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IN THE TIME MACHINE WITH NIGEL OLSSON
R&B SUPERSTAR USHER’S AARON SPEARS

NASHVILLE A-LIST STUDIO DRUMMER CHAD CROMWELL
LOS ANGELES SESSION MASTER CURT BISQUERA

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DIVERSITY IN DRUMMING

As I glance through this latest edition of Edge magazine and witness so many different, yet inspiring drummers within its pages, I’m instantly reminded of how diverse the drumming world can be. Whether it’s jazz, R&B, pop, country, hard rock or alternative, one thing remains constant—the drums are our voice.

At DW, we never forget that diversity means many drummers have specialized needs. By making pedals that are easily adjustable to every player’s taste, a full line of hardware in multiple weights and drums that not only sing, but are as versatile as the multitude of music genres represented here, our goal is to make tools for drummers to express that voice.

We’ve received a number of patents and have had many novel ideas over the years, but the ones that really stick out in my mind are those that have made a change in the way drummers approach the instrument, no matter what style of music they play. These are the ideas and the innovations that cross over musical boundaries: the free-floating 9000, the double pedal, the 9702 Multi Stand, Timbre Matching and even our new VLT technology. They all make translating the language of music just that much easier.

So, as we welcome new artists from all over the music world to the DW family, we can learn from each other and embrace our diversity. It’s part of what makes drumming a truly universal language.

Don Lombardi
President, Drum Workshop, Inc.
Introducing the LX Exotic Series. It's an 8-ply all-maple shell finished in stunning Kurillian Birch with a flawless Charcoal to Natural Lacquer Fade. LXE comes in a standard 5-piece kit configuration with heavy-duty 900 Series hardware pack and available 8” and 16” add-ons.

From the moment you sit behind an all-new LX Exotic drumset, you'll realize that this is no ordinary drumkit. With a host of pro features and serious sound that rivals much more expensive offerings, LXE is Pacific taken to the next level.
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Aaron Spears: I was born and raised in DC. I remember my first taste of music was in church. I came up as a Church of God in Christ kid. As I look back there were so many different grooves and feels represented. The choir would sing so many different types of songs. I would play everything from a blues shuffle to a straight funk groove. It was never a dull moment. Back then I always thought of it as fun and challenging but now I see how even then it helped to shape my vocab and my love for music. It was definitely a great outlet for me. When I’m not on tour you can find me playing at my church. I’ll never get away from my roots.

EDGE: How do you make the transition from playing in church to being a professional musician?

AS: Making the transition from the kid sitting in the first row of the church, begging and waiting impatiently with my one pair of sticks for my turn to play, to where I am now definitely was a process. As I got older, I began to listen to anything and everything I could get my hands on. I would practice in my basement with records I would hear on the radio or with cassette tapes. I loved playing with tunes recorded by The Winans, The Hawkins Singers, Commissioned, and John P. Kee. Those were some of my absolute favorites. I would imagine that I was the drummer putting it down on those different records. As I got older, I started to get into more diverse styles of music. I remember listening to music from Phil Collins, EWF, Run DMC, Prince, Sting, Stevie Wonder and even a little Metallica, Van Halen and AC/DC. Hearing what was happening on some of those records was like an incredible new world! I did a little playing in my high school marching band and also with the jazz band in college, but I didn’t really feel like I found my place until I began to play with a gospel group in D.C. called Gide-

EDGE: Talk about coming up in the gospel scene and how that shaped your playing.

on Band. It was there my musicianship and concept of playing together with a band began. Our music was compared a lot to Mint Condition and EWF because of the instrumentation represented. We had three horns, two keyboards, a B3 Hammond, percussion, bass, lead, three vocalists and drums. We also performed all our songs with a sequencer (drum machine). This really helped me because when it came to hitting on the big stage, the challenge of playing with tracks and loops was not difficult for me. If it wasn’t for Gideon, I am sure that the transition wouldn’t have been as smooth. However, going into the first week of rehearsal smoothing out the rough spots, that’s a whole different mountain to climb. If it wasn’t for God, the support of the band and the insight of my MD, and the advice of a couple of my boys, I could have gone down in flames. It’s good to be in close contact with people who know first hand and can identify with what you are going through.

EDGE: Who are some of your strongest musical influences?

AS: Let’s see. I have so many. When I was younger, I would try to play like my favorite gospel drummers, like Joel Smith (The Hawkins), Dana Davis (The Winans), Michael Williams (Commissioned), Jeff Davis and Gerald Hayward. I’m still trying to get some of Gerald’s chops to this day. I later began to get into other cats like Dennis Chambers, Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Weckl, and Steve Gadd. I have taken so much from all of them. I remember sitting with my dad watching Vinnie play at the Zildjian Day in New York, like, 15 years ago. He was definitely the first of many drummers who would change my life in regard to playing. I would try my best to do the things they were doing and make it my own. I’m into so many different drummers now: Teddy Campbell, Nisan Stewart, Chad Smith, Jojo Mayer, Paul “Buggy” Edwards, Horacio Hernandez, Marvin McQuitty, Gary Novak and Abe Laboriel, Jr. I still dig Gerald, and Lil’ Jon Roberts, Calvin Rogers, Chester Thompson, Chris Dave, Travis Barker, Brian Frasier-Moore, Ladell Abrams, Milton Smith and Simon Phillips are a few of my modern day heroes. There is a crop of drummers who I consider to be, like, “new age” who also inspire me with their innovation and new concepts. Because of newcomers like Eric Green (Jill Scott), Dana Hawkins, Cordell Pridgen, George “Spanky” McCurdy (Tye Tribbett & GA), Jamal Moore and Ronald Brunner, Jr., I believe the world of drumming will continue to evolve.

EDGE: Describe your live set-up with Usher and why you’ve gone with a relatively modest kit.

AS: On the tour I am playing a beautiful DW Black Spider Pine Maple kit with Satin Chrome hardware. I sound like a salesman [laughs]. I play an 8x10”, 9x12”, 14x16”, 14x18” (the 18” is to the left of my hi-hat), 18x24” kick and a 10x13” Edge snare—this monster sits on floor tom legs. I use the Pacific rack and the 9000 hi-hat and single pedal. These were the tools used to make this tour feel like heaven to me. A lot of people ask why I only have a six-piece kit. That’s easy. After my tech Polo and I configured my cymbal setup there was no room for anything else. Just kidding! Coming up in church, a 12”, 13”, 16”, 22” kick and 14” snare were the norm, so I honestly just stayed close to what I’m used to. I have always been comfortable playing a five-piece but I added the 18” on my left because some of the tunes called for really big, beefy fills. Those 16” and 18” VLT floor toms are just what the doctor ordered. The low tones are powerful! I really did have a lot of cymbals set up there on my kit though [laughs]!

EDGE: Do you have a particular warm-up routine?

AS: I can’t say that I do. Did I miss that section in my trusty drummer’s handbook [laughs]? As the tour went on though, I did find myself doing pretty
much the exact same thing before every show. I would get dressed for the show and listen to a couple songs from Jay-Z’s *The Black Album*. I would give Polo our secret handshake, and from the time I’d sit down on my kit until my MD, Valdez, would call for the intro to the show, I would pray and ask God to take away any nervousness, help me make it through this show and play it the way he would have me to. That was about it.

**EDGE:** How has Usher’s immense popularity and rise to the top of the charts directly affected your drumming career?

**AS:** It’s absolutely incredible! I couldn’t have asked for a better situation. I know this was nothing but God that worked this out for me. I have been dreaming of playing at this level ever since I can remember. I used to wonder what it would be like to be in any magazine or publication, to be affiliated with the best sponsors in the world and possibly appear on some of my favorite late night TV shows. Because of Usher and Valdez allowing me to be a part of their team, I don’t have to dream about it anymore.

**EDGE:** What’s it like to play the Grammys with the “Godfather of Soul” James Brown?

**AS:** It was an absolute honor. I really felt like I was dreaming even in the rehearsals. A couple of my closest friends helped to put things in perspective and it was such a huge honor to be there. They both are extremely successful. They shared with me that it took one of them ten years before he got to play there, and the other is still waiting for the opportunity. So please try to understand my excitement. This is my first professional gig and tour, and I get to play at the pinnacle of music recognition with the number one artist in the world. And on top of that, the “Godfather of Soul” is coming out to make a special appearance. Wow-ee! It took a few days for the reality to set in. I really thought I was dreaming until James Brown showed up for rehearsal—I was so swoll. Keep in mind, we are talking about “Soul Brother #1,” “Mr. Papa Got A Brand New Bag,” the original “Sex Machine” himself. We also had Fred Wesley and the best horn players I have ever had the honor to share the stage with. These guys have played with everyone from Phil Collins to Maxwell. Did I mention this is one of the biggest stages in the world with two of the biggest names in music? Oh, okay, cool. I just wanted to make sure you knew [laughs]. Once the music started and Mr. Brown looked at me with approval, I was cool. He later verbalized his consent in regard to how I was playing his song. I did a good job of trying to stay chill, but, man, on the inside I was so hype. Wow! It was definitely an experience that I will never forget.

