the percussion chair in Weir and Phil Lesh's group Furthur to rejoin Primus, has a style that falls somewhere in the middle. Jay is for the most part looser than Herb and tighter than Brain, and a lifetime of constant gigging has afforded him an unwaveringly confident touch; his super-funky feel is undisturbed by tricky, lickety-split fills and figures that would throw off many groove players. He's also unusually versatile—few drummers could so convincingly pull off the dual feats of slamming out the Primus and jamming out the RatDog. There's virtually no overlap between the bands, other than their Northern California home bases (and the fact that Primus guitarist Larry LaLonde is a well-known Deadhead).

Lane was just back from the 2011 Bonnaroo festival in Tennessee when he spoke with *Modern Drummer* about these very eventful last couple years. "I still got the dirt on my shoes, man," he says of the legendary Bonnaroo dust bowl, which he and Primus helped kick up with a raging set. "We had a good one. It was awesome."

**MD:** How did it come about that you rejoined Primus?

**Jay:** I've had an on- and off-again musical relationship with Les over the years. We've played together in different bands. Every now and then RatDog got a little slow, and I'd do something with Les. Bob Weir ended RatDog last year, and Les got the idea to put Primus back together. He called me up and I said, "Hell, yeah."

**MD:** Is RatDog officially over?

**Jay:** Bob had been doing it for so long, and I think it was just time for a change. He'd been really committed to keeping us employed all these years. Gosh, the life span of RatDog outlasted most bands ever. Bob rekindled his friendship with Phil Lesh, and they started Furthur. I think Bob wanted me on that gig, but Phil didn't necessarily want me on the kit, so they were good enough to throw me a bone by getting me the gig on percussion. Which is great, but I wasn't playing the kit. So then Les called, and I had to make a decision.

**MD:** And this time you chose to join Primus.

**Jay:** It's an offer I can't refuse. Both of them are killer gigs; I just had to choose one. I think anybody would understand my decision.

**MD:** I saw you play with Furthur, and I thought your contributions were crucial. You played the role of percussionist very well.

**Jay:** It felt really good too, because I had been playing those songs for so long, and instead of worrying about holding down the drumkit thing I was able to jump around and accentuate stuff and go kind of nuts up there texturally, which is always fun. I had never done that before. But I think I'd rather be on the kit.

**MD:** You played a lot of cymbals—ride patterns and crashes—without a bass drum.

**Jay:** I think I was just trying to stay out of the way. [laughs] I had a blast, and I had gotten so locked in with Bob. Bob's an

interesting guy. There are musical skills he has that I don't think I'll see again in anybody else. For instance, he's a tempo Nazi. Bob can hold down a tempo on rhythm guitar like nobody's business. He can tell you the difference between 99 and 100 bpm—that's a big difference to him. There were times when we were at odds over the tempo, but by the end of it I had gotten to know *exactly* where he wanted it and we had a real good lock.

Another thing Bob can do that's remarkable is, whether it be in sound-check or on the gig, if he hears feedback, he can rattle off what frequency it is: "Roll off some of that 200 hertz..." [laughs] You think, *Yeah, right—he doesn't know what the hell he's talking about*, and he's right! It's pretty damn hilarious.

**MD:** So when you left Furthur it was time to switch gears for Primus.

**Jay:** It was February of last year when I did the last gig with Furthur, and there were no Primus gigs happening till June. So I



Kevin Packard

## JAY'S SETUP

Lane plays a Ludwig Maple Classic kit in gold glass glitter, including a 16x22 bass drum; 10x8, 10x10, and 10x12 toms; and 14x14 (on left) and 15x16 floor toms. His snare is a 5½x14 Ludwig Black Beauty, and his auxiliary bass drum is a 14x24 orange Vistalite. He uses four Tama Octobans. His Sabian cymbals include 14" AAX Fast Hats (brilliant finish), 13" Paragon Hats (brilliant; used as auxiliary hi-hat), an 8" AA splash, a 17" AAX-Plosion crash, an 18" HHX O-Zone crash, a 22" Paragon ride (brilliant), a 19" Paragon China (brilliant), and a 9" Radia Cup Chime. Jay also plays a Hammerax Boomywang, plus miscellaneous bells and percussion. His Aquarian heads include Response 2 tom batters and a Super-Kick II main bass drum batter, and his snare head is a Remo Falam. He uses DW hardware and 5000 series pedals (auxiliary bass drum, main and auxiliary hi-hats), a Czarcie Kopyto double bass pedal (main bass drum), and Vater 5A sticks.

had like three months to prepare. Primus had a rehearsal room at that time, and I just set up the drums and started shedding three or four days a week, two or three hours at a time. Just sitting there with my iPhone and headphones, with all the Primus albums on shuffle, over and over. That really helped.

Les, by the way, is an excellent drum coach. He's the perfect guy to help mold your drum concept. He's really good at knowing the right direction for me, whether it's what kind of drumhead to use or how to lean on the beat in a certain way. He knows what I do well, and he's trying to draw it out of me. It's been really great working with him.

When I was in Primus back before Tim "Herb" Alexander, we did the *Sausage* demo, with six of the songs that they ended up rerecording, and I kind of put my signature on it. Knowing that, and not really listening to much Primus after I was out of the band, I kind of thought I might have had a little more influence on the drum parts than I actually had.

But it wasn't until last year, when I had to learn all the drum parts—not only Tim's but also Brain's—that I was actu-

## LES CLAYPOOL on "The Power of Jayski"

**MD:** Did the re-formation of Primus hinge at all on Jay's participation?

**Les:** There was definitely a certain synchronicity to what was happening with us and with him. Jay has always been my go-to guy. As a wannabe drummer I've always aspired to be him—Jay and Stewart Copeland and John Bonham are my heroes. I used to roadie for Jay's band the Freaky Executives back in the day, and he was the king daddy-o of San Francisco as far as drummers. There are a handful of people around from back then that really knew the power of Jayski, and I'm one of them.

**MD:** He's done lots of diverse gigs since his first stint in Primus.

**Les:** When he first started playing the Dead stuff with Bob Weir, it was foreign to him. The Jay Lane that I knew grew up listening to Prince and Dave Garibaldi and this whole Minneapolis funk thing, and he had that feel. He always sat in front of the beat, sort of leaned forward, and here he was having to pull back and be more reserved. I think RatDog was an amazing gig for him, because Bob is an incredible guy and the whole scene was such a brotherhood. But you didn't really get to see Jay shine. I would always tell people how amazing Jay Lane was, and they were going, "Really? The guy from RatDog?" That gig wasn't a spot where he could really show off what he's naturally inclined to do—whereas Primus is the perfect spot for him.

**MD:** Do you find that he's still playing on top of the beat?

**Les:** It's funny, because back in the day Jayski was like this stallion—away he'd go, and you'd just hop on for the ride. It was very similar to playing with Stewart Copeland. They interpret songs differently every time. Jayski's got way more discipline now than he did back then, and I find him holding me back, because I tend to push the tempos. I'll look at him, like, "C'mon, we need to lean it forward a little bit," and he's shaking his head, like, "Nope, you're wrong." Then I listen to the tapes, and he's right.

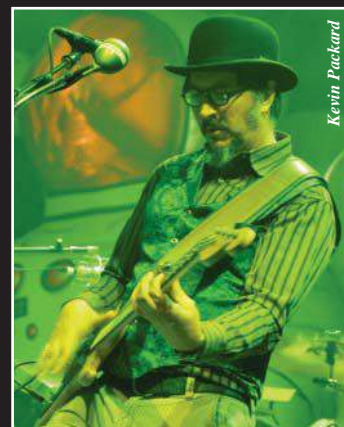
**MD:** Have you been feeling reinvigorated in Primus?

**Les:** One of the most important things is how musicians can relate to each other. Jayski is that guy that takes me to a different level as a player. It's an extraordinary thing to find those musical relationships, and when you do, you really have to savor it.

I spent a lot of years, with Frog Brigade and whatnot, trying to replace Jayski. Drummers that I've played with will tell you that I'm always referring to him—I'm sure it's been a pain in their ass. So it's great to be playing with him again, especially with Primus, because now people get to see what that original sound was—not to take anything away from Brain or Tim, because those were both spectacular eras for the band. But this is a very exciting thing for Larry and me, because there's this chemistry again.

The thing about Jayski is he loves to be challenged. If you say, "Hey man, try this," or if he sees someone else play, he's not threatened by it. He's continually seeing other people and going, "My God, look at that! I gotta work on that." Or, "Dude, I gotta get me one of those."

He's one of those rare people that gets up and has a cup of coffee with a smile on his face and has a good time just livin' life. When we were in Europe and we're bitching and moaning, he's just wandering around, like, "Aw, man, I love it over here!" [laughs] He's almost like a big kid. At all times he has this wonder to him. We play festivals with all these bands that he's never heard of, and he goes and watches them all and just gets fired up by all of it.



Kevin Packard

ally sitting there for a while wondering if I could even do it. Those guys are incredible drummers, and I had a newfound respect for both of them and their influence on the gig. Some of the stuff was so good that I was kind of kicking myself for not listening to it back in the day, and also for assuming that I was up at the level of these great drummers. It definitely kicked my ass—some of the parts and double bass licks, and just the technical ability of both of those guys.

**MD:** I assumed that you helped to form the drum approach to Primus in general.

**Jay:** I didn't have the heavy metal influence that Tim had. I was coming from more of a funk background. So I did a lot of fancy hi-hat work and stuff like that, and I always thought Les's bass-playing style fit well with me. We always locked right in. He's a very easy bassist to play with.

Tim brought a more lumbering, marching kind of sound to the band that I didn't really have in my playing. He's a master of writing drum parts. The parts he wrote have a big thing to do with those songs.

**MD:** Have you retained certain elements of what Tim and Brain did on the old material, while bringing in your own style?

**Jay:** Yeah, but I was trying to go all the way there, trying to sound as much like them as possible. And then, when I sit down and relax and play the stuff, my style will come through no matter what. I don't know if I have enough of a real attention span to remember to sound like anybody else. [laughs] All the influences are going to come through.

It's important to try to get into as much music as possible, across the board. Whatever it is you like, don't be afraid to just immerse yourself in it. And don't worry about: Now I'm gonna sound like this guy or that guy, or this style or that style. If you just do what you do, everything from Elvin Jones to George Jones is going to come out in your playing, and it can all come out at the same time. That's what it's all about.

**MD:** So once you got the gig, you had to go about creating a drumset for it, right?

**Jay:** Yeah, and when I was sitting there learning Herb's parts, sometimes I was like, How the hell did he do that? Like "Jerry Was a Race Car Driver," in the verses he's obviously doing a double bass riff, but the hi-hat's closed. How is he taking his foot off the hi-hat to do the double bass drum thing, but the hi-hat isn't opening? I realized that he had a fixed closed hat. So I was like, Okay, I gotta get one of those....

And I was asking the guys: "What do you think—double kick drum or double pedal?" Honestly, man, coming into this gig, I showed up in a tie-dye T-shirt, with shorts and Birkenstocks. They were like, "Well, first of all, dude..." [laughs] We were

## RECORDINGS

**Primus** Sausage (cassette EP), June 2010 Rehearsal (EP), Green Naugahyde ///

**Charlie Hunter Trio** Charlie Hunter Trio; Bing, Bing, Bing! /// **Sausage** Riddles Are About Tonight /// **Alphabet Soup** Layin' Low in the Cut, Strivin' /// **Les Claypool and the Holy Mackerel** Highball With the Devil /// **Christión** Ghetto Cyrano /// **RatDog** Evening Moods, Live at Roseland /// **Colonel Les Claypool's Fearless Flying Frog Brigade** Live Frogs: Set 1, Live Frogs: Set 2 /// **The Les Claypool Frog Brigade** Purple Onion /// **Les Claypool** 5 Gallons of Diesel (DVD) /// **Band of Brotherz** Deadbeats and Murderous Medlys

## FAVORITES

**The Time** What Time Is It? (Jellybean Johnson, Morris Day) /// **Pink Floyd** Animals (Nick Mason) /// **Weather Report** Weather Report (1982) (Peter Erskine) /// **Tower of Power** Live and in Living Color (David Garibaldi) /// **Funkadelic** Uncle Jam Wants You (Tiki Fulwood, Bootsy Collins, Dennis Chambers) /// **The Billy Cobham/George Duke Band** Live on Tour in Europe (Billy Cobham) /// **Return to Forever** Romantic Warrior (Lenny White) /// **Peter Gabriel** Security (Jerry Marotta)



talking about the first photo shoot, and they were like, "Bring a bunch of different colors to take the pictures—and not all on the same shirt!"