**EDGE:** You’ve been traveling the world over the past year and a half. Any interesting or funny stories?

**AS:** Wow-ee! There were so many memories, man. This was an incredible experience for me personally off stage, as well as professionally on stage. I could tell you about the time I felt a little sick just minutes before a live TV taping in N.Y. where I earned the nickname “Dynamite Bottom.” I could talk about how the band—Natural, Buddy, Valdez and I—would stay up for hours trying to determine who was the PS2 nighttime champion. It was always me, but please don’t mention it to the others. Maybe I could share about the time when Usher picked a girl out of the audience to sing to and she had the look on her face like he better have picked
her because she belonged up there with him. She was so stuck on herself. So he stopped the music, politely asked her to return to her seat and picked a young lady who was crying and singing with disbelief as she danced with him while he sang to her. I could even talk about all the celebs that I have had the privilege to meet. Looking back, all these things were really cool. There are, like, a thousand more memories in my head that I could mention but the one that totally sticks out in my mind is when I got to go home a house of one of my heroes, Bootsy Collins. He was sooo cool. One of my friends had been doing some work with him and mentioned that we were in town. Mr. Collins was like, “Bring them over to the house.” It’s crazy! It’s like a museum. So many different pictures and memorabilia. So many different basses. I remember seeing a couple of them during his performances on TV or on video. I was so swoll! Here I am with the band, chillin’ at Bootzilla’s crib. Unbelievable! He has a studio in the basement. We all got on the instruments and brought in the funk for like an hour. It was so much fun. He gave us our official funk cards. Definitely an experience I will never forget!

**EDGE:** What advice would you have for young, aspiring R&B or Hip Hop players that are looking for a career as a pro drummer?

**AS:** I would first tell them to be patient and wait for their opportunity to come, but make sure to be ready when it shows up. Chops and licks are really cool when you are shredding, but on the gig you have to be able to establish the groove and play the part above anything else. Once the groove is laid down, it’s the placement of those chops that you have in your vocabulary that will set you apart from the players who focus on wowing the crowd with the ultimate super-fast double roll of death and mortification. That’s whack! Stuff like that will get you an aisle or a window seat on the way back to your house quick. Do not get caught up in the hype that these gigs can bring. It’s so easy to go down in flames because you aren’t being true to yourself. My MD would always tell me about how so many great musicians got fired on their day off. Stay humble and really appreciate what it is that your gift has made room for you to do. I have met so many incredible musicians who are dying to be able to play at the professional level. If you get there, you can’t take it for granted. It’s really a blessing. I think the most important thing that I can share with the future cats is how important it is to keep God first. Stay grounded in him. He will direct your paths and put you where you need to be. When you do get there, make sure you cherish and enjoy every second of it.

**GERALD HEYWARD:**

I met Aaron when I was on tour with Mary J [Blige]. I was hanging out with my homeboy Jay and he showed me this tape of Aaron playing in his basement. It was crazy. His playing is real crazy ‘cause you can’t really figure out how he fits the licks that he does in any size space. And he can do licks all day long. Aaron, don’t ever, ever, ever change kid, stay true.

**TONY ROYSTER, JR.:**

The first time I met Aaron was at Gerald Heyward’s house, along with Calvin Rodgers. We were on our way to the Zildjian factory to pick out some cymbals. Actually, that’s the first time I heard him play. We were playing together on this practice kit, in this soundproof room where you test out cymbals. It was great.

Aaron’s playing is incredible. He is clean, precise, and he plays with a lot of power. If he commits to a fill on the drums, you are definitely going to hear, and know, that he meant to play it. Also he has great time, which is a very important aspect of becoming a great drummer.

He should continue to develop his own style of playing so he can have his own tone and be distinguished from everyone else. He is doing the right thing by staying busy and having a passion for his craft. Aaron Spears, an awesome drummer.

**NISAN STEWART:**

I met Aaron a couple of years ago in Detroit. I was out there at Fred Hammond’s big gospel event performing with The Soul Seekers, and he was playing with The Gideon Band. I was amazed from the gate. He was killing!!!

I love his style. He’s very quick and creative. You never know what to expect from him as the show goes on.

My advice to Aaron is to keep it chuuuuuch, as we say out in L.A. For those that don’t know, it means keep it church! He follows a great list of professional drummers that started out in church. Some say it’s not where you come from, but it’s where you’re at. To me, it’s both!

**USHER: CONFESSIONS (2004)**
EDGE: What inspired you to start playing?

Nigel Olsson: I spent a lot of my early years in West Africa because my father was a pilot. He was the chief pilot for the Ghana government. A pilot being the guy that brings big ships in and out of the harbor so they don’t crash. And he never lost one, so I guess he was good [laughs]. So, my older brother and I would spend our summers in Ghana—it used to be the Gold Coast—for eight weeks at a time in the summer, and it was like, still is, a major, major part of my life. I think about it often, about going back. Now that it’s Ghana, it’s changed a lot because it got political. There’s war on either side, you know, there’s war on either side, like, what we would call jam sessions now. And then the weekends, the local people would have, like, what we would call jam sessions now. And they’d beat on anything, you know? It was all about beating on stuff, hollowed-out pieces of tree—you know, basically what you guys do [laughs]. They’d chop a tree down and make a canoe out of it; and then they’d chop another tree down, and hollow it out, and make a drum out of it. And you know, they’d have animal skin heads and stuff, and different tonal quality. But I always remembered that the low tones were the ones that stuck with me, and I think it stuck forever and ever. So my early mega-influence was these African people bashing away, basically.

EDGE: How do you make the transition from hearing African music, which is sort of like a language and religion there, to a drumset?

NO: To me it’s all about the tone of the drums. You know, I don’t read or anything, and I can’t do a roll—if they asked me to play “God Save the Queen” it’s gonna be, “Off with his head!” ‘cause I can’t even do a roll. But it’s just that tonal thing, and when I hear the music, especially Elton’s music, which is very inspirational to me, you know, the big ballads and stuff, I plan what I’m going to play, but I hear the low tonal quality. You know, my drum fills aren’t very technical, but they’re planned to be big and huge.

EDGE: Tell us about your front-of-house sound man, Clive. I understand he’s been with you since the beginning.

NO: He’s been there the whole time, and you know, he’s been through many, many drummers as well. He just loves this new kit, and we got it past him with these kick drums because he loved the “Ghana” kit, but that’s our studio kit now because as soon as it goes in the studio you put a microphone on that kit. You don’t have to hardly use any EQ or anything. Engineer’s dream, right? So we’re keeping that for studio work now. “The Pinky,” the pink and purple one, he loves that as a road kit. Loves it. And when we had discussed doing a special kit for Las Vegas for The Red Piano, John Good had said, “Listen to this bass drum.” And we went into the little workroom, showroom, whatever it is, and he said, “Hit that.” And I boinked it once, and I said, “Phew! That’s it. Let’s do it. Let’s get it ’round Clive, though.” [laughs] So Clive basically didn’t know, I don’t think, until John told him about three or four weeks ago when we were in Vegas.

EDGE: I want to just get back briefly to you transitioning from being inspired by African drums to actually your first experiences playing drumset. How you got started playing, you know, in popular music, or…?

NO: Well actually, I started out as a guitar player. I was with this band—God, I’ve forgotten what they’re even called—and I was a guitar player. ‘Cause in those days, this was like the nineteen—mid-’60s, I would think. In those days you only needed to know basically three chords, which I’ve now forgotten [laughs]. And I was, like, the lead singer and rhythm guitar player. And our drummer had left, or he didn’t show for a gig one night, and you know, I could basically keep time, so I just went back and bashed away on the drums and loved it. And loved it even more because some of the places where we used to play in those early ’60s, if you didn’t play The Beatles or The Rolling Stones they’d start hurling stuff at you, you know. ‘Cause mainly we were playing in working men’s clubs or pubs, you know, I mean rough stuff. So I figured out, if I’m sitting behind the drums and the cymbals I’ve kind of got shields, you know [laughs].
EDGE: So you never had lessons?
NO: No lessons, no.