So I needed some direction. Double kick drum—is that not cool? I didn't even know. So it was like, "No, use a double pedal." And, "We should probably have three rack toms," kinda like Herb. You've gotta have some Octobans, for "Eleven" and "Bob." And then Claypool really liked the idea of having an auxiliary kick drum off to the right side, which has a marching bass drum sound. When we recorded the album, we had some songs that had that kick drum on them.

**MD:** You've done a few tours now. Are things evolving?

**Jay:** Yeah. I was struggling for a while, and some songs I still struggle with. But I'm starting to flow with it more. My stamina's up, and I think my chops are up a little bit now. Got the calluses going on my hands. It's definitely helping to try to stay as fit as possible and practice as much as possible. It makes the gig go a lot easier.

I've been trying to hit the gym and also just trying to sweat it up in the room, air drumming or playing on a practice pad. I was actually going to the gym and air drumming with five-pound weights, trying to get the ol' shoulder strength and stuff. Holding the weights like drumsticks and practicing bashing in the air really helped work those muscles.

**MD:** You've done some slamming gigs in the past, but on this one you have to play pretty busily the whole time, with a lot of energy.

**Jay:** Yeah, man, and sometimes I start tightening up. I'm trying to get to the point where I can really be slamming and be relaxed at the same time. It's a challenge.

**MD:** When you're going back and forth

between one and both hands on the hi-hat and doing a lot of intricate work, does that ever cause physical issues?

**Jay:** It does, because when you go to play this little fancy thing on the hi-hat, you're using more of your fingers. But then, when you have to use the same hand every backbeat to smack the snare drum super-hard, it's not like you can just have one grip and bash, bash, bash. It's like: fancy and then bash, fancy and then bash... I find myself starting to lose the stick and find my hand getting tight. You open up your hand to play that little fancy stuff with your fingers, and then you have to kind of grab the stick as you whip the backbeat. I'm getting better at it.

**MD:** Has double bass been part of your style for a while, or is that more of a Primus-specific thing?

**Jay:** No, that's part of the stuff that I didn't think I was going to be able to do. I'm still kind of struggling with it a little bit, but the double bass riffs are crucial to some of those songs. So I've been sticking with it, you know. But no, I didn't play any double bass drum before that.

**MD:** Before 2010?

**Jay:** Exactly. I had played around with double bass pedals, but I'd never really used them on the gig that much. There was no call for it really in RatDog. I just never went there.

**MD:** It's impressive that you could start going there so quickly. It's hard to just say, Okay, now I'm going to play double bass.

**Jay:** I know. But as I said, I'm glad that I was able to practice that hard. There's proof right there that if you really work hard at something you might be able to do it, and eventually you might be able to do it well.

**MD:** So it's really coming together?

**Jay:** Yeah, every gig is getting better.





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# Barry ALTSCHUL

The differences between straight-ahead and avant-garde, melody and rhythm, and straight and free time become intriguingly unclear when you're studying the work of **this jazz-drumming great.**

**H**aving a "name" can be a mixed blessing. Consider Barry Altschul. As a result of his 1970s work with such artists as Circle (with Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Anthony Braxton), Paul Bley, and Andrew Hill, and solo recordings such as *You Can't Name Your Own Tune*, *For Stu*, and *Brahma*, Altschul developed a fine reputation as a free or avant-garde drummer. But because of that, people seldom called him for straight-ahead gigs.

"I've had close friends like Mark Elias and Ray Anderson tell me that people have asked them about my abilities," Barry says. "Can he play time? Can he swing?" A lot of people don't know that I was in the Hampton Hawes and Sonny Criss Quartet with Reggie Johnson on bass. I played with Lee Konitz and Chet Baker, but none of that was ever publicized. When I lived in Europe for several years I played with Dexter Gordon and Johnny Griffin, and I was in Babs Gonzales's band with Clifford Jordan. When I was on the road for three months with Art Pepper, a review from Blues Alley in Boston said, 'The surprise of the

evening was avant-gardist Barry Altschul swinging.' So that hurt, but what can I say? As far as swinging is concerned, Art Blakey, Mal Waldron, and all kinds of people put into print my ability to swing. If they said I can swing, I'm cool with that. But yeah, I find it to be a problem to this day."

Anyone who thinks Altschul can't swing hasn't been paying attention. Even on recent "free" recordings with the FAB Trio (bassist Joe Fonda, Altschul, and violinist Billy Bang) and the Gebhard Ullmann/Steve Swell band, Barry transitions smoothly between open, non-metered drumming and straight-ahead playing that confirms his grounding in swing and bebop. And there is plenty of straight-ahead playing on Jon Irabagon's *Foxy*, which is made up entirely of variations on the Sonny Rollins classic "Doxy."

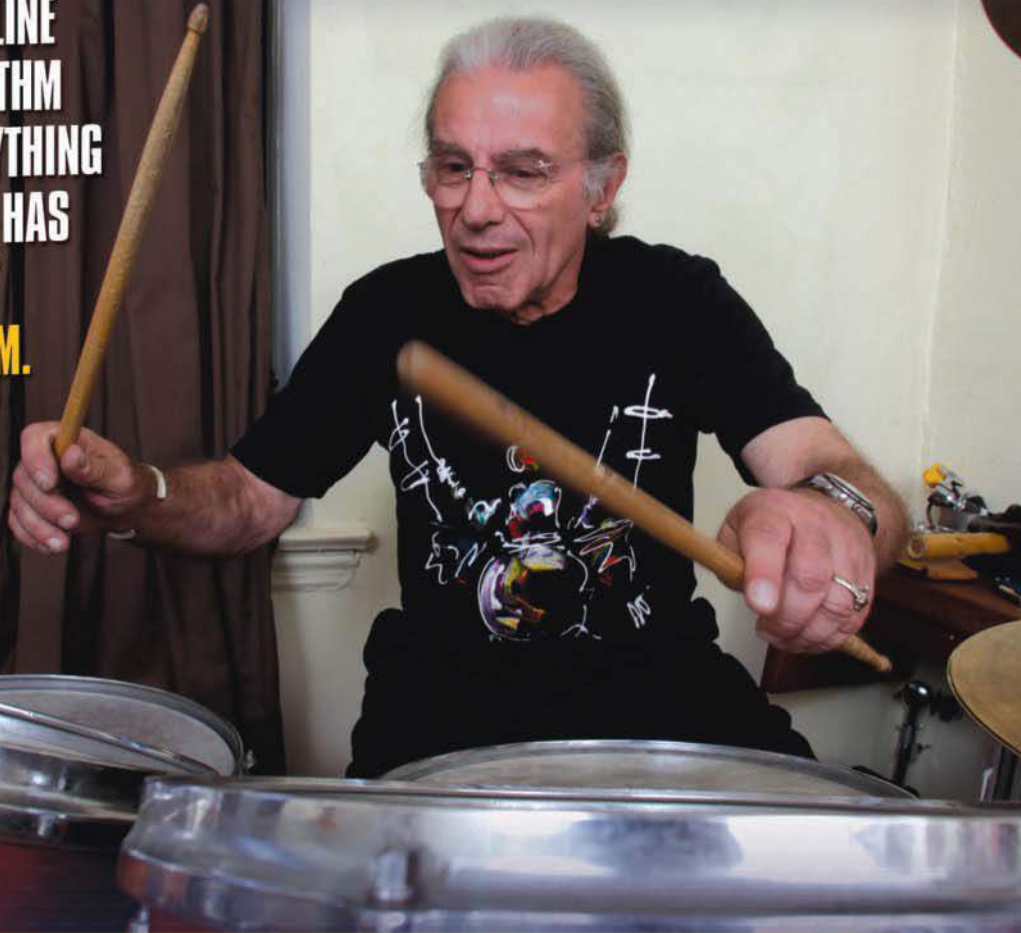
"My own definition of *free* is different from a lot of people's," Altschul says. "I don't really call myself an avant-gardist. I don't mind saying I'm a free drummer, but my definition of being free is having choices. If I have more musical choices, then I'm freer."

Story by Rick Mattingly  
Photos by Paul La Raia





**“WHATEVER MELODIC LINE IS BEING PLAYED, RHYTHM IS INHERENT IN IT. ANYTHING I PLAY ON THE DRUMS HAS A RHYTHM, SO I DON’T HAVE TO THINK RHYTHM. I CAN THINK MELODY.”**



**MD:** Can someone who doesn't know how to play straight-ahead play free? Is it one of those things where you have to know the rules before you understand how to break them?

**Barry:** Yes. In fact, I think a lot of times playing free is used as a cop-out. To me, playing free is an extension of bebop. That's the music I listen to. But some of these people who say they play free find a little area they stay in—for example, people who play squeaks on their horn and that's all they do. To me, that's not being free; that's being locked up in a very small bag. Playing free is the next step, not a backwards step.

The only person who I think really accomplished something doing it backwards was Archie Shepp. He started out playing free and then went back and learned to play tunes and changes. And when he plays now, it's really a beautiful approach. It's got melody, harmony, and rhythm in a very original way. But most of the people who start with free don't go back to learn where it came from.

Also, the free scene now has become more “worldly.” A lot of the free music now isn't from an American aesthetic but a European aesthetic.

**MD:** How did you get into free playing?

**Barry:** I have no idea. [laughs] Drummer-wise, my major influences were Max Roach, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and Roy Haynes. The minors were people like Charli Persip, Frankie Dunlop, Louis Hayes, and Roy Brooks. A lot of horn players turned me on more than the drummers, like Lester Young, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Bird [Charlie Parker], and Sonny Stitt. I grew up with beboppers and hard boppers. Before I played with Paul Bley, I didn't listen to anything that was considered avant or open music. I was a straight-ahead person.

**MD:** How did you start playing with Bley?

**Barry:** I was a janitor in a recording studio, and Paul came in to record. He and I started talking, and then he called me out of the blue for the first

gig ever at Slugs. Paul asked if I wanted to play some standards or if I wanted to play some other stuff he was into. I was an arrogant kid from the Bronx, so I said, “Play whatever you want.” So he started to play “out” stuff, and I just responded.

It was kind of similar to me practicing on a drum pad and listening to my older sister playing classical piano. She is a Juilliard graduate, and I grew up listening to her practice six to eight hours a day. She would be in the living room on the piano and I would be in my bedroom with a drum pad, playing along with her. I wasn't playing time behind her but just improvising to what she was playing.

**MD:** Obviously there was nothing you could imitate in terms of what to play on the drums behind classical piano, so you just had to use your ears and play something that fit.

**Barry:** Right. It gave me a phrasing concept. I realized that whatever melodic line you're playing, rhythm is inherent in the music. Anything I play on the drums has a rhythm, so I don't

have to *think* rhythm. I can think melody. If the melody is repeating itself, it becomes a rhythm that repeats itself, and that's fine. But what I'm playing on the drums is, in my mind, the contour of the melody I'm thinking about or improvising.

**MD:** Were you playing off the melodies that your sister and Paul Bley were playing, or were you thinking of your own melodies?

**Barry:** When I was playing with my sister, I was improvising in that style. I wasn't just trying to play the pieces she was playing. I don't have counter-melodies going on in my head when I'm playing with someone, although I might have one going in my head if I'm playing a solo. If I'm playing in time, my left hand is kind of like a piano, in a certain way playing the chords, and little figures I play in the comping are sometimes responses to what I'm hearing in the melody the soloist is playing. So I look at the drumset as another melodic instrument that at times is part of the rhythm section and at other times is an equal voice in the improvisation.