EDGE: So you developed your style of playing on your own?
NO: I just used to put the headphones on and play along to records. Whether it was Cliff Richard records, or Lonnie Donegan records, or Beatles, whatever. And I'd just play along with them. And that's basically how I started. Then, actually, Slingerland built me a kit with wooden rims. It was in the '70s, like '73 or '72. And I had wooden rims on them. Oversize toms, oversize '70s, like '73 or '72. And I had wooden rims on a kit with wooden rims. It was in the studio don't rattle like metal ones do because of me having to tune the drums so low. So, that worked.

EDGE: So did you play with a click back then?
NO: No. No clicks. I hate, loathe click tracks. I even hate ProTools. Because now that Elton has figured out that you can fly stuff in, you know, you only get, really, to play half a song anymore.

EDGE: So you were rehearsing in the studio, actually, when you were doing that sort of thing?
NO: Not really. We knew we had the sound together, and we just sat down and played the song. Most of that stuff, the big, big records were cut within one or two takes 'cause if you go any more than five, you lose the freshness of it all, I think. Still to this day, I don't like to go in and play until I've heard the song at least a couple of times—if Elton plays it down a couple of times. I won't sit at the drum kit until he's ready to, like, say, "Okay, let's go and cut it."

There was a song we did on the Captain Fantastic album, I think it's called "We All Fall in Love Sometimes," which goes—it's kind of two songs in one—it goes into "Curtains," and we didn't want to make an edit between the two songs because you would lose the atmosphere. And I have this, what we call my "descriptive drumming," which would be, you know, those big fills that I put in the Elton songs. When I first heard, I think it was The Beatles’ White Album, when you heard Ringo’s drums in stereo in the headphones, it was amazing 'cause he's got that low tonal quality. I think it was Geoff Emerick who was the engineer on that particular record—and I think they used to put sheets and carpets over it. Just to make it sound like "dju, dju, dju, dju, djum." I wanted to take that a little bit further and have that kind of sound—but with the sheets off. That's where I was looking for that low "djooooom"—that you don't stop the tone, you make it ring on, you know? And I was a nightmare actually when we first started recording with Elton because I didn't want to tape up the drums. I wanted that "djum," but in those days, you know, they'd always say, "Oh, it's rattling. You've got a rattle here," and you'd spend, like, hours trying to find where the rattle was coming from. Then, actually, Slingerland built me a kit with wooden rims. It was in the '70s, like '73 or '72. And I had wooden rims on them. Oversize toms, oversize kick drums, and these wooden rims on the toms. And we found that wooden rims in the studio don't rattle like metal ones do because of me having to tune the drums so low. So, that worked.

EDGE: Everybody’s doing that.
NO: And you get the same drum fill twice, exactly the same. And it's okay to put the same fill in, but you can play it a little bit different.

So, the days of making records like I know records are meant to be made is totally, probably, over. It'll never be like that ever again. And for the records that we did with Elton, the early records—you know, like “Captain Fantastic,” “Good Bye Yellow Brick Road,” “Candle in the Wind,” “High Flying Bird”—those records were cut in minutes, basically. We'd be there when they were written, we were all on the same wavelength so we knew exactly what we were going to play, and we were excited to go and get behind the gear and bash away. They were just so inspirational, and most of those songs were recorded, written and recorded, within about an hour and a half. “Daniel” was written in fifteen minutes and we went straight into the studio and cut it first take [snaps his fingers]—done!

EDGE: So you didn't even cross-fade it?
NO: As you hear it on the record, that's the way we cut it. So, you know, you get halfway through the first song, “We All Fall in Love Sometimes,” and you say, “I hope that I remember how to get it to the next!” [laughs] And it was fantastic. Still one of my favorite songs that we've ever, ever recorded because it was just fresh. We were, again, all on the same wavelength, and I remember we had our eyes closed and we knew exactly what we were going to do. And we didn't have to cross-fade or edit or any-
thing. No razor blades on that record.

EDGE: Talk a little bit about your solo career.

NO: I was happy with most of the stuff I put out. “Put on Your Dancin’ Shoes” was a big record for me. It was, like, top four in America. It never did a thing overseas. But it was a good experience for me to make records because I love being in the studio, that’s my thing.

And when I moved to Atlanta, the lady that I was seeing—I mean, we were together for like nine years—she ran, well, owned Bang Records out of Atlanta. So we’d be in the studio all the time, basically, cutting with Paul Davis and some of the Atlanta people and bringing people in from Memphis and Muscle Shoals. That was a great experience to work with those kind of musicians. You know, the Blues guys, and the people from Staxx and everything, you know? But, I never toured.

I was going to go on a tour, and then I had a really bad car crash and never made it out onto the road on my own. But I was kind of freaked out anyhow because I didn’t really want to come out and sing, even though I had James Stroud, who was going to play drums. We were going to have, like, two drummers, and I would come out and sing part of the time and then go back and James and I would play together. But I was just freaked out about being the frontman. And it’s not a case of them throwing bottles anymore, I just don’t want to be the frontman, you know?

But I’d like to do a record, which I did, and it was only really released in Japan, the most recent one, called Move the Universe. I cut that record, but had different singers. I had, like, girl singers, a couple of guy singers, and just did songs that I always wanted to do, like old cover records or whatever. And we tried to get a record deal over here for that, but they said, “Well, we don’t know where to put it.” So... but I just love to be in the studio.

EDGE: Has your auto racing career played a role in your drumming?

NO: It’s actually backwards. Being a drummer, you are so much more coordinated in a racing car. Because when you’re behind the wheel, and you’re doing, like, 200 miles an hour, and there’s a wall coming up, your reactions have to be very, very, very quick. And, you have to use both sides of your brain. Your hands, arms, legs and feet are doing totally different things all the time, so you have to be really coordinated to do this. And that’s part of my passion. I was so passionate about motor racing, and when I got to go into the Ferrari Challenge and drive these super-cars the way they’re meant to be driven you know, at breakneck speeds, and knowing that there was nobody coming around the other way, well hopefully not, it was amazing. And I did very, very well, I think, because of my coordination. You know, your legs have to do different things from your arms and hands. People find it very, very tough. It’s like that thing where you rub your stomach and pat your head, you know, you’ve gotta be coordinated and concentrate.

EDGE: So, it sounds like you’re purposefully playing fills in a certain way. You’re holding back and playing in a simpler way than you might have.

NO: And it’s basically to the lyrics, as well. Because all the big, big ballads that we’ve done with Elton, you know, they’re Bernie’s lyrics. The lyrics have so much meaning and you don’t wanna cover them up with something that’s not really needed. You know, just don’t do a drum fill for the sake of doing it. When we first started recording with Elton, I discovered that if I do a fill across the toms in stereo it travels across the speakers.

EDGE: Those were the “Don’t Let the Sun Go Down on Me” fills...

NO: True. So you know that when you got back in the control

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:
Solo Albums:
1971  Nigel Olsson’s Drum Orchestra and Chorus
1975  Nigel Olsson
1975  Drummers Can Sing Too!
1978  Nigel Olsson
1979  Nigel
1980  Changing Tides
2001  Nigel Olsson’s Drum Orchestra and Chorus, Vol. 2: Move the Universe

With Elton John:
1969  Empty Sky
1970  11-17-70
1971  Tumbleweed Connection
1971  Madman Across the Water
1972  Honky Chateau
1972  Don’t Shoot Me...I’m Only The Piano Player
1973  Goodbye Yellow Brick Road
1974  Captain Fantastic
1975  Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy
1976  Here & There

1980  21 at 33
1981  The Fox
1983  Too Low For Zero
1984  Breaking Hearts
1988  Reg Strikes Back
1991  The One
2000  Elton John’s The Road to El Dorado
2000  One Night Only: The Greatest Hits
2001  Songs From The West Coast
2002  Greatest Hits 1970-2002
2004  Peachtree Road