When I started playing with Paul Bley, I just responded to the music. I never studied "free" music, and I never listened to it until I was with Circle, when Anthony Braxton started turning me on to stuff to listen to. But to me it's jazz. Part of my concept came from thinking about what would happen if I were playing an up-tempo tune and there were no more barlines, just speed. What would I play? So I can relate a lot of my fast free playing to an in-time thing. And I feel that free music—non-metered music—can still swing. That's what I try to bring to free playing rather than a Eurocentric improvisational approach.

**MD:** The fact that you played along to your sister's classical piano might explain something on the FAB Trio's *Live in Amsterdam*. At one point the combination of Billy Bang's violin and what you play on the snare drum and woodblocks reminded me of *The Soldier's Tale* by Stravinsky. You also play some march-like things on the snare that made me wonder if you



## BARRY'S SETUP

**Drums:** Gretsch round badge  
**A.** 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 14 Creation Barry Altschul Signature snare  
**B.** 8 x 12 tom  
**C.** 9 x 13 tom  
**D.** 14 x 14 floor tom  
**E.** 14 x 20 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Murat Diril  
**1.** 14" Luminous hi-hats  
**2.** 18" Jazz crash  
**3.** 20" Black Sea ride  
**4.** 16" Jazz crash  
**Not pictured:** 20" Black Sea Flat ride

**Heads:** Remo Fiberskyn 3 snare batter and Clear Ambassador bottom, Coated Ambassador tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Clear Black Dot CS bass drum batter and Coated Ambassador front head

**Hardware:** Ludwig Speed King bass drum pedal

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Extreme 5A sticks and Heritage brushes

**Percussion:** Altschul often carries an attachment that holds two woodblocks and two cowbells.

**Notes:** "My snare drum was individually handmade to my specific design by the Creation Drum Co. of New Jersey," Altschul says. "It has an African mahogany and American poplar shell with maple reinforcement rings, nine coats of hand-rubbed lacquer on the outside, and nine coats of hand-rubbed teak oil on the inside, plus die-cast hoops, aircraft-aluminum lugs, a Dunnett throw-off, PureSound Blaster wires, and an adjustable Gretsch muffler system under the top skin. Creation and I are in the process of making a Barry Altschul Signature set. It will have a little deeper, rounder sound than my Gretsch kit.

"Murat Dirils are hand-hammered cymbals made in Turkey on the Black Sea. We, too, are working on a signature line. The sound is a wonderful mix of an old K sound and a more modern, Paiste-ish sound."

played drums in your high school band.

**Barry:** Yes, the concert band and the marching band. I use whatever I have experienced. It's like a vocabulary. The more words you have, the more you can express yourself. So I feel the same about being free musically. It doesn't mean that I can only play without time or without melody or

harmony or whatever. I take everything that I've heard and try to incorporate that into my music.

**MD:** You've done a lot of teaching over the years, both privately and at Sarah Lawrence College. In 2011, what does an aspiring jazz drummer need to know?

**Barry:** The computer. [laughs] Nowadays, pretty much the whole

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history of music. Now you're required to play almost any style at any time. Also, in the past twenty or thirty years, the whole level of technical ability has risen. The average player coming out of college now with a performance degree has all kinds of chops.

I think the advances made in the past twenty years or so have been more technical than conceptual. I'm finding that the concept of "telling your story" in your solo seems not to be in the forefront as much as developing technique. I believe that the concept stimulates technique, not the other way around. If you're hearing something and you can't play it, you practice it and your technique evolves. Take a guy like Billy Higgins. Everything he played was so joyous and happy, but technically it was fairly simple. But his intention, intensity, and swing were phenomenal.

**MD:** So students come in with their technique together, but as you hear them play you don't feel they're "telling a story." What do you say to help a student work on that?

**Barry:** "Telling your story" implies that you have a story to tell, and that requires experience. I don't really have a technique to help students tell their story, except to make them aware. I also point out that in the old days when musicians took solos, they took two or three choruses, and their reputation and influences were in those two or three choruses, and that's creativity in itself. Drummers usually took four- or eight-bar breaks and were able to be recognized as well as influence others by their "short stories." Coltrane was one of the very few who could play for very long periods of time and keep telling the story, rather than repeating clichés and having the energy drop because you're just using your technique. Another thing is to not make technique your concept—to use technique to get out your ideas.

**MD:** If you look at the whole song as the story, then your solo should presumably be part of the same story. I've heard drum solos where it seemed like the tune stopped while the drummer showed off technique, and then the song started up again. But then I think

## RECORDINGS

**Barry Altschul** You Can't Name Your Own Tune, Another Time/Another Place, For Stu, Somewhere Else, Brahma, Irina, That's Nice /// **Chick Corea** *The Song of Singing* /// **Dave Holland** Conference of the Birds /// **Andrew Hill** Spiral /// **Paul Bley, Gary Peacock, Barry Altschul** Virtuosi /// **Anthony Braxton** Town Hall 1972 /// **Circle** Paris Concert /// **Sam Rivers Trio** Live /// **FAB Trio** Live in Amsterdam /// **Jon Irabagon** Foxy /// **The Ullmann Swell 4** News? No News! /// **Roswell Rudd** Trombone Tribe



of Elvin Jones and the fact that if you sang the melody of the tune to yourself while he soloed, his solo related to it in some way.

**Barry:** One time I went to see Elvin when he was giving a clinic, and at one point he just started to play. He didn't announce what he was playing, but I recognized the tune by the licks he was playing, so I called it out. He said that was right and that he wanted people to be able to recognize the tune by the drum licks.

But that's also a stylistic thing. If you're playing a composed tune, yes, I agree that the drum solo should be an extension of that tune. But in freer music, if I take a solo that has nothing to do with the tune because there *is* no tune, the solo, like a short story, will have an introduction, a beginning, a middle, and an end. So in that kind of solo I'm playing my own composition. But when the band is playing an actual tune, then I play that tune when I solo.

Again, I don't really concentrate on playing rhythms as much as I do on thinking of some kind of melodic thing, because whatever it is, it has rhythm. If I'm thinking [sings bebop-style melody], I'm playing the contour of that melody around the drums.

**MD:** And going back to the vocabulary analogy, you're not just throwing random words out there—you're putting them together to form sentences and paragraphs.

**Barry:** I try to, yes.

**MD:** Let's say a student comes in with a good command of standard swing

and bop drumming and wants to move toward a freer way of playing.

**Barry:** I have a bunch of conceptual exercises to help open up students' heads. I talk about three areas—time, implied time, and non-time—and then put that into musical situations. For example, you're playing time and you're swinging. Then you go to a place where you're playing implied time, where the time is felt but it's not stated. In other words, you're not really playing 2 and 4, but it can feel like that. I will play something using implied time and ask the student to find the time I'm playing off, because there's a time signature going on in my mind. But I don't state it; I play around it.

Then the third is non-time—more or less an improvisational, classical approach: sound, color, texture, speed, and so on. You don't have a set pattern of beats in each measure. In fact, there are no measures. You eliminate the barline if you're going to look at it in terms of written music. You can listen to some of the stuff I've done with Sam Rivers or some of the stuff Rashied Ali did with Coltrane—the duets where there is speed and motion rather than defined time. But then again, you can often feel a sense of time if you look for it.

To play that way, you have to know a lot of history, and it seems that many young players are going back to study each era. The under-thirty musicians no longer seem to be hampered by a style. At one time the free musicians didn't respect the other type of musicians, and vice-versa. Now it seems that the young people are more into my concept of free: learning as much as you can from all musics and being able to put that in your style whenever it's called for. If you're swingin' and playing 4/4 and all of a sudden you can find a way to stretch it for a minute or change the feeling, you can do that if it works musically. I'm enthused and excited about what I'm hearing from the young players. The styles of music they're playing encompass many areas. I think that's a good thing.





Gene Arnab

# JIMMY CHAMBERLIN: Smashing Conventions

**A jazz and fusion fanatic with a mind for songcraft, Jimmy Chamberlin was the perfect engine to power one of the boldest, most dominant rock bands of the 1990s, the Smashing Pumpkins. With their majestic rock epics, sweeping pop hooks, and grand thematic gestures, the Pumpkins gave Chamberlin an ideal opportunity to take his place among the most identifiable timekeepers of his generation.**

Chamberlin was born into a large musical family in Illinois and spent much of his youth shedding the drums. By his mid-teens he was making a respectable living playing gigs. After a few years touring in show bands, he returned home to work as a carpenter. Soon after, a friend introduced him to singer-songwriter Billy Corgan, who needed a live drummer to secure a gig at Chicago's Metro club. Jimmy showed up with his Tony Williams–yellow Gretsch kit and ended up drastically changing the sound of the band. "It took about two or three practices," Corgan told *Guitar Player* in 2002, "before I realized that the power in his playing was something that enabled us to rock harder than we could ever have imagined."

From the opening tom and snare beat on the Pumpkins' debut album, *Gish*, Chamberlin establishes himself as an integral part of the band's instantly recognizable sound. The drummer's finely honed chops and rock bombast prove the perfect match for Corgan's exacting guitar tones and driven vocals, while his jazz sensibilities are evident in his textural kit approach. "I tend to gravitate towards snare drums and ride cymbals," Chamberlin told *MD* recently, "because those are the two main components that my favorite drummers play. If you listen to Elvin Jones on 'Passion Dance' by McCoy Tyner, the amount of expressiveness he achieves on the kick, snare, and ride cymbal alongside McCoy Tyner's left hand is really all you need to know about the drumset, period."

The Pumpkins' 1993 second album, *Siamese Dream*, debuted in the *Billboard* top ten and went on to sell more than four million copies in the United States. Jimmy is *all over* this record. Drummers can immediately pick up on the influence of his jazz heroes in the triumphant snare rolls on "Cherub Rock" and "Quiet." A closer listen reveals that Jimmy's using the whole drum, sneaking in buzzes and varied accents, not unlike a textbook Buddy Rich solo. His flam usage and steady-pulsing hi-hat may owe something to the fast all-fours of Tony Williams, whose energy Jimmy has admittedly spent most of his drumming life trying to match: "No matter what I hear him play, it's got a power, a beauty, and an execution. There's a real lack of uptightness about his playing—I

just love the abandon that he plays with."

Smashing Pumpkins went even further into the multiplatinum stratosphere with 1995's *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. Chamberlin's strokes are all over the canvas, whether it's subtle work with bundle sticks on "Galapagos" and "To Forgive," pummeling it home on "Bullet With Butterfly Wings" and "An Ode to No One," or keeping it primal on churning grunge numbers like "X.Y.U." and "Bodies." In the snare work on "Tonight, Tonight," you can hear the ability to make use of all of the sounds available from the drum.

Chamberlin was out of the Pumpkins between 1996 and 1998, recovering from heroin addiction and briefly joining a supergroup of sorts with former Skid Row singer Sebastian Bach. In Jimmy's absence the Pumpkins released *Adore*, a decidedly different-sounding record that features extensive drum programming. It took a player as strong as Kenny Aronoff to assume touring duties while Chamberlin was out, but Billy Corgan got Jimmy back in time for the next album, *Machina/The Machines of God*. Within a couple of months of the record's release, however,



the group announced that it was breaking up, though not before releasing one last album later that year, *Machina II/The Friends & Enemies of Modern Music*.

From 2001 to 2003, Chamberlin worked in the ill-fated project Zwan with Corgan and members of Slint, Chavez, and Tortoise. The drummer saw the band's early demise as a chance to explore his musical roots by forming the Jimmy Chamberlin Complex. A YouTube search finds Chamberlin channeling equal parts

Lifetime-era Tony Williams and Yes/King Crimson iconoclast Bill Bruford on the original composition "P.S.A." and the Lifetime staple "Fred" at the 2005 Pukkelpop festival in Belgium.