Other appearances:
1968  Plastic Penny: Two Sides of a Penny
1969  Plastic Penny: Currency
1969  Spencer Davis Group: Funky
1971  Coische: Swallow Tales
1971  Mike Hurst: In My Time
1972  Mick Grabham: Mick The Lad
1972  Long John Baldry: Everything Stops For Tea
1973  Kiki Dee: Loving And Free
1973  Davey Johnstone: Smiling Face
1974  Jimmy Webb: Land’s End
1975  Barbie Benton: Something New
1975  Neil Sedaka: The Hungry Years
1975  The Who: Tommy (Original Soundtrack Recording: “Pinball Wizard”)  
1975  Linda Ronstadt: Prisoner in Disguise
1975  Rod Stewart: Atlantic Crossing
1976  Leo Sayer: Endless Flight
1976  Rick Springfield: Wait For Night
1976  Brian and Brenda Russell: Word Called Love
1976  Neil Sedaka: Steppin’ Out
1976  Peter Lemongello: Do I Love You
1977  Eric Carmen: Boats Against The Current
1977  Paul Davis: Singer of Songs, Teller of Tales
1977  Helen Reddy: Ear Candy
1978  Eric Carmen: Change of Heart
1978  Bonnie Pointer: Heaven Must Have Sent You
1978  Uriah Heep: Lamentoware Tapes
1979  Leo Sayer: Show Must Go On: Anthology
1997  Eric Carmen: Definitive Collection
1999  Random Hearts (Original Soundtrack Recording)
2002  Toto: Through the Looking Glass
room, your toms will travel. And Gus [Dudgeon, producer] was actually the one that said, “Nige, you know, you can leave a few of them out. You’re not Keith Moon. Let Moony do all that stuff. Hold back a little bit.” And that was it. That clicked. It’s what you leave out and that’s been imprinted into my brain since the early, early studio days.

EDGE: So, does Elton ever have anything to say about drum parts?

NO: No. He actually doesn’t say anything to anyone about what they should play because he has so much trust in the way we know his music. So he won’t say anything about, “Well, you play like this, and you play like that.”

EDGE: Tell us about when you and Curt Bisquera were playing together.

NO: He brought me along to you guys. Curt was playing DW at that time because he was part of the band at that stage. DW was basically the sound, the way they were built, it was what I was looking for. And Curt says, “You know, I know these guys really well.” And then Curt made the call right there.

EDGE: So you’ve mentioned that you get pretty anxious before a show.

NO: No, I freak out until I get on that stage. And I don’t know what it is. It’s not that I’m worried if I’ll break a drumstick or make a mistake in a song. I don’t know what it is, I’m just absolutely frightened to death. And with the Vegas shows, it’s so weird, ‘cause I don’t look at a clock, but I have this adrenaline rush. I mean it’s like having heart palpitations, my whole body goes “vroooouh,” and I know that it’s 7:05 and I need to go start getting ready for a 7:30 show. And then Chris, my tech, will come in with a Pepsi—has to be Pepsi. He will hand me the Pepsi fifteen minutes before I go on stage. Every single night. He’ll give half the can to me and half the can to Davy. Before I go on stage, I have to have Dennis, our stage manager, standing on the left of me [laughs]. Keith [Bradley, our manager] will be over by the curtains, Bob Haley, Elton’s assistant, his right-hand guy, is just behind me, and Bob Birch, the bass player, is right behind me to go on the stage behind me. And as soon as our intro begins, I say a little prayer to make this a really good gig, and as the downbeat for the intro music goes, Dennis will always shake my hand and say, “Have a good show, Nige.” And I’ll put my drumstick out here like that, and touch Keith, every single day. And Bob Haley, Elton’s guy, always messes with me because he’s kind of movin’ around, and I know that he’s in the wrong place. And I’ll look back to see that Bob Birch is following me because I’m not going to do it on my own. And Bob will always say, “...and a one...” So, we have our own little ritual. And I’ll always sign all the drumheads before I do the gig, and that makes it all go smooth. It’s like motor racing. You know, if your tire man isn’t there when you come into the pits, you’re in big trouble. You know, it’s all split-second stuff here.

and JG: Those were some really big records with big hits. And when we saw you, Elton and the band playing the other night, I felt just like it did the first time I saw the band, in ’71. Back then, it just blew me away. And it wasn’t a big venue, but the people were electrified with it. And I’m still seeing the same feeling coming from that stage.

NO: His songs, there is a special way of playing his songs, and I think we still pull it off. I play, actually, a little bit behind. I tend to hold things way, way back. I was actually once offered a gig with The Beach Boys, and Carl—God rest his soul—said, “No.” ‘Cause Carl and I were good friends, and he says, “No, Nigel wouldn’t work out because he plays too behind the beat. Beach Boys songs are right there, or are a little bit rushed. And Nigel is totally the wrong style.’ And I would tend to hold it back, and I leave out a lot of stuff where people think, “Oh, here comes a fill, here comes a fill.” Oh, well, not with “Nige.” I leave a lot out. It’s that space that makes our records so different, and the way that they’re held back. And, you know, Dee obviously died ten years ago now, and we miss him dreadfully within the band—Davy and I, and Clive. But Bob Birch has that Dee Murray thing going on as well. He studied the way that Dee played on the records. And it’s pretty frightening because sometimes, especially when we’ve been in the studio recently, when Bob plays, it’s very Dee-esque—if that’s a word we can use—Davy and I look at each other and say: “That was a Dee, wasn’t it?”

JG: It just seems to be such a chemistry with him and you guys. I mean, Bob’s one of my favorites...

NO: He’s got it down...

JG: ...and he nails that gig just perfectly.
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Steve Rinkov with rock and roll icon Mick Fleetwood

EDGE: Is there a preferable finish? Is lacquer a better bet than a wrap, or vise versa?

Steve Rinkov: From my perspective, I prefer a wrap to a lacquer for durability. When taking drums in and out of road cases each night, drums are likely to incur the odd nick or bump. Wrapped drums tend to hold up better than the lacquer.

EDGE: How many snares is too many on the road?

SR: I don’t know if there’s a rule about how many snares drums one needs. I haven’t worked for anyone who uses more than two on a kit, and I’ve found that one spare for each snare on the kit is enough to get out of any dicey situation quickly. Also, I’ve been lucky in that for the tours on which I have worked, the drummers haven’t made changes to their sound once we left rehearsals, so I didn’t need to carry extra drums for optional sounds.

EDGE: Is sound or durability the primary concern when choosing head combinations?

SR: My main objective is to help the drummer achieve his or her sound. After that, it’s about finding a balance. I’ve worked with people who like the calf head sound in the studio, but that’s just too hard to control on the road, and they’re just not dependable. All of the major drumhead companies offer such a broad selection of high quality heads with extremely diverse sounds that finding some that are durable, in addition to offering just the right sound, isn’t a problem.

EDGE: What should be in every touring tech’s toolbox?

SR: Great question. I tour with a fairly large road case filled with a multitude of things ranging from cleaning products, tools, such as a cordless drill and soldering iron, spare drum and hardware parts, cables and whatever will get the job done. However, oftentimes I’ll get to work at a television show, and for one reason or another, my case won’t be with me, so I’ll have to grab just the things that are most crucial. Usually that’s a drum key, gaff tape, a small selection of tools and my flashlight because I’m often working in the dark.

EDGE: Is heavy-duty hardware overkill or a must?

SR: It’s certainly not overkill. Everyone I’ve worked for plays just a little harder live than they do in rehearsals. Seeing double-braced, heavy-duty hardware hold its ground is a comforting thing. For me, it takes less effort to secure heavy hardware to the drum riser and leaves me with less to worry about.

EDGE: Which parts should always have spares?

SR: In my workbox, I always have a selection of snare wires, tension rods, drum keys, cymbal stand wing screws, snare string and tape. I also keep a couple of different manufacturers’ hi-hat clutches, snare strainers and bass pedal parts. It’s a good idea to have a little of everything handy if at all possible.

EDGE: Are sizes relative to each drummer, or are they dictated by sound and venue size?

SR: I have never been in a situation where drum size was determined by venue size. In some cases, drummers use what they have for years, like Mick Fleetwood. Or with Jimmy Paxson, who I happen to be working with now on the upcoming Stevie Nicks tour, he chose drum sizes that best suit the music.

EDGE: Should drummers and techs be concerned with monitor mixes, or is that strictly left to the audio guys?

SR: I can only say that being well rounded is the key. The more you know about everything happening relative to the gig, the better. When it comes to monitor mixing, I’ve found it best to act as a communication conduit between drummers and monitor engineers. Often times, however, it can be best to just stay out of the way.

EDGE: What are some tricks to ensure the identical set-up night after night?