Corgan and Chamberlin resurrected the Pumpkins in late 2005 and recorded 2007's *Zeitgeist* almost entirely as a duo. Aside from earning a producer credit, Jimmy played a couple of unexpected shuffles at Corgan's behest: the fist-pumping "Tarantula" and the almost ten-minute-long "United States," which he nailed in a single pass. Jimmy even sneaks in a Neil Peart-ish drum break on "Starz."

In 2009, once again out of the Smashing Pumpkins, Chamberlin entered a prolific composing phase and wrote about thirty new instrumentals in his home studio. On a recommendation from a friend, he began working with the multi-instrumentalist and lyricist Mike Reina, and the pair collaborated cross-country on Skysaw's 2011 debut, *Great Civilizations*. The album, which merges subtly progressive harmonies and rhythms with a more pop-oriented vocal sensibility, features virtuoso playing all around and echoes of early Yes, King Crimson, Peter Gabriel, and Roxy Music, along with the pop-oriented work of Brian Eno. ("Sky Saw" is the name of the first track on Eno's *Another Green World*.) The album represents yet another unique pathway for Chamberlin, yet, like

**"If there was ever a drummer in the 1990s to set the foundation for a band," says Chris Guanlao of Silversun Pickups, "it would be Jimmy Chamberlin. The melodies and fuzz seem to float around Chamberlin's drums, fitting perfectly in the pockets on and around the notes, making the songs so tight and oddly groovy for hard rock music. The impact he made in the '90s is palpable, not matched but referenced consistently in rock drumming today."**

all of his other recorded work, displays a relentlessly athletic and adventurous approach to the drumkit.

In 2008 Billy Corgan referred to Jimmy Chamberlin as "pound for pound, the best drummer in the world." It's an audacious statement, made by an audacious artist. Still, if the fervor with which Chamberlin's drumming is studied and emulated is any indication, there are quite a few people out there who would agree.

**Stephen Bidwell**



# Ride Cymbal Phrasing

## How Grip and Fulcrum Impact Your Sound

by Steve Fidyk



**T**he ride cymbal is a jazz drummer's best friend. This instrument helps form the sensation of swing. Whether a drummer uses a tight or loose interpretation of the beat, his or her ride cymbal phrasing is what provides the unique pulse for the composition.

This article will examine the German, French, and Hinger timpani grips and how the different fulcrum (balance point) of each can influence the sound of your ride cymbal beat. We will apply each grip to ride transcriptions from the legendary drummers Shelly Manne, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones. Each of these players held the stick a little differently, and each possessed an individualized and instantly recognizable signature sound.

### German Grip

Check out Shelly Manne's right hand in the photo shown below (at left). Notice that Manne is playing the ride cymbal with the back of his hand held over the stick. This position is known as the



Shelly Manne

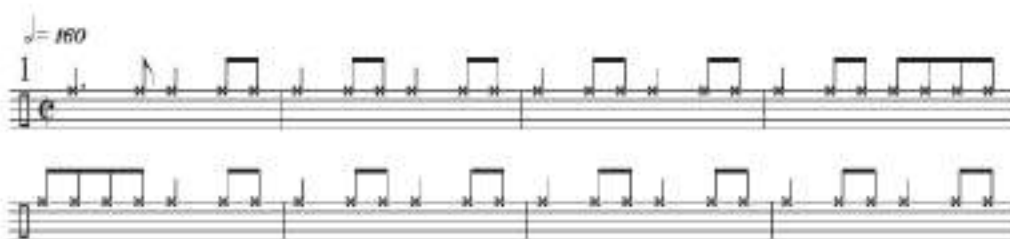


German grip

German grip. The fulcrum for German grip is between the pad of the thumb and the first or second joint of the index finger. The grip uses a waving wrist action, similar to dribbling a basketball, which helps drive the stick.

Manne was one of the greatest up-tempo swingers of all time, and his ride cymbal of choice was a 20" Avedis Zildjian that had the perfect balance of high and low overtones. At fast tempos, Shelly would keep each note of his ride pattern dynamically consistent. The ride cymbal transcription shown here is from the song "A Gem From Tiffany," which appears on the Shelly Manne & His Men album *At the Blackhawk, Vol. 5*.

As you listen to the track, pay close attention to Manne's 8th-note phrasing and notice how his ride patterns are in sync with the bass and the tenor saxophone soloist. In your practice, experiment with holding the stick the way Manne did. The faster the tempo, the more relaxed you need to be. This transcription begins immediately after the opening melody.

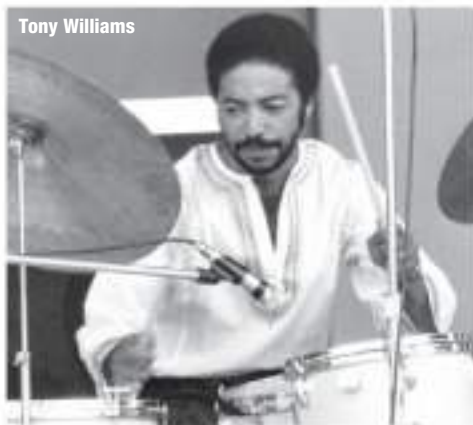






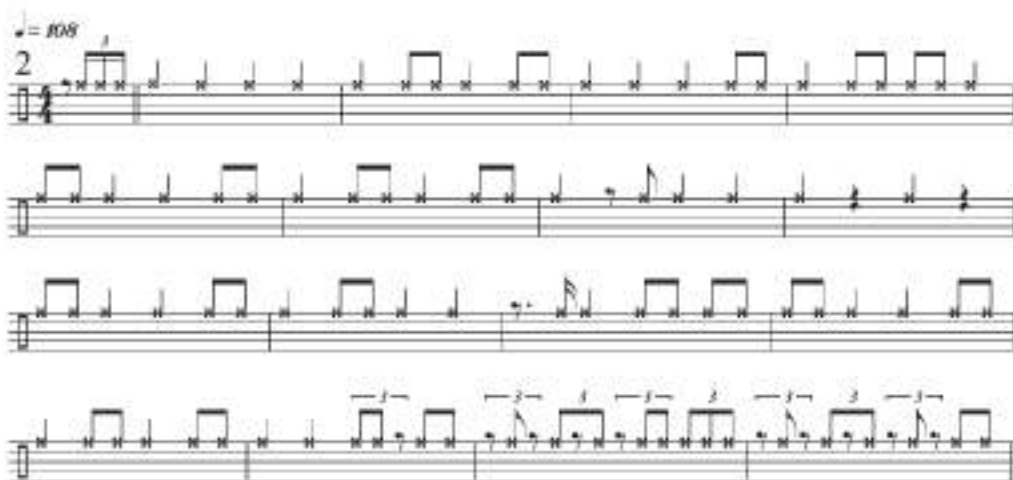
### French Grip

Tony Williams played a 22" K Zildjian ride cymbal with the Miles Davis Quintet, which was intense, dry, and low in pitch. He favored the French grip, and he kept his fingers wrapped securely around the stick



for control. The French grip is similar to the German grip, with the exception that the thumb is positioned on top of the stick. The momentum for French grip is created by a combination of wrist and finger technique. For a more robust and driving ride pulse, Williams would incorporate his forearm into the downstroke motion. The ride cymbal transcription shown here is taken from the title cut of the Miles Davis Quintet's classic album *Nefertiti*.

As you listen to the track and read along with the transcription, which begins at the top of the tune, notice Tony's driving feel and check out how he leans into the ride cymbal in support of each quarter-note pulse. That signature "snap" you hear is created with a combination of high-velocity wrist and finger action. When practicing, try holding the stick with the French grip, and attempt to match Tony's intensity. (All 8th notes are played with a swing feel.)



## Hinger Grip

The Hinger timpani grip is a variation on the French grip, with a fulcrum that's formed with a combination of the ring finger and pinkie.



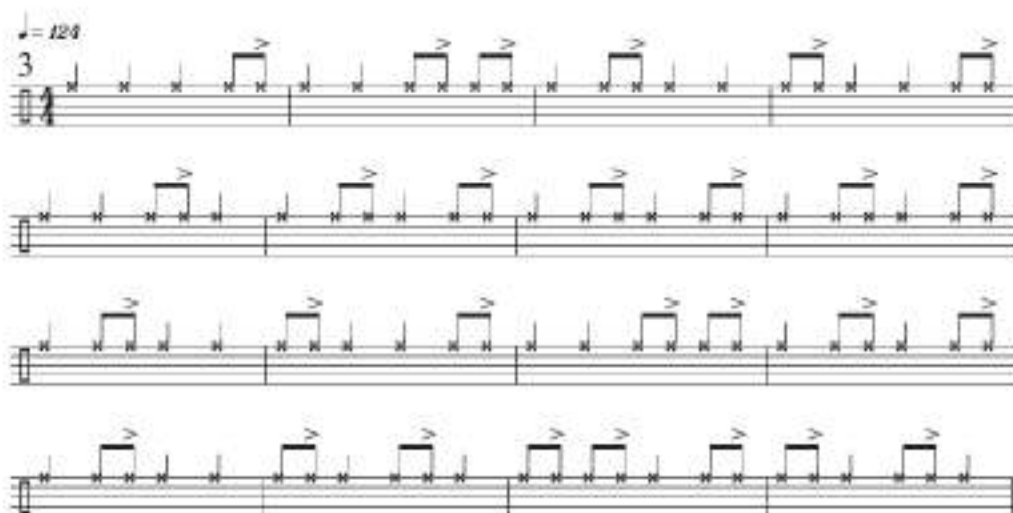
This unusual hand position was first developed by the legendary timpanist Fred Hinger of the Philadelphia Orchestra, but jazz drummers have applied it to the ride cymbal. Mel Lewis and Elvin Jones often held their sticks in a similar manner, whether it was a conscious decision or a moment of inspiration caused by the music, and Ed Soph also employs this technique.

Approaching the ride cymbal with the Hinger grip can help create legato (smooth) cymbal sounds, in part because the entire hand is not gripping the stick. The rotation of the wrist and the use of larger forearm muscle groups are what drive the stick as it dances on the cymbal. Through his recorded work with John Coltrane, Elvin Jones revolutionized drumming with—among other things—ride patterns that stressed the skip note (the third 8th note of a triplet grouping). Elvin's ride cymbal beat was innovative and original, and his touch on a 20" K Zildjian cymbal created a shimmer of sound that was equally dark and bright.

The ride cymbal transcription shown here begins after the opening melody of "Lady Luck," from Jones's recording *Elvin!* As you listen to the ride cymbal phrasing, pay attention to the dynamic shape and the lift that Elvin creates by accenting the last 8th note of each grouping. (All 8th notes should be played with a swing feel.) When you're practicing, experiment with holding the stick with the Hinger timpani grip. Keep your hand relaxed as you stress the skip note within your ride patterns. This technique will help you build ride cymbal shapes that are loose and free.

$\text{♩} = 124$

3



**Steve Fidyk** is the drummer with the Army Blues Big Band from Washington, D.C., and a member of the jazz faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. Fidyk is also the author of the critically acclaimed book *Inside the Big Band Drum Chart*, which is published by Mel Bay.



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# The Spivack/Wilson Approach to Technique

## Part 2: The Seven Basic Strokes

by Richard Martinez and Kevin Crabb

The first article in this series on Murray Spivack and Richard Wilson's technique appeared in the September 2011 issue of *Modern Drummer*. For a quick recap, here's what we covered:

**The grip.** Spivack focused on teaching a three-fingered grip with a narrow fulcrum.

**Fulcrums and lever systems.** A fulcrum is part of a lever system. The parts of the system are resistance, force, the lever arm, and the fulcrum.

**Wrist turn/wrist stroke.** To develop these, we played basic exercises focusing on singles and doubles.

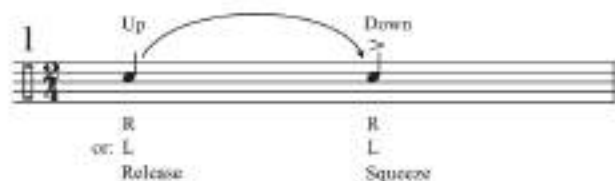
### The Basic Strokes

The wrist turn/wrist stroke (turning the wrist for one note) and the double stroke (turning the wrist twice) are two of what Spivack called the seven basic strokes. Murray placed a great deal of emphasis on learning these strokes. Each involves a motion that's applied to various other strokes and rudiments.

The seven basic strokes are the single stroke, double stroke (also known as wrist-turn doubles), flam, wrist stroke (or wrist turn), rebound, upstroke, and downstroke.

### Single Stroke

One of the first strokes Spivack would teach was the single stroke. It combines the upstroke and the downstroke, the latter of which Wilson called "the throw."



Although Spivack talked about the upstroke and the downstroke separately, he felt that the two were intimately connected as a primary component for many other strokes and rudiments, so he taught them as one individual stroke: the single stroke.

The first part of the single stroke is the upstroke. To play it, go from a low position to a high position while making a low tap. In matched grip, you make the low tap by merely bending the wrist forward. You'll strike the drum because you're so close to its surface that you can't avoid it. Bending the wrist forward motivates the upward motion of the forearm

and causes the elbow or upper arm to move slightly outward from the body.

In traditional grip, think of making the tap in the left hand by bending the wrist toward the right hand.

Note: It's very important to lead with the wrist and not the arm. If you lift the forearm and/or purposefully move the elbow out, you're not leading with the wrist.

After bending the wrist slightly and making a tap, follow the stick and turn the wrist toward the ceiling. In matched grip, when you reach the top of the stroke you'll see that the stick is now away from the palm. In traditional grip, the stick moves away from the fourth finger. In either grip, the stick should point toward the ceiling.

Now cock the wrist a bit and determine how much thrust (force) you want to add to the next stroke, which will be an accented downstroke. The wrist should move back a little further, which automatically causes the arm to come back down.

The wrist adds the majority of the thrust for the stroke, while the arm adds momentum. In matched grip, the middle finger should move in toward the palm, adding its own amount of thrust. In traditional grip, the first finger moves toward the thumb. If handled correctly, the stick will stay aligned throughout the motion (up and down). The stick should not move out to the side or shift forward or backward. Also, depending on the speed or dynamic level at which you're playing, you can allow the body to adjust the motions to become correspondingly larger or smaller.

Now let's put the single stroke to work in rudiments that exemplify its use. These were among the first things Spivack and Wilson taught to their students.

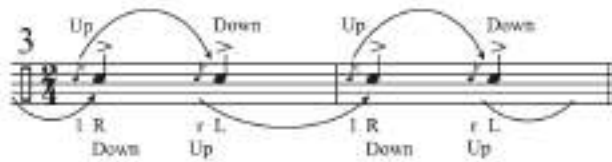
### Single Flam, Alternating Flam, and Feint and Flam

The single flam is made with a downstroke in one hand preceded by a grace note made with a small wrist stroke in the other hand.

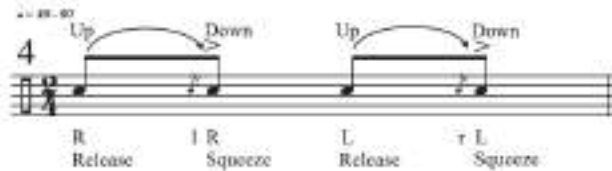


The alternating flam is played with alternating single strokes. The grace notes are made with a low upstroke, and

the accents are made with downstrokes.



The feint and flam is the combination of an upstroke and a downstroke with one hand and a low wrist stroke (for the grace notes) with the other.



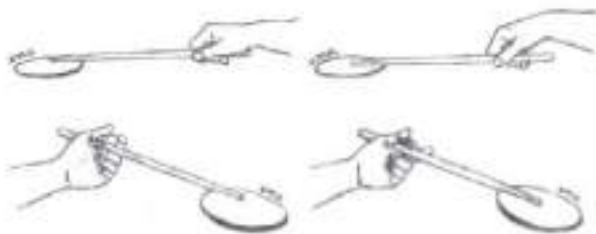
### Rebounds

A rebound is where you turn your wrist once and then allow the stick to bounce one or more times. When playing rebounds, you have to pay attention not only to the fulcrum in the wrist but also to a second fulcrum in the hand. Spivack and Wilson taught very specific hand fulcrums. In matched grip, the palm faces down and the hand fulcrum is the first joint of the middle finger. In traditional grip, the hand fulcrum is between the first finger and thumb.

The rebound notes should sound the same as the primary stroke. To achieve this, the stick must be allowed to rock over the hand fulcrum evenly, by opening the fingers slightly on the primary stroke and then following through with the fingers on the rebounds.

The first finger and thumb in matched grip, and the fulcrum between the first finger and thumb in traditional grip, are areas of inactivity, meaning they are not involved in the opening (release) and closing (squeeze) process of rebounds. Wilson described these parts of the grip as being “firm, comfortable, and constant.”

If rebounds are executed correctly, the stick will move parallel to the drum (see illustration below). If you hold your fingers too rigidly and prevent them from elongating as you bend your wrist forward, the stick will remain at a downward angle.



### Double-Stroke Roll (Rebound Doubles)

As Spivack said, “There’s nothing more important than the single- and double-stroke rolls.”

Wilson described the double-stroke roll as the drummer’s long tone. He believed drummers should devote as much attention to the double-stroke roll as violinists and horn players do to long tones on their respective instruments.

The double-stroke roll involves rebound doubles, which are played by turning the wrist once and allowing the stick to rebound once, providing two notes for every wrist turn.

Tap both feet with the metronome when practicing the following exercise.

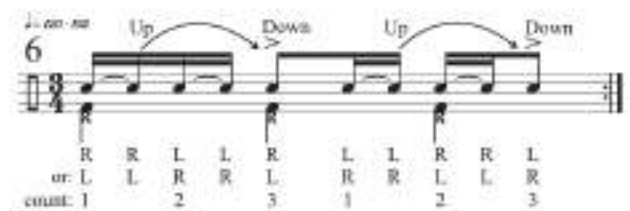


### Roll Strokes

The following exercises are four roll rudiments that are played using rebound doubles and the single stroke. The rolls are played with rebound doubles, with one or two accents at the end.

Wilson categorized roll strokes, when played repetitively, as either hand-to-hand or single-handed. In hand-to-hand rolls, the stroke begins in one hand, and the next iteration begins with the opposite hand. When played repetitively, single-handed rolls naturally begin with the same hand. Single-handed roll strokes can be played starting with either the right or left hand. To make single-handed rolls alternate, start the next iteration with the hand that makes the final accent.

The five-stroke roll contains two rebound doubles and a single stroke.



The seven-stroke roll contains three rebound doubles and a single stroke.



The six-stroke roll contains two rebound doubles and two accented single strokes.

The eight-stroke roll contains three rebound doubles and two accented single strokes.

The following musical passage contains all of the previously discussed strokes.

In part three, we'll discuss how ruffs, paradiddles, and ratamacues can be played utilizing the seven basic strokes.

**Richard Martinez** has recorded with Julian Lennon, Dan Hill, John Jones, and Rick Nowels. He is also general manager of the Music Is Hope Foundation, which produces music for children's nonprofit organizations. **Kevin Crabb** is a drummer/composer who has performed with Alphonso Johnson, John Beasley, David Garfield, and many others. His recent album *Waltz for Dylan* is available at [kevincrabb.com](http://kevincrabb.com).

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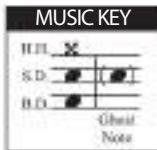
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# Open-Handed Playing

## Part 2: Asymmetrical Accents and the Control Stroke

by Claus Hessler



In the first part of this series (September 2011), we worked on a number of variations on open-handed playing within a basic rock groove. Playing patterns in an open-handed stance (left-hand ride on a right-handed setup, or vice versa) gives you much more freedom with regard to the rhythmic placement of snare notes and various orchestrations around the drumset. Bringing in toms or any other sounds on your kit is limited only by your imagination, not by restrictions imposed by playing with your hands crossed. In this installment, we'll begin adding accents on the snare that don't line up with the accents in the hi-hat pattern.

The wavelike Moeller stroke is a great technique to employ in order to play accents in conjunction with softer notes. But you need a certain amount of space to be able to use the Moeller whip motion correctly. The open-handed position allows for Moeller strokes to be used on the snare without being encumbered by the hand playing the hi-hat.

Last time we worked with just one hi-hat pattern. Here are some more options to try. The list isn't all encompassing, but it should provide enough variations to keep you busy for a while.



Now try interpreting a basic reading text (like Ted Reed's *Syncopation* or Gary Chester's *The New Breed*) on the snare drum using a technique known as the control stroke, which involves playing an accented note followed by one or more soft rebound strokes with the same hand. It's important to stay relaxed on the accent. Don't squeeze the stick after the initial stroke, or else there won't be enough rebound to produce the soft strokes. I prefer to use a Moeller whip for the accents. In the four examples shown here, the accents are indicated with a regular note head plus an accent, while a note head in parentheses indicates the soft strokes. The notes above the system indicate the basic rhythm that we're interpreting.



Combining the hi-hat rhythm in Example 2 (accented 8th notes) with the control-stroke rhythm in Example A looks like this:

The first critical point in Example 2A is at the “&” of beat 3, where the left hand on the hi-hat moves down while the right hand on the snare has to move up to prepare for the accent. The open-handed approach eliminates any possibility of the hands bumping into one another.

The second obstacle is in the successive control strokes on the “&” of beat 4 and the downbeat of beat 1. Squeezing the stick too much after the first accent will disturb the fluid, wavelike motion needed to execute that passage. Stay relaxed!

For additional practice, interpret the basic rhythms in Examples A–D using each of the twelve hi-hat patterns. Once you have those down, try interpreting other basic 8th-note rhythms.

It’s important to start slowly so you can get a good feel for the control-stroke movement. The more relaxed your movements are, the more fluid and smooth your playing will sound. Also, make sure that the dynamics between the accented and unaccented notes are consistent. A few more advanced exercises based on groupings of five 16th notes are included in the *Modern Drummer* Digital Edition and are posted on the Education page at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

Have fun and enjoy the journey!



**Claus Hessler**, who is based in Germany, is an in-demand drummer in Europe. His book, *Open-Handed Playing Vol. 1*, is available through Alfred Publishing. For more info, visit [claushessler.de](http://claushessler.de).

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**Fill Options Using Groups of Five 16th's**

The following patterns A through P are each groups of five sixteenth notes which can be used for fill applications or any sort of interaction while playing another pattern on the hihat or ride cymbal simultaneously. The notes with a circle around the head represent a floortom, the ones without are regular snare strokes. The bassdrum fills the spaces between the notes of floortom and snare in a step-by-step process. Any stems without noteheads are rests:

Patterns A through P are musical notation examples showing groups of five sixteenth notes. Each pattern is written on a single staff. The notes are arranged in a sequence of five sixteenth notes. The first note in each group has a circle around its head, indicating it is a floortom stroke. The other notes are regular snare strokes. The stems between the notes represent bassdrum fills. The patterns are labeled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, and P.

Combine these with the same twelve hihat patterns we also have been working on in the workshop in the magazine:

Twelve hihat patterns (1-12) are shown in 2/4 time. Each pattern is written on a single staff. The patterns are numbered 1 through 12. The notes are arranged in a sequence of five sixteenth notes. The notes with a circle around the head represent hihat strokes. The other notes are rests. The patterns are labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

## Open Handed Playing - Groups of Five

The combination of any of the hihat patterns and the five-note groupings will usually create a cycle of five bars. (In case the cycle is longer I would recommend to contact any experienced local drum teacher). However as a starting point I would recommend to begin with a four bar phrase consisting of two bars of regular eighth note groove and two bars of hihat plus the five-note phrase. Watch the example made up of pattern A of the groups of five and pattern number 2 of the hihat phrases:

The image displays three staves of musical notation for a drum set. The first staff begins with a 4/4 time signature and a hihat pattern of four eighth notes with accents, followed by four bars of a five-note phrase. The second and third staves show the five-note phrase in different rhythmic groupings.