SR: This is a tricky one because there are some secrets I can’t give away. I will say that, for me, it’s important to sit behind the drums and get a sense of the spatial relationship between all the drums and cymbals. Also, it’s important to take note of any strange angles. The slightest rotation of a snare drum stand can really throw players off. In some situations, detailed measurements are necessary, but most of the time, marking on the drum riser (a.k.a. spike marks) will generally ensure consistent placement each night.

Steve Rinkov began his music career as a drummer in Southern California. From there, he moved to Seattle, where he opened a small, but well-known drum shop in the area called The Drum Garage. His first experience with teching began in 2000 when he joined the Lenny Kravitz camp and worked for Lenny on the “Lenny” record. Soon following, Steve toured with Fleetwood Mac on their very successful “Say You Will” tour, not only working with Mick Fleetwood’s elaborate set-up, but also joining Mick on drums for several songs each night. In 2004, Steve teched for both Taku Hirano and Teddy Campbell on the road with Bette Midler, and this year he’s been in the studio with Matt Cameron and the boys from Pearl Jam on their upcoming CD release.
JAZZ MUSICIANS MAKE THEIR LIVING WEAVING Intricate Musical Conversations. With That in Mind, We Decided to Ask Carl Allen, Mike Clark, Billy Kilson, Gary Novak and Billy Ward to Do What They Do Best. Our Newest Edition of Q&A Has These Five Accomplished Conversationalists Speaking on Their Jazz Roots, the Art of Improvisation and What It Means to Swing. >>>

EDGE: Who inspired you to get started and who keeps you going?

Carl Allen: Oh boy, well, there’s so many. With respect to drummers, I tend to believe that we all have what I would call our “Fab Five.” These are five people that as a drummer, you really identify with, and for me, that would be Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Roy Haynes and Billy Higgins. Spending countless hours around all of these gentlemen, every time they would play, it was about just being in the moment, and it’s about the way that they were able to live their life experience through their instrument. That being said, there are others who also inspired me in terms of the way that they would play. You know, people like Bobby Hutchinson, McCoy Tyner, Joe Henderson and Freddie Hubbard. Every time they played their instrument, it was the most important time of their life.

Mike Clark: Well, my father was a drummer, and he had a hell of a jazz record collection. So, even before age three and four, they would put me in the front room in a bassinet down by the record player, so my brain had absorbed all this Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Miles Davis. I started playing when I was four. My father brought his drumset down from the attic, and I was a natural; I started playing and it made sense, and it swung right off the bat. I remember doing it; it was kind of a tom-tom type of solo, and it wasn’t like a little kid just banging things—and I’ve been playing ever since then. And I could name off all of my heroes, which is almost everybody who has played jazz, rhythm and blues, soul, and blues. There are very few people that I don’t like and that haven’t inspired me in some way. Personally, Herbie Hancock has inspired me tremendously—to be different and to not play what everybody else is playing. I was playing along the lines of Elvin and Tony and Philly Joe [Jones]—not that I could play like those guys, but along those lines.

And when I met Herbie, he just sort of said, “I don’t want to hear that. I know all those guys real well: Tony’s my best friend. If I wanted them, I’d call ‘em. I want you to do something different.”

Billy Kilson: I would say in the order of Lenny White, Tony, and Philly Joe. Those are the guys that brought me to Boston. I started playing when I was sixteen, so when I heard Lenny White, I said, “Oh my God. I definitely want to play drums for sure.” So I quit playing football when I heard Lenny White. And then when I heard Tony, I thought, “What the hell is this?” Then, I get to Boston, and I meet Philly Joe. And those three guys, I would probably represent jazz playing. They’re like the corners of the triangle. Lenny represents the fusion funk side, Tony represents the jazz fused with the fusion stuff, and Philly Joe represents my traditional side. But what gets me up to play drums everyday, what gets me up night after night, day after day, studio session after studio session—bar none—is my teacher, Alan Dawson.

This is going to really sound strange, but I listen to Rachmaninoff’s “Preludes” a lot. I also listen to some of the new metal stuff, like Crisis and the Metallica stuff. I’ve just been re-introduced to Joni Mitchell and Donald Fagan stuff, and definitely a lot of hip-hop stuff, like Jill Scott.

Gary Novak: Being involved in a lot of different types of music, I have a lot of different inspirations. I would say lately, what’s really getting me back into playing would be listening to older Keith Jarrett records. I like a lot of piano trio music, ‘cause it’s an open format for jazz musicians. When you get three guys, the freedom is the most wide open. You can go in many different directions; you’re not dealing with more minds that have to be in the same place. Also a bunch of these early ECM records, with Keith, Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock. That’s some of the greatest music that’s ever been recorded. Keith Jarrett is a modern day Mozart.

When you listen to people like Keith, it can almost make you feel like quitting because he’s so unbelievably great that it’s hard to even relate. I also listen to a lot of Bill Stewart. A lot of the music he gets involved in, aside from his great playing, is the stuff I’m really into. It’s pretty conceptually cool, and they’re taking chances in an environment musically where taking chances are really frowned upon. So, what’s been keeping me going lately is just listening to some of the more revolutionary music of the early ’70s and some of the younger guys now that are at least trying to do the same thing.

Billy Ward: Louie Bellson was the first clinic I ever saw. I was nine years old. My drumming hero list then expanded to include Buddy Rich, Ringo...really everybody. Nowadays, it’s not so much “who” as “what” inspires me, and that is a great song or piece of music. Sometimes, if I haven’t played for a couple of days, I forget how much fun drumming is!

EDGE: Well, as is the case with so many genres of music, jazz is divided up into these sub-categories. There’s straight-ahead bebop, and there’s swing, and cool jazz, and the stuff that Miles initiated. If you had to encapsulate jazz into one specific category or give someone just one jazz record to exemplify the genre, what would that be?

CA: One of the things that jazz is, and I say this very tenderly, is the freedom of expression. But when we talk about that, there are still certain boundaries. I think that the foundation of this music is a feeling, and that feeling is swing, that defines or separates what jazz is or what it isn’t. But it’s also about improvisation. I would easily say Kind of Blue. With Coltrane I would easily say A Love Supreme...and there’s the other stuff. There’s the big band stuff. One of my favorite records would be Thad Jones/ Mel Lewis Orchestra Presenting Joe Williams. And that’s something completely different. What Joe brings to the table is...
just the element of the blues because he was originally a blues vocalist, or blues singer, but how that plays into the jazz thing is just the way he was able to communicate with people.

MC: I think I’d give them *Milestones* with Philly Joe Jones. And God, that’s a hard question because there’s so many. I think that one captures most of it, most of the jazz feeling and the jazz language. It’s what swinging is all about. I’m not saying that it’s full of inventions like some records are, but it encapsulates jazz history. I see a lot of people playing jazz now, and the swing quotient is not happening, but they have tons of technique. Most of us have the instincts to be able to swing or we wouldn’t be playing drums, so I don’t really buy into, “This guy can swing,” or, “this guy can’t swing.” If someone practices a bunch of technique, then they should really practice swinging and really knowing how to lay that quarter note, and how to get nasty with it. And I can think of some drummers that come to mind right now that can really lay a nasty pocket up in there, and stack all kinds of stuff up against it. To me, the primary thing is the quarter-note. Being able to swing and really lay it in there. And in that way, there is no such nonsense, like, on top of the beat, behind the beat, in the middle of the beat, you just swing or you don’t.

BK: This is true to form for a jazz musician; we hate categorizing the music. If I was to give something to my mother-in-law, who probably never listens to jazz, the first thing I would lay on her would probably be *Kind of Blue*. I see it as a true representation of the old be-bop, the new sounds—there were new harmonies that were introduced in that music that we take for granted today when we hear all music post-Fifties. And for the listener, it’s easier on the ear. It’s the biggest selling jazz record today, so it’s easy to pick *Kind of Blue*. And for the jazz musician that is serious about playing, I would pick that too, and then I would pick *A Love Supreme* with [John] Coltrane. The performance on there, that’s the quintessence. It’s unbelievable. It’s hard to pick any other albums.

GN: To me, it’s an era more than a record. It’s that whole era of 1963 through 1972. That’s when they, really, in my very humble opinion, took all the basics of be-bop, and they took that repertoire and started to loosen it up a little bit and not be so regimented about structured bar lines or form. Music at that point really started to take its foundation and then knock walls down. So they had the ability to improvise over form, but at that era, form started to become less important. So it was really, truly improvised music.