Remember the chess player example from the column in the MD magazine? The five-note grouping simply creates a lot of different combinations between your hands and feet that will stretch your open-handed vocabulary. On top of that, some of the combinations really sound cool! Have fun!

Claus Hessler

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### Orchestrating the Illusion

Return to playing accents on every third 16th note to create a 3/16 cross-rhythm, but move the accent to your floor tom for a more melodic orchestration.

Now move the accents in the previous 5/16 cross-rhythm to your floor tom and middle rack tom.

You can do the same thing with the 2-2-3 grouping of the 7/16 cross-rhythm. Move the accent hand to your floor tom, middle tom, and high tom.

### Multi-Pedal Ostinato

Once you've mastered the previous examples, start moving the ostinato to different surfaces. By placing alternate pedals to the right of your bass drum pedal and to the left of your hi-hat you can now play the ostinato with four different voices.

The next step is to go back and repeat each of the previous examples using the multi-pedal ostinato. The orchestrated 7/16 cross-rhythm from Example 8 played over the four-pedal ostinato looks like this:

Next time we'll touch on the concept of metric modulation and discuss how to play two different feels simultaneously over our ostinato. Stay tuned!



Jason Gianni is a full-time faculty member at Drummers Collective in New York City and a coauthor of the acclaimed instructional book *The Drummer's Bible*. For more information, visit [jasongianni.com](http://jasongianni.com).



# DIY Drum Restoration

## Part 5: Snare Beds in Depth

by J.R. Frondelli

Welcome to part five of our series on DIY drum restoration. This month I hope to demystify the final element of the shell design equation: snare beds. So much has been written about them, and, unfortunately, a good percentage of it is hyperbole. Snare beds are actually not quite as mysterious as you might think.

### Snare Bed Basics

When you look at the resonant side of a snare drum, you'll see material missing from two opposing sections of the bearing edge, right under the strainer and butt plate. These cutouts may be barely discernible, or they may be fairly deep and prominent. The depressions form what's known as the snare beds. Oriented in the direction of the snare wires, the beds allow for a slight inward curvature to form across the surface of the head, which in turn allows the wires to lie snugly in place (hence the term *bed*). Without a snare bed, the wires would rattle, sometimes uncontrollably, yielding an indistinct tone.

The degree of contact between the wires and the drumhead is dependent on the depth of the snare beds. The requirements of snare beds differ depending on whether the drum is designed with standard or extended snare mechanisms, or possibly even cable or gut snares, which still enjoy limited use. Because snare beds also affect overall head tension (especially at the lugs closest to the cutouts), they can be manipulated to shape the overall tone and response of the drum.

### Do You Really Need Snare Beds?

Snare beds are essential on drums that use wraparound gut, cable, or metal snares, and for standard snappy wire mechanisms. On these types of drums, the cables or straps—or the snares themselves—have to make a sharp turn over a corner of the bearing edge to create tension. Snare beds are used to compensate for the imperfect physics of these wraparound and snappy snare systems. In the case of wraparound snares, deeper snare beds are required in order to allow the snares to turn a gentler corner. If the snares were forced to turn a sharp corner, the center of the wires would belly out and not make intimate contact with the drumhead.

With standard snappy snares, the end plates tend to want to toggle upward in response to the cord, cable, or strap pulling on them, but this is not nearly as extreme as with wraparound snares. Drums outfitted with snappy snares require much shallower snare beds—only about  $\frac{3}{32}$ " deep.

Drums that feature extended snare systems, like the Rogers



Rob Mazzella

Dynasonic, which has pre-tensioned snares set within a frame, don't need snare beds, because their tension system is independent of drumhead contact. Just for insurance, drums with extended snare systems often have minute, nearly imperceptible snare beds that are a few thousandths of an inch deep.

### Know Your Drums

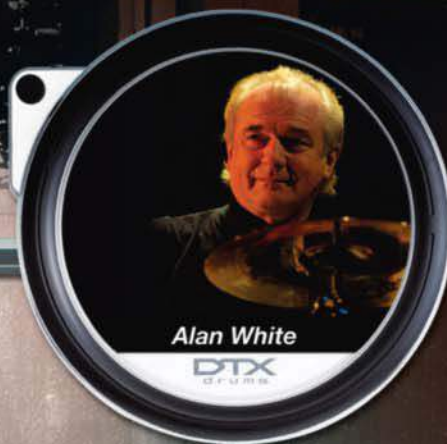
An important thing to keep in mind is that snare wire units should be no wider than the width of the drum's snare beds, or else you'll experience snare tension and rattling issues. As a result of the resurgence of the classic John Bonham sound among drummers, there's been a recent trend toward the use of forty-two-strand snares. Bonham's omnipresent Ludwig 402 snare drum has very wide and shallow snare beds, which facilitates the use of such a wide snare unit. Be sure to check out the width of the snare beds on your drum *before* you buy a wide strainer, or else you could be disappointed by the results.

The size and depth of the snare beds greatly affect a drum's tonality. For instance, the classic punchy sound of an old Slingerland Radio King is partially due to deep snare beds, allowing for a greasier snare response and a tubbier overall tone. (The other defining factor in the Radio King sound is the drum's rounded bearing edges.) Conversely, the crisp snare response and sensitivity you get from Ludwig models is due mainly to the drums' employment of wide, shallow snare beds.

Because snare beds, particularly deep ones, lower the snare-side head tension in the area near the bed cuts, the beds have a big impact on the bottom head's resonance and the drum's snare response. A common issue with drums that have deep snare beds, like vintage models that were originally equipped with calfskin heads, is a wrinkled snare-side head. The wrinkle appears because polyester film doesn't like to conform to radical curves. Calfskin heads are much more malleable, which is why poorly shaped snare beds and bearing edges didn't affect drum tunability or response on older drums. A wrinkled head means reduced tension, which can inhibit a crisp snare response and yield a boxy sound. (Some players might actually *want* this sound.) Shallower snare beds



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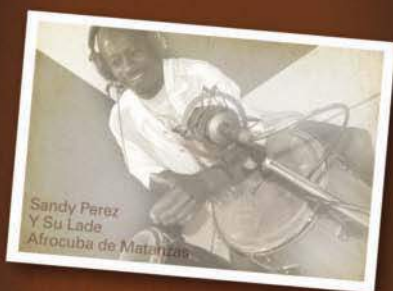
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guarantee a crisper snare response.

Warning: Using a hair dryer or heat gun to remove wrinkles from snare heads with deep beds is a surefire way to ruin a good head. The plastic used in drumheads is a thermofilm, which means it is formed by and reacts to heat. Drumhead collars are formed on special temperature-controlled presses that localize the heat. As a result, the molecular structure of the film changes and holds the curve. The process actually makes the drumhead harder and a bit more brittle. If you apply heat to a drumhead under tension, where the already thin film is being stretched even thinner, you're setting yourself up for sudden failure.

If you own a drum with deep snare beds that often cause wrinkles in the head, and you *don't* want to modify the beds, use a thinner 2 mil snare head, like Remo's snare-side Diplomat or Evans' Hazy 200. The thinner film will follow the radical contours of the edge much more easily, so you'll be able to remove any minor wrinkles by tensioning the rods on either side of the snare beds. Don't sweat it if the hoop appears to be a bit uneven. Though the hoop may not look correct, the tension across the snare bed will be optimized. Drums equipped with die-cast hoops might have a problem in this area, due to the stiffness of the hoop.

### Making Modifications

I'm often asked whether an old drum with round bearing edges and deep snare beds, like a Radio King, can be coaxed into possessing better snare sensitivity and more cut by reshaping the edges and snare beds. Absolutely! By cutting a small roundover on the bearing edge (to reduce the high-frequency muting effect while still maintaining good head-to-shell contact) and trading deep, narrow snare beds for a wider, shallower profile (to maximize head tension near the wires), you can reshape the drum's response without affecting its primary tonality. The beauty is that modifications can be done in degrees, depending on the amount of sensitivity and presence you're looking to gain.

Most wood snare drums can be cajoled into producing "your sound" via edge and snare bed manipulation, unless the shell's natural properties are vastly different from the qualities you're after. For example, trying to coax a fatback sound from a piccolo-size drum just won't work. You *can* manipulate the edges and beds to make the drum sound darker, and head choice can play a major role in the overall sonic color, but the volume of air within the shell (i.e., shell depth) is the primary determining factor for how "fat" a drum can sound.

### Smooth or Rough?

I'd like to finish this article with my stance on an age-old argument among DIY and professional drum builders: Should bearing edges be finished smooth and waxed, or should they be left natural so that they have a bit of grit to them?

First you must realize that plastic drumhead film is very slippery and almost nothing wants to stick to it. This is what makes the process of applying coatings to drumheads a science unto itself. So is there really any point to burnishing and waxing bearing edges? Well, there's one other question you need to answer: Do you want the drum to tune (and detune) easier, or do you want it to hold tension better?

If you would rather have hair-trigger tuning, then by all means fine-sand, finish, and wax your bearing edges. I want my drums to *hold* their tuning better, so my practice is to sand the edges down with 320-grit paper and then seal them against moisture with a wipe coat of shellac. This results in an edge that's smooth yet has a palpable texture. The increased surface area tends to grip the slippery drumhead film a bit, which I feel translates into more stable tuning.



**J.R. Frondelli** is the owner of Frondelli USA Drums, which specializes in repairing, reworking, and restoring vintage drums, as well as building new vintage-style drums. For more info, visit [frondelli.com](http://frondelli.com).



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## ZILDJIAN Rarities Cymbals

Zildjian recently released select collectible and prototype cymbals from its vault and sound lab. Developed in conjunction with Zildjian artist Adam Nussbaum, the 22" K Constantinople Renaissance ride is medium-thin and has random hammering and traditional lathing for an even spread of overtones. Cluster hammer marks add a little "dirt" to its sound.

In response to demand for thinner and darker-sounding cymbals, Zildjian has developed a new K Dark Thin series that's unlathed and features brilliant finishes. Models include a 19" K Dark Thin crash/ride, a 22" K Dark Thin ride, and 14" K Dark hi-hats.

Also available are K Custom Special Dry crashes in 16", 17", 18", and 19" sizes. These cymbals are heavily hammered and unlathed on top for a raw, earthy appearance and a very dry sound. The completely lathed bottom provides exotic overtones.

A 24" ZHT ride and a 10" A Custom EFX cymbal complete the Rarities offerings.

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



## TAYE Brushed Black-Nickel Brass Snare Drums

The first model released in Taye's MetalWorks snare drum series is a 5x14 brushed black-nickel brass model with matching 2.3 mm counter-hoops (\$499). The drum, which is said to have a sound that combines sharp attack, rich body, and mellow overtones, employs Taye's patented Sidelatch snare release.

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

## ROLAND V-Tour Series V-Drums

Roland's TD-9KX2 (\$3,199) and TD-9K2 (\$2,299) kits include an updated TD-9 sound module, which contains more than thirty new expressive sounds and dozens of new kits. The update also adds the ability to play MP3 files via USB flash media. Ambience effects and EQ can be added to quickly create custom kits, which are automatically stored to the internal memory. Users can archive a library of custom kits and settings from the TD-9 via USB flash media.

For practice, the TD-9 features the unique Scope function, providing real-time feedback of beat placement. The onboard Quick Record/Quick Play feature allows drummers to record and play back performances.

Both the TD-9KX2 and TD-9K2 feature Roland's patented multilayer mesh heads for the snare and toms, with rim triggering available on all pads. The new KD-9 kick pad includes a cloth-designed bass drum head, and the new lightweight CY-13R ride (with three-way triggering) and CY-12C crash offer a more natural playing feel. The TD-9KX2 also includes the VH-11 hi-hat, which mounts on a standard acoustic hi-hat stand.

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



## MEINL ABS Pandeiro With Napa Head

New to Meinl's percussion offerings is a traditional 10" ABS pandeiro featuring a replaceable napa head, which reduces overtones for more controlled playing.