BW: I would say swing is my pick for jazz “DNA,” but I’d rather not break it down like that. For example, which rock style is the most revealing—hard to tell. Louis Armstrong is a great start for listening to jazz, but my very first jazz record was [Dave] Brubeck. Most folks get into a new music form by listening to something “in the middle” like Brubeck, and then we become explorers and seek out what happened before and after our first experience.

EDGE: Which other genres of music have affected your playing or your style?

CA: Oh man, first and foremost, gospel music. I grew up listening to gospel music and my mother was a gospel singer for as long as I can remember. And I grew up playing in church, and that music was everywhere around us. But also, the thing that influenced me was just early R&B stuff. Well, maybe not so early, but ’70s R&B and soul music from the ’60s. All of that being said, I grew up in an era where musicians could actually play and sing, and being able to program something didn’t constitute you being a musician. Not to say that there’s something wrong with that, but I was just from an era in which, if you were a singer, you really had to be able to sing. And you weren’t really considered a singer unless you could bring tears to someone’s eyes. But, those styles of music were very influential for me. And I think the backbone behind all of these different genres is the feeling of the music. Because whether it’s gospel, or whether it’s some old Sam Cook, or whether it’s Parliament and Funkadelic, or whatever it’s Miles and Tony Williams, the thing that is the common link between all of these styles of music is the feeling. The feeling that it gave you when you listened to it; it gave you the ability to take you somewhere else. You can listen to this music and it can take you somewhere else.

MC: “Soul music” in the ’60s hit me right smack between the eyes—and every offshoot of that, pre- and post-Motown, all of the Staxx stuff. Also, I lived in Texas and I had a hell of a blues background as a child. I played with many, many, many famous blues cats before I was even eighteen because I worked in this club where they all used to come through. It wasn’t like I was in their band, but I’d back them up for a week at a time, and so I really learned how to play the shuffle.

BK: When I was working with Dave Holland, my wife introduced me to Rachmaninoff. One of the very first preludes that I like—it’s sort of like a five over four kind of figure—but it sounds like triplets, and it feels so even. And if anyone knows anything about Dave Holland’s music, we’re playing a lot of odd-meter stuff. Elvin would say that he wouldn’t hear time as like this up-and-down, left-or-right kind of thing. If you look at the clock, the time would start at the twelve and then slowly move around, and then the twelve would be one, and there’s no one, two, three, four in between that. There’s just one, go around the clock, and there’s one again. That’s what kind of turned me on. You can hear those influences definitely when I played with Dave Holland, and you can hear a lot of hip-hop influences, too. And more recently, I’ve been playing with Chris Botti. You’ll probably hear more of the metal or the Joni Mitchell influences now.

GN: Playing jazz is definitely more about perpetual motion; you need to keep thinking forward. And sometimes, when you’re playing eighth note music, it’s kind of in the middle of the beat. You’re not thinking rushing, you’re not thinking really laid back, it’s in the middle. And sometimes that concept doesn’t necessarily work for playing jazz; it sounds like you’re holding the band back. I think I get a little heavy-handed, and a little bit too in the middle of the beat, instead of on the top end of the beat sometimes. But that’s just from being infiltrated by one style of music more than another. You know, your roles are very different in those two different elements. When you’re playing vocal music, you’re supporting a lyric and a poem and a story, but in jazz, the music is the story and the journey is the story. In rock, it’s almost like classical; you play the music as written. You’re playing a song, you’re playing a part,
and you have to play it with conviction. In jazz, if you played it that way every night, you’re not playing jazz.

BW: Everything. I like what John Cage once said, “If you want to hear music, go to your window and open it.” Sometimes, the horns honking in Manhattan at rush hour sound like an Ornette Coleman record.

EDGE: Jazz is said to be one of the “true American” art forms, but it’s also been lovingly accepted overseas. What’s been your experience from audiences overseas?

CA: Well, it’s always been a great experience, particularly in Asia, more specifically in Japan. You know, that’s one of my favorite places. When you go there, they’re knowledgeable about the music, they respect the music, they respect the people who play it; and from a business perspective, they treat the musicians with a great deal of respect.

MC: First of all, it’s great that they know who we are (The Headhunters) and know our history. Let’s put it this way—no matter how high you are on the food chain, they know who you’ve played with and they know what you’ve done. I think maybe because of the classical background, they’ve learned to listen deeply. They can hear the conversations between the musicians inside the music. Not that the American audiences can’t, but it’s kind of hard when you’re playing jazz to people who have the mentality of the Spice Girls or something.

GN: Well, there’s absolute truth in everything you just said, in the sense that it is one of the true American art forms. And it definitely has died off in popularity in the United States over the years. I also think that has to do with a generational gap and people that are interested in seeing music that they’re in awe of. I also believe that when kids today go to see music, they actually want to see something that they believe that they can do or understand immediately without any effort. I just think that the younger generations have such an instant-gratification mentality these days. If they can’t imagine themselves being able to do that, they don’t want to be involved in it, because it’s something that might be beyond their reach.

BK: In Europe, I feel like they kind of embrace jazz as the classical artform in a weird sense. Like say, in Japan for example, or even in Russia, the response might be a little bit more conservative, but they’re still mad into it. They’re not going to be as physically responsive as they would be in the western part of Europe. Like when I’m working over there with any band, in any unknown club, or some festival, and playing this outlandish jazz, and I’m thinkin’, “I can’t tap my foot to this.” And people in the audience are standing in the aisles or standing on their chairs dancing as if we’re Jay-Z or something. There’s nothing more gratifying than that.

BW: They are thirsty for great music—a live musical experience is special in most of Europe, and I really enjoy playing there. There is less of a “cultural big brother” influence over there, for some reason. Here in the States, we have humongous radio stations like Clear Channel playing the same pop song sung by slender young so-called “stars.” In Europe, that whole thing seems to be less of an influence.

EDGE: Why do you feel jazz has gone “under the radar” in this era of hip-hop?

CA: Well, I think the recording industry has something to do with that, which is not necessarily a bad thing. I think it’s gone “under the radar,” as you put it, for other reasons, too. Take for example, reading a book. And I make this analogy because I think one of the things that has happened in this age of technology is that younger people now have shorter attention spans. With some young students, I just ask them, “So, now what was the last book you read?” And they’re like, “You mean for class?” And I’m like, “No, just ‘cause you want to learn about something or check something out.” People just don’t read anymore. Even here in New York, the scene has been affected. People don’t go out as much, people go out earlier. I would do a gig, and the earliest I would get home was 3:30 in the morning. Now, sometimes 12:30, 1:00, I’m at home. People don’t want to just sit and listen to music.

MC: Well, I think African-American music, along with the African-American experience, speaks from an observer’s point of view, and all of the cause and effect related to that situation rippled right through the artform like a rock in a pond. You throw a rock in a pond, and you create a wake. So, that same effect probably kept it, and is still keeping it, under the radar. I also think the music is emotionally rich and really deep, so you have to dig down.

BK: I’ve heard for the last twenty years, you know, “It’s on it’s way back, it’s on it’s way back,” but I don’t know about that. But, I do see that there is a serious fuse going on between jazz and hip-hop. Like, if you listen to some of the Jill Scott stuff, you can hear her influences, like Joni Mitchell. But then some of the harmony that’s going on with some of this hip-hop stuff, even Dr. Dre’s, you hear a lot of the jazz influences and they’re using more and more of the jazz musicians these days. And maybe there’s a new sound comin’. Who knows? Everything has its cycle. Duke Ellington and Count Basie, they were the Jill Scotts, or whatever, of the ‘30s and ‘40s. In every club, people were dancing to that music. A year or so ago, I remember seeing this MTV Unplugged thing and it was LL Cool J, and he had live musicians... it was hot. And I think with drummers, it’s kind of fusing the two. Maybe jazz itself will go away in that sense, or it
will never be at the level of 'Trane and Miles, but this style of music, between jazz and hip-hop, who knows what’s going to come of this? I think most of it died off because the legends themselves died. You can’t mimic what they did, man, they were the masters.

GN: Listening to jazz is too challenging. At this state, music is to not think anymore. People want to turn on music when they’re at work...when we were kids, we used to listen to music all the way through and not do anything else. Put the headphones on, and stare at the corner and listen—it was an auditory experience. It wasn’t something that had multi-media attached to it.

BW: Well, maybe it hasn’t. Maybe hip-hop hasn’t finished growing. I guess we’ll see. I’d like to add that a pursuit of jazz is incomplete without a total love and embrace of the great blues musicians and rhythm and blues music that beautifully exploded out of the U.S. this last century.

EDGE: Why do you feel jazz is so closely tied to education in this country?

CA: Well, I think that’s happening for a number of different reasons now. I think a big part of it is that the jazz scene has changed quite a bit. There are fewer opportunities to play. There aren’t as many people leading bands as there were, say, twenty years ago. When I first came on the scene, I would get calls to join a band, you know, whether it was Dexter Gordon’s band or Monty Alexander’s band...people who were touring, who were recording, who had an existing identity, as opposed to just someone who had a gig this weekend. I think the other thing is that, because the whole concept of improvisational music is really starting to reach people at a younger age, a lot of the universities are forced to create programs. When I first started college, I started as a classical percussion major because there was no jazz program there. And then I transferred to a school where I could study jazz. But now you have other programs around the country, like at Berklee in Boston. This is what schools are starting to do to try to keep their enrollment up.

GN: A lot of jazz music is harmonically in depth. Each measure of music has different harmony structure, and for the people that have had very little musical education, that can sound cacophonous, you know, arrhythmic or inharmonic.

BW: Why not? It’s a beautiful, complex artform. I’m assuming you mean it’s being taught in universities...or do you mean smart people dig jazz? [laughs]

EDGE: Rock and pop music are so heavily rooted in two and four and kick and snare, yet jazz is obviously more centered on the quarter note and the ride cymbal. Please talk a little bit more about that relationship.

CA: More so than being between the ride cymbal and the hi-hat. I would really focus in on the ride cymbal. The thing that I’ve discovered is that every drummer’s ride cymbal pattern has a shape to it. And when you listen to Billy Higgins, or Art Taylor, or Elvin Jones, whomever, Mel Lewis, you will hear that their ride cymbal has a different shape to it. But what you will also hear is the other limbs helping to support that cymbal. So, in other words, you can’t just play ride pattern A and think that pattern B, and C and D are going to work necessarily, because pattern A has a certain thing to it that has to be supported by the other limbs. So, it’s really about understanding the shape of the ride cymbal, and then from there, seeing how to make everything else fit within that. It’s a conceptual thing.

MC: I think all music owes a huge debt of gratitude to the blues and the people who invented it. That’s where it came from. To me, that’s the bottom line.

“...a huge debt of gratitude to the blues...”

Mike Clark

EDGE: How can drummers better understand that concept of improvisation?

CA: I think the key is through study. You have to listen. Part of my whole mantra about what I’m all about was really based out of a conversation that I had with Dizzy Gillespie. It’s to move forward with a sense of tradition. And Dizzy taught me that all great art was created with a sense of moving forward, but with a sense of understanding what has already taken place, ‘cause you have to understand the legacy that you’re building upon before you can even begin to contribute.

MC: I’d say just start trying to play standard tunes with your friends, and just start trying to listen to the jazz drummers and somehow copy or mimic what you think they’re doing. And once you
put a little dent into that, maybe apply that type of understanding to all of the music you play. That’s what I did with Herbie Hancock. I just applied my jazz understanding and language right inside of the funk. I played from the inside out. I listened carefully to what everybody was doing, like you would a jazz player taking the solo, and even if I was just playing time, even now, I’m still coming from that place. I’m a conversational drummer.

GN: Improvisation is different as it applies to different instruments. A drummer, in a jazz setting, is an accompanist—until he gets the solo thrown at him. You’re not dealing with harmony, you’re dealing with rhythm. And as a drummer, you need to really pay attention to the other instruments in jazz and see what it’s about. It’s a whole lineage thing when you get into improvising on the drums, because every twenty years, it completely revolutionized itself. The one guy that I think would be the leader in the pack would be Roy Haynes. He was the first guy in the late ’40s and ’50s to stop using the hi-hat on two and four all the time. And he started loosening patterns up and not playing one all the time, playing groupings of fives and sevens and nines, and all that weird stuff that Vinnie Colaiuta and Steve Gadd picked up on. And Elvin and Roy started all that stuff with Tony Williams. But they went back from a lineage of understanding. The ’50s be-bop style jazz, and in the ’60s, started getting a little looser, but when you have all that knowledge and history behind you, it all kinda comes into play. So being an improviser takes a lot of homework. You have to check out a lot of different styles to make your own voice. It’s one thing to just be into that whole 60s-era sound, but not everybody’s into that format. If somebody calls you for another kind of style of jazz, you need to be relatively acquainted with that, too.

BW: Improvisation is much like a word game that we all might have played when we were five years old. Play one of your favorite grooves or beats and then go away from that groove and do something with your toms or cymbals. Remember in your ears what you just did as you go back to the groove for another couple of bars. Then go away again and add a little something to it. Try to have each new thing reflect what happened before. Now you are improvising. I personally enjoy it and feel more creative when I limit things—like no double strokes allowed. Or, I’ll limit the number of drums so that when I leave the groove, I have to play either the snare or one tom. If you are truly going for it, playing what your ears are asking for, then you will inevitably make a mistake. At this point, you can stop and practice the varying stick options for that pattern that threw you off. And now you’ve just added a personal lick or pattern that your ears asked for!

EDGE: How do you generally tune your kit? Is it the traditional way where it’s a little tighter? Talk about that a little bit.

CA: One of the things that I learned early on through just talking to different drummers is that each drum has its own character. So you have to intimately get to know the instrument itself, but it also depends on the acoustics of the room and the style of music. My basic concept is, if I’m playing straight-ahead, acoustic jazz, I tune the bottom head tighter than the top head. The reason for that is just basic physics. The sound is going to come back to you quicker when you’re tuning the drums at a higher pitch. There’s also less miking when you’re playing that kind of music, as opposed to something a little heavier.

MC: I tune my bass drum to a G. I use two heads on everything, and I have an 18” bass drum, and I tune it right around there somewhere. I tune the rest of the tom-toms sort of high, like a jazz sound. I always enjoyed the sound of Billy Higgins’s tom-toms, or Elvin and Tony. I don’t pick exact notes on the tom-toms, but I kind of do with the bass drum—yes, sort of a tight, high sound. I have a funk set, and I use the same tom-toms. I just bring them down a little bit, and I use a 22” bass drum that I tune really low.

BK: I tune lower than most jazz drummers. And some jazz musicians, you know, at the beginning it drove them crazy, but I got a big compliment from James Moody. I did a gig with him a few weeks back, and the way I tune the drums, he said, “Man, I love the way these drums sound. They sing, and they have a lot of body.” And this is no slight against jazz drummers. They tune relatively high, and I probably tune it closer to a funk, hip-hop tuning because those are my roots, and that’s what I feel more comfortable playing. And when you say tuning, man, this takes me to DW. There’s no other drumset on the planet that is so easy to tune. That’s what brought me to you guys. And they will stay in tune, and the resonance, how they react. I don’t change the tuning between genres now at all, and that’s so important to me.

GN: Tuning for a lot of my favorite jazz drummers, like Roy Haynes, or even the new guys like Bill Stewart and Brian Blade—everything’s tuned up. It’s kind of bouncy and boingy and overtony. Maybe it comes from Philly Joe, one of the greatest drummers ever to have lived. But I think a lot of it may have come from calfskin heads. Back in the day, everything would tighten up when it got cold out and that would become the sound, you know?

EDGE: I’m guessing the bass drum sound you go for with jazz, with traditional jazz, is more open?

CA: I use a 14x18”, or sometimes a 16x18”. What I have found with the DW bass drums is that their sound is so much deeper and so much more versatile, that with an 18” I can tune it up or tune it down and use it for everything. You know, I’ve used some 18” bass drums on big band gigs and recordings, and you know, and the engineer’s like, “Man, I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

MC: I use the traditional jazz sound when I’m playing jazz with an open bass drum. Every once in a while, I make a record in the studio and there’ll be a drumset there and the front head is off or something and you sort of have to play it. So, not all of my records accurately represent my sound, but when I play live, that’s what I do.
**Currently Embarking** on a high-profile arena tour, sharing the stage with none other than the legendary U2, Kings of Leon are more mainstream than they had ever dreamed. From VW ad campaigns to the Billboard charts, the band’s new release Aha Shake Heartbreak is striking a chord with music fans everywhere. Drummer Nathan Followill talks about the band’s inherent classic rock sound, their ability to transcend being labeled and what it takes to rock a set of pink drums.

**NF:** Man, I think we were inspired by you?

**E D G E:** What were some of your earliest musical influences? Kings of Leon have a bit of a preference—large versus small?