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



## PEARL Throne Thumper

A two-year development partnership between Pearl and Guitammer has resulted in the Throne Thumper, a device that allows drummers to feel low frequencies transmitted through their drum seat. List price: \$499.

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

## Q DRUM CO. Custom Vintage-Style Drums

Jeremy Berman, who was previously the head builder and artist relations manager for Orange County Drum & Percussion, has launched Q Drum Co. Berman is focusing on building vintage-style models that can withstand the constant wear and tear of modern-day touring. Drums are available in a variety of materials, including maple, birch, mahogany, acrylic, brass, copper, aluminum, and even galvanized steel.

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



Q Drum artist Hayden Scott (the New Regime, Awolnation) playing his gold sparkle set



## AHEAD Armor Cymbal Silo

The new Ahead Armor Cymbal Silo, licensed by Revolution, features DX-Core dual-foam padding, removable dividers covered in premium-grade Sherpa fleece, and a Tuc-Away convertible backpack system with heavy-duty straps and lower back support. The

Silo's main compartment holds cymbals up to 24" and has a reinforced bottom, while the exterior includes additional storage space for hi-hats, splashes, and effects.

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





## AUDIX Micro-HP Microphone

The success of Audix's Micro-D miniature rim-mount drum mic has prompted the demand for a similar product specifically designed for hand percussion instruments. The result is the company's Micro-HP. A rubber shock mount and protective anodized aluminum ring provide maximum vibration control, while the flexible gooseneck design of the DCLAMP allows users to position the Micro-HP quickly and easily. List price: \$255.

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



## BLACK SWAMP Pro10 Studio Line Expands

Black Swamp Percussion has added two new field drums to its Pro10 Studio line. These 10x14 (\$932) and 12x15 (\$998) models feature 6-ply maple shells in red mahogany finish and come with 2.3 mm hoops.

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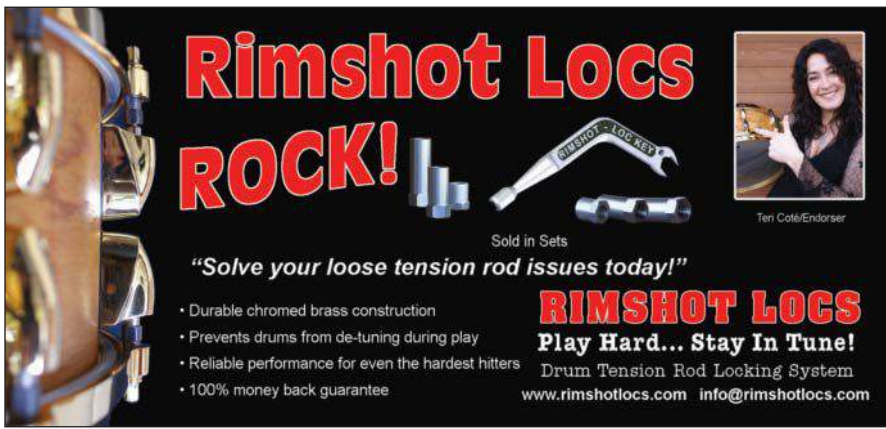
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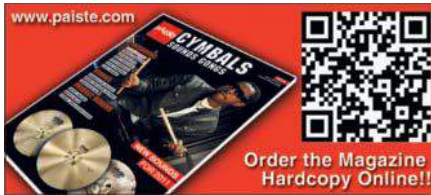
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Rick Markin



# JON "THE CHARN" RICE

He may be best known for laying the concrete-slab foundation for death metallers **Job for a Cowboy**. But behind this young blood's blazing speed, fierce blast beats, and unearthly precision is a born drummer raised on classic rock.

by David Ciauro

**A**t just twenty-four years old, Jon Rice has earned a massive amount of respect within the metal community for his work with Job for a Cowboy. In early 2011, Rice further demonstrated his diversity in all things metal by signing on to tour with longtime friends the Red Chord, who'd recently parted ways with drummer Michael Justian. Rice had some downtime with JFAC between touring and writing for the band's next album, so he jumped at the chance to do something different.

Given that Rice had only a few days to learn the songs and just three rehearsals prior to hitting the road, his performance with the Red Chord earlier this year at the School of Rock in Hackensack, New Jersey, was nothing short of jaw-dropping. Jon drove the band through the chaotic and rapidly occurring riff changes with apparent ease and unrelenting energy, even after the group was forced to stop the set for fifteen minutes so paramedics could cart off a downed pit member with a dislocated knee.

Rice hits incredibly hard and with obvious confidence, but not in an arrogant way. In our conversation after the School of Rock show, he gives off a similar vibe. He's sure of his abilities yet always striving to improve as a musician, and he readily acknowledges the drummers who continue to inspire him.

**MD:** The Red Chord's catalog is intense in its feel, arrangements, and chops require-

ments. How did you manage to learn the songs so quickly and accurately?

**Jon:** I've been a fan of the Red Chord since I was sixteen, and I was pretty familiar with their material, so learning the songs was a bit easier than if I'd come into the situation blind. I don't have a kit where I live, so I pretty much learned everything by air drumming. I heard Gene Hoglan say that if you can air drum a part perfectly, you can play the song perfectly. So that's basically how I approached learning the Red Chord tunes.

**MD:** Job for a Cowboy and the Red Chord differ stylistically. What are the biggest drumming differences that you had to adapt to?

**Jon:** JFAC is much more death metal or classic-style fast double bass, while the Red Chord is more raw punk aggression. With JFAC I always use two bass drums that are triggered with my Axis Longboard pedals. The Red Chord guys are anti-trigger, so to get more definition I play one bass drum with an Iron Cobra double pedal with rubber beaters. If I'm playing without triggers, it's always one kick, because trying to get two bass drums to

sound identical is more of a hassle. Using triggers with JFAC really helps keep everything super-tight in a live setting. Triggers have their place, but if I can get away with it, I prefer acoustic kicks.

**MD:** Triggers are quite misunderstood by many drummers—what are your thoughts about using them live?

**Jon:** Triggers actually make playing harder, because you have to be perfect or else it sounds like you're making popcorn. Also, without triggers, if you're playing 8th notes with one foot at 240 bpm it sounds like a wind tunnel. There's no definition. Triggers provide that definition, which makes a band sound tighter live.

**MD:** I noticed that your foot technique seems to switch from heel up to heel down

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Rice plays Yamaha Oak Custom drums in red sparkle finish, including 8x12 and 9x13 toms, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and 18x22 bass drums. With the Red Chord, he uses one bass drum with a double pedal and only the 16x18 floor tom. Jon plays a 6½x14 Mike Bordin signature snare. His Meinl cymbals include Mb20, Byzance, and Generation X models, plus a Soundcaster Custom Mega Bell ride in special traditional finish. His Remo heads include a Hazy Ambassador snare bottom, Clear Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batters; his snare batter is an Evans Hybrid. Rice's hardware includes Axis Longboard pedals (Job for a Cowboy), a Tama Iron Cobra double pedal (the Red Chord), and a Pork Pie throne. Jon plays Vic Firth 5BX sticks with nylon tips. His electronics include Roland RT-10K bass drum triggers and an Alesis DM5 module.

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## JON RICE

when you're playing really fast passages.

**Jon:** Yeah, but it's something I don't control. I guess it's just how my muscle memory reacted when I started achieving faster tempos. When I'm playing straight-up "rock" grooves, though, I'm definitely playing all heel up.

**MD:** How do you like to tune your kit?

**Jon:** I tune my snare tighter on the batter side for the response when I'm blasting. When it's too loose, it's like hitting mud. I'm way into bigger toms because the response of the heads makes you hit harder. I tune them on the looser side, so I have to be precise with every hit in order for there to be definition. Plus bigger toms just sound better to me in a rock environment.

I tune my kick pretty low too. The resonant head is finger tight, and the batter is pretty slack.

**MD:** What type of ride were you using tonight? The bell was ridiculous.

**Jon:** It's a Soundcaster Custom Mega Bell ride that Chris Brewer from Meinl was kind enough to get me in an original finish instead of the brilliant finish. I sweat and spit a lot, and the original finish doesn't corrode as fast. The bell is insane! Some of the clubs we play don't have great moni-

tors, so if I accent on the bell everyone can follow it because it cuts so much.

**MD:** How did you get started on drums?

**Jon:** My dad's a drummer, so I've pretty much had sticks in my hand my whole life. He always had his 1979 Ludwig Vistalites set up, and I will forever have an affinity for those drums. I learned to twirl a drumstick by watching Tommy Lee on MTV when I was three.

**MD:** What drummers inspired you early on, and who do you like now?

**Jon:** From childhood it was Bonham, Ian Paice, Buddy Rich, Gene Hoglan, Axe from Opeth, and Kai Hahto from Wintersun, Rotten Sound, and Swallow the Sun. Now it's people like Jojo Mayer, Benny Greb, Thomas Lang, Derek Roddy, and George Kollias. I am 100 percent a rock drummer trapped in death metal bands, but I'm also a huge metalhead, so I obviously love playing extreme metal. When I'm coming up with drum parts, I'm always thinking of John Bonham and Ian Paice. I try to pull from and incorporate my non-metal influences as much as possible.

**MD:** If you had your druthers, what type of band would you be in outside of metal?

**Jon:** I'm on a massive psychedelic rock kick right now, so something in the vein of

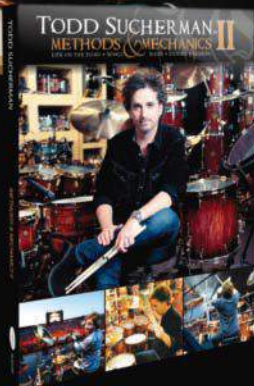
Sir Lord Baltimore, Black Sabbath... something a little more crusty.

**MD:** How has it been to be the "new guy" in the Red Chord?

**Jon:** They are the nicest guys ever and so welcoming. There was no hazing process—they're all really down to earth. When I tour, I try to stay super-positive on the road because nobody needs a negative vibe on tour. You're stuck in a van with smelly dudes for a long time, and having someone complaining is a total downer.

**MD:** Speaking of vibes, do you have any pre-show rituals to get in the right mindset before hitting the stage?

**Jon:** I actually hate warming up for some reason. I heard Thomas Lang say at a clinic that there's something to be said for just grabbing your sticks and hitting the stage. And that's what I'm all about—just going for it. It works for me. If a venue is really cold for some reason, then I'll warm up to get physically warmer before going on. Normally I put on stage clothes, grab some beers if it's not a dry venue, and just talk to the band about the set list. I like to let the vibe take me wherever it goes, whether it's an angry, dislocated-knee vibe or a chill one. I like the spontaneity.



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## ENCORE

# THE GO-GO'S BEAUTY AND THE BEAT

The term *girl group* gained new depth with the arrival of the Go-Go's in 1981. On the occasion of the thirtieth-anniversary reissue of the band's classic debut album, Patrick Berkery talks to drummer **Gina Schock** about the band's early days.

It's been *three decades* since the Go-Go's dominated MTV with their '60s-pop/new wave hybrid. Let that sink in. Let this sink in too: So much was made of the girl-group novelty that the quality of the band's songs and musicianship never got a fair shake. The thirtieth-anniversary reissue of the Go-Go's' debut proves that was an egregious oversight—especially in Gina Schock's case. Schock took what she learned banging the tubs in the clubs of L.A. and refined it to a solid science based around 8th-note propulsion—check out her metronomic right foot on "We Got the Beat"—and hook-friendly accents and fills, like those on "Skidmarks on My Heart." In addition to the remastered studio album, the reissue contains a previously unreleased concert at the Metro in Boston from 1981. (EMI)



## GINA SCHOCK ON BEAUTY AND THE BEAT

**This album represents your first time working in the big leagues.**

**Did your parts need much refining?**

The only thing I did was slow everything down so that the melody didn't go racing by. Songs that were a minute and a half ended up being two minutes. [laughs]

**Was that your first time playing to a click?**

Yup. And I made the click my friend. One thing I'm really good at is timing; that's always been my strongest suit. That's what I tell every kid: Learn how to play with a metronome.

**Soon after the album hit, you were opening for the Police in arenas.**

**Was that intimidating?**

No, I was pretty confident. To me it was challenging, but in a really good way. I felt like I was up against [Police drummer] Stewart Copeland. I'd watch him every night. Our styles were *completely* different. I remember Stewart coming up to me one day, asking, "So, how do you play 'We Got the Beat'? Are you doing that on your floor tom or on the kick?" He's one of the greatest drummers ever, so that was incredibly sweet. I'd just watch him play every night, and that was fuel for the fire. "Now you watch me tomorrow night!" [laughs]

## MULTIMEDIA: BANDS IN FOCUS



**RUSH CLASSIC ALBUMS:  
2112 AND MOVING PICTURES**

**DVD LEVEL: ALL \$14.98**

The *Classic Albums* installment covering Rush's groundbreaking *2112* (1976) and *Moving Pictures* (1981) paints the former album as the work of a band that was not willing to compromise its personal or musical integrity and, against the odds, created a

devout following in the collective fringe that loved both progressive and heavy rock. Conversely, the songs that became the self-contained greatest-hits album *Moving Pictures* were conceived after the members of Rush had established themselves and were living their childhood dream of being full-time musicians. The band discusses the earnestness behind these songs, drummer **NEIL PEART**'s lyrical mastery, and the cinematic beauty of the music that brings each of Peart's short stories to life. The DVD extras include a wonderful "not solo" segment of Peart getting loose behind the kit and showing his powerful, introspective, and focused approach to the drums. Producer Terry Brown also isolates tracks from the studio console, which is fascinating for Rush fans and newbies alike. (Eagle Vision) **David Ciauro**



**TOM PETTY AND  
THE HEARTBREAKERS**

**CLASSIC ALBUMS:  
DAMN THE TORPEDOES**

**DVD LEVEL: ALL \$14.98**

Drummers who've been influenced by TP & the HBs' iconic third album, 1979's *Damn the Torpedoes*, will be both delighted and mad-

dened by this DVD, which offers rare insight into *Torpedoes* yet in some ways marginalizes the contributions of the band's original drummer, **STAN LYNCH**. Though much of the credit for the album's big, fat drum sound goes to producer Jimmy Iovine and engineer Shelly Yakus, it's Lynch's beats, feel, and fills that help lift songs like "Here Comes My Girl" and "Even the Losers" to goose-bump-raising heights. Lynch and Iovine, both strong personalities, didn't get along in the studio, but Iovine gets far more face time here and implies that the sonics, and even a shaker part on "Refugee," are more crucial than the drumming itself. Though Petty largely agrees, while listening to "Refugee" he says of Lynch, "He's playing pretty good." Iovine counters, "Well, we weren't gonna stop till he did." Sigh. Yakus, keyboardist Benmont Tench, and bassist Ron Blair provide the voice of reason, defending Lynch's indelible tracks. "His sense of humor comes out through his drums," Yakus says. "When they tried other drummers at one point during the album... it didn't sound like Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers." (Eagle Rock) **Michael Parillo**



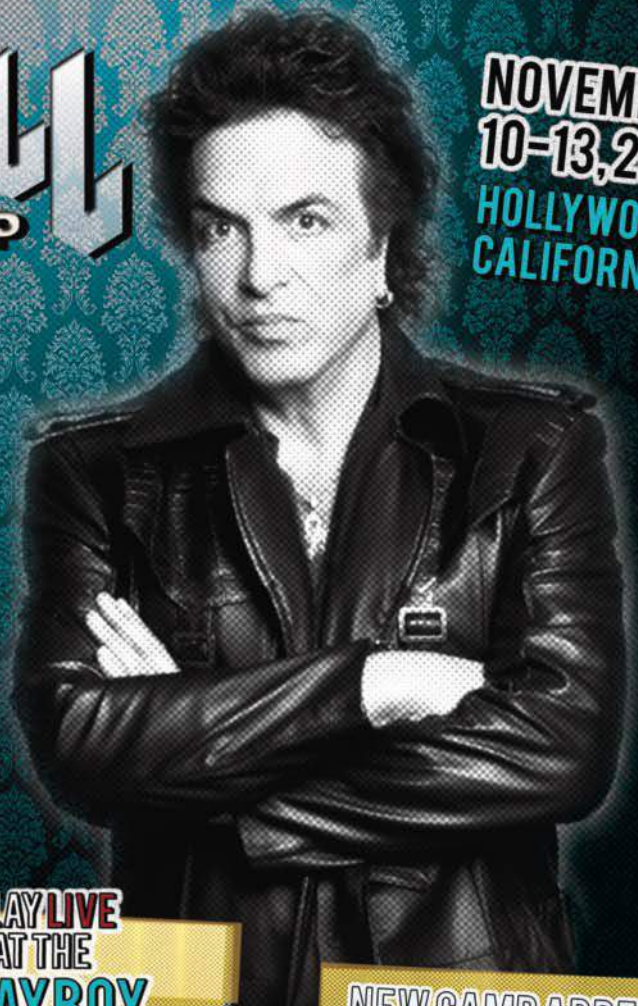
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# Drummers Collective

## Relocated, Reinvented, Remarkable

by David Ciauro

In late December of 2010, the Collective School of Music, which many *MD* readers may know as Drummers Collective or simply the Collective, moved to a brand-new 13,000-square-foot facility at 123 West 18th Street in Manhattan. Although the new space is only a few blocks from the old facility, the two are worlds apart in appearance. Assistant director Tony Maggolino says that the difference between the two venues is “the equivalent of moving from a parking garage to a mansion.”

### THE SPACE

The former Collective was about half the size, and though it maintained a gritty NYC charm, it was admittedly cramped quarters located above a McDonald's. The new state-of-the-art facility boasts a chic modern style, an airy atmosphere, a sophisticated practicality, a cut-above functionality, and a wealth of beautiful city views. New amenities include two recording studios, eleven drum studios, a Roland V-Drums electronic lab, a student lounge, a swank lobby, a library/computer lab, three non-drum studios, two ensemble studios, an eighty-person-capacity performance theater, and a pro shop.

The recording studios allow students to capture performances throughout each semester to chronicle their progress, while also gaining valuable hands-on experience with Pro Tools. The drum studios are for private practice or instruction, small-group

lessons, and ensemble rehearsals. The Roland V-Drums lab houses seven TD-12 kits, so students can gain experience playing electronic percussion and partake in larger classes with a unique format twist—the instructors have the ability to patch together their and the students' kits via headphones, so everyone can play simultaneously yet quietly.

The lobby and student lounge provide students with places to relax, hang out, grab a bite between classes, and perhaps even have the opportunity to talk to a drumming legend who happens to be roaming the halls. “Jojo Mayer stopped by recently, and the students were all freaking out,” Maggolino says.

There's a library, featuring new Mac computers and displays that give students a place to check their email and also take classes like Music Theory and Musicianship. “The Collective is more than just learning how to read and shred,” Maggolino explains. “It's

learning how to compose, listen, and become a better musician.”

The largest ensemble classroom holds up to thirty-five students. Classes like Positive Performance Thought, which extend beyond the physical aspects of drumming to focus on improving the mental condition while performing, are taught here.

The pro shop sells accessories like educational books and DVDs, as well as drumsticks, shakers, snare wires, heads, guitar strings, and picks. A major advantage of the shop is that it's open until 1 A.M., when the school closes for the evening. This means local gigging musicians have a valuable resource should they ever find themselves in a gear pickle.

The theater houses master classes, clinics, performances, recitals, and other special events hosted by the Collective. Drumming giants like Chad Smith, Stanton Moore, and Jason Bittner have already graced the stage.

Another advantage of the new space is that the recent expansion not only houses all four Collective schools (drums, bass, guitar, and keyboards) but also includes music-related subtenants such as D'Addario, renowned vocal coach Liz Caplan, Media Right Productions, and Visionary Media, a nonprofit organization that works with blind musicians.



## THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

The lobby welcomes students and visitors in quintessential modern NYC style, with a sense of cool. Just off to the right is a door that enters into the Drummers Collective wing, which is in sonic seclusion from the rest of the school. Down a mirrored corridor lined with practice pads where students are carefully scrutinizing their technique, the faintest din of drummers hard at work becomes noticeable. The walls in this section of the school were constructed with two layers of drywall and a coat of a product called Green Glue in between. When this material cures, it forms a sound-absorbing wall. The studios are airtight as well, and they employ a floating-floor system to increase the isolation.

Each of the eleven practice studios is filled with high-end gear, from Sonor, DW, Tama, Canopus, Zildjian, Sabian, Paiste, Meinl, Evans, and Remo, among other companies. The equipment is maintained meticulously. "We change out heads about once a week on all the kits," Maggolino says. "But some of the jazz guys don't want certain kits to have the heads changed, or they don't want certain cymbals cleaned, and we try to respect their requests."

Non-students can also rent these studios hourly. "It's not at all uncommon to have someone like Steve Smith practicing in the next room from yours," Maggolino says. "When Steve's in town, this is the only place

he comes to practice."

An inherent part of the Collective experience is that students get to interact with some of the biggest names in drumming. "What's really cool is that they realize how down to earth these guys are, and how even drummers at their level still practice for four hours at a clip," Maggolino notes. "That's what makes the Collective so special and an unique experience. With D'Addario housing their artist relations here now too, we'll be able to have Evans and Pro-Mark artists come through and generate even more exciting traffic for our students."

"New York is the perfect place to be as a student of drumming," Collective director Anthony Citrinite adds. "Any night of the week, after classes are done, students can use the city as an extension of their classroom and go see Roy Haynes, Keith Carlock, Jeff Watts, Terry Bozzio, or Steve Smith a few blocks from here." The Collective also receives calls when musicians are needed for local gigs, and students frequently get the opportunity to tech for drummers like Tommy Igoe, at his Friday-evening Birdland gig.

## PROGRAMS THAT SPEAK TO THE DRUMMING COMMUNITY

According to Citrinite, the Collective's new space allows the school to broaden what it can offer the drumming world. "I like the idea of having a sense of community instead of a sterile school vibe," he says. "It's better

to create an environment where drummers can learn from and interact with each other in a relaxed, noncompetitive social atmosphere. With 70 percent of our student body being international, some students barely speak English when they arrive. But I've seen how drumming and music becomes the language they communicate through, and that's great to witness."

With the Musicians Monthly Membership, drummers can use the Collective much as they would a gym. They can also specify their membership plan based on how in-depth they want their experience to be. Beyond the usual array of full-time, part-time, and short-term programs, there's the availability of online lessons and course work, and even a Vocal Performance Workshop.

## SETTLED IN

Though it's been a long and sometimes arduous road to the realization of the "new" Collective, it's been well worth the effort for the staff, the students, and the drumming community in general. "Whenever you move to a new place there are growing pains," Citrinite says. "If it were all smooth sailing, I would never appreciate all the progress that's been made here. So that helps keep the stressful elements in perspective as we embark on the new future of the Collective."



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# TAMED BEAST

Our latest rig is from Liberty University student Josh Minnick of Harrisonburg, Virginia. "I needed something that wouldn't produce a lot of volume and would fit in my dorm room," Minnick says. The bass drum is a converted 16" floor tom, with a custom subwoofer that sits in front of the drum. "I wanted a set that had a small footprint, but I didn't want to lose the big sound that a bass drum should produce," Minnick explains. "That's why I built the subwoofer for the bass drum. Because the drumset is quiet, the sound engineer can mike it, which makes it sound twice as big as it is."

The outfit also includes a custom Risen Drums snare, and the whole thing fits into two relatively small cases. Minnick himself painted the kit. "I picked the paint scheme to match the attitude of the drumset," he says, "and I call it the Beast. As the sticker on the bass drum/subwoofer says: 'Drum machines have no soul.' This set was built to take the place of electronic drums, and to put the soul back into the music!"



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



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