**NF:** They’ve been nothing but professional. Everyone from the guys that load us in, all the way up to their manager, all the way to Bono and the rest of the band—they’re all amazing! They could easily just give us a tiny little corner of the stage and stick us up there just to kill time while their fans file in, but they’re really cool, really pro. We’re up in Seattle right now, and two nights ago, Eddie Vedder got up there and sang a song with us in his hometown, and the crowd went insane. So, that right there just lets you know the kind of band that these guys are—that they let the opening band have a special guest on that’s gonna get the place going crazy. So yeah, they’ve been great.

**NF:** Most bands that have had their siblings are known for their arguments and their blowouts, but I don’t know. When you look at it, we’re really the only ones who have the consistency. And you know, we have our little fall-outs, we have arguments, but at the end of the day we’re looking forward to seeing each other at Thanksgiving and Christmas, so nothing can be too big to make us pissed off enough where we won’t talk to each other for five years, or break up the band or anything like that.

**E D G E:** So, after picking up the drums in church, how did you develop the skill of playing drums and singing at the same time? That’s also not easy to do.

**NF:** Church, too. Yeah, when I was about nine, I’d say, there was this kid that went to church school with me, and he could tear up a piano. And he was, like, eleven, but we were kind of both in the same boat in that we picked up an instrument at a young age and were able to play it a lot better than we probably should have been able to. But that’s really where it started. He would play the piano and sing, and I would play the drums and sing, and we would just sit there and write horrible, horrible songs and sing ‘em. But, looking back on it now, it’s kind of cool. It definitely helped me out with my profession.

**NF:** To be honest with you, I don’t think I’ve ever seen a pink drum kit before.

**NF:** Yeah. I mean, I look like Grizzly Adams here. I don’t think anyone’s going to question my motives for me playing a set of pink drums if I look like I just bit the head off of a squirrel, you know?

**NF:** Most bands that have had their siblings are known for their arguments and their blowouts, but I don’t know. What inspired you?

**NF:** Church, too. Yeah, when I was about nine, I’d say, there was this kid that went to church school with me, and he could tear up a piano. And he was, like, eleven, but we were kind of both in the same boat in that we picked up an instrument at a young age and were able to play it a lot better than we probably should have been able to. But that’s really where it started. He would play the piano and sing, and I would play the drums and sing, and we would just sit there and write horrible, horrible songs and sing ‘em. But, looking back on it now, it’s kind of cool. It definitely helped me out with my profession.

**NF:** Do what you feel. Don’t try to play the drums like this person or that person. Don’t try to model your career after this person or that person. At the end of the day, you’ve got to live with yourself and your band, and you get tired of a CD eventually if you listen to it to much, so just be original. Don’t be scared to be original. It’s better to fail doing what you think you should be doing than to succeed and be miserable and not sleep at night because you think you sold out.
Being the drummer’s choice means you never stop thinking and never stop evolving. Case in point, the all-new 9702 Multi Stand. With its oversized mega-tripod base, easy-to-adjust quick-release ratchet arms and a host of world-renowned DW features, it’s a heavy-duty, modular cymbal stand and so much more. And, with available percussion arm, tilt and counterweight accessories, you can customize the 9702 to fit just about any set-up. The sturdy 9702 Multi Stand—big time functionality, extreme versatility and steel-reinforced strength—because we designed it that way.

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EDGE: How long have you had your roots planted in Nashville?

Chad Cromwell: I came here in the fall of ’90, 'cause I’d actually just finished a Jackson Browne tour, and I came here to live.

EDGE: Where were you before?

CC: Memphis. I was in Memphis, but I was commuting basically between L.A. and San Francisco all the time, workin’ out west. Because at that time, in the late ‘80s, mid-to-late ‘80s, I was really involved with Joe Walsh, and Jackson, and Neil Young. Primarily, it would’ve been Neil and Joe Walsh. So I was, like, ping-ponging between record projects and tours with Joe and Neil.

EDGE: How has the scene changed in Nashville over the years since you’ve been there?

CC: Well, it’s undergoing a really wholesale change right now. And what I’m noticing is that the boundaries, musically, seem to be shifting back toward artist singer-songwriters. Not necessarily to just be traditional country, but there’s evidence of even traditional country sort of making a comeback, as well as the sort of edgier singer-songwriter artists. For example, Miranda [Lambert]’s record, if you listen to that, you’re going to hear elements of Texas, like Texas Blues Shuffle stuff, you’re going to hear kind of a pop vibe and you’re going to hear traditional country. It’s a really interesting mixed bag, and my take on that is that the young artists are just bringing their influences to the table. And their influences can mean anything. And I’ve always thought of country music as like the white man’s blues, you know? And it seems like right now, that sense of country is beginning to kind of make its comeback. And then there’s the generation that are just as likely to buy Ashlee Simpson records, they might go and buy Miranda’s record and get exposed to a whole different bag altogether. And you’re talking about polar opposites in terms of production style and songwriting and that whole thing. Just the whole method is completely different.

EDGE: Have you consciously positioned yourself as a country-tinged rock or blues type of player, or is that where you have just naturally gravitated?

CC: Well, my recurring theme seems to be that I find myself working with singer-songwriter guitar players. There’s a lot of that in my life. I’ve got Neil Young—that’s a prominent role in my life. Mark Knopfler—prominent role in my life. Joe Walsh—prominent role in my life. Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt, let’s see—who else? There’s also Vince Gill. These are all singer-songwriter guitar players. And either I have a language that they understand, or vice-versa. I’m not quite sure how that works but it’s not so much about the drumming thing, it’s more about the song thing. It’s more about interpreting songs.

EDGE: So you attribute that to chemistry?

CC: Yeah. It’s definitely a chemistry and a conversation, a musical conversation, that has to happen, and is deeply rooted in rhythm and blues. Being raised in Memphis throughout the ‘60s and ’70s, my school, in fact my teacher, was Jim Stewart, the guy who started Stax Records.

EDGE: But Stax is more an R&B thing?

CC: Absolutely. Full-on R&B, yeah.

EDGE: So where you come from is definitely a different flavor from where you’ve ended up.

CC: Absolutely, absolutely. But the thread that goes through it all is still about songwriting and songs, and interpreting songs with a kind of feeling about them.

EDGE: So, how do you get gigs? Is it word of mouth, or do you actively contact artists you’d like to work with?

CC: Mainly word of mouth. All the resumes in the world will maybe get you in a door to meet somebody, but the way it really happens is if you do a great job for somebody who then says, “Man, you oughtta check this cat out. He’s happening,” or, “He might be right for your thing.” And then after a few years of that, you finally build up enough of a reputation to where people begin to get an idea of what you can do. And maybe it can be applied to several different genres, and not just one, you know. And that’s what I have been blessed with. One day I’ll go and play on a soundtrack to a film, and the next day I’ll be doing some hard-core blues date with somebody, and then the next day it’ll be Vince Gill, or Leanne Womack, or you know...I guess I never know from day to day what I’m gonna walk into. I’ve seen it all. I mean, from a pop drumming standpoint, I should say, I’ve seen it all. I just did this instrumental record with Chuck Lavelle. Chuck is one of the original keyboard players in The Allman Brothers Band. He also had a band called Sea Level back in the ’70s. He’s been with The Rolling Stones now for, like, twenty-five years I think. Hammond, Wurlitzer and piano, that’s his thing. He’s a brilliant musician. And so I just did this jazz record with him. I’m not a jazz player! But what I can do is I can interpret songs. I can bring something that I don’t even know how to technically explain to you, but it’s just this organic, cellular feel. And I can morph that into many different things.
CC: I did my interpretation. I would never in a million years profess that I can play be-bop. As much as I’d love to, man, you know, that’s not me. I mean, I’m a fan of it, but only from a safe distance. That’s not my genre as a player.

EDGE: Are you into jazz?

CC: As a fan, yeah, I love it. But that’s such a completely different discipline and technique. My thing is that all my patterns are built from the bass drum up, okay? And, like, in a be-bop kind of approach, as you well know, the bass drum is actually more of an accent than the actual fundamental groove.

EDGE: Well yeah, in jazz, the groove comes from the ride cymbal.

CC: Absolutely. It’s all ride cymbal with accents. And that’s just not at all what my forte is. But, man, do I love listenin’ to it. I just love listenin’ to all those guys, like, [Ed] Thigpen, Elvin Jones, and all those guys back in the day. Buddy Rich—all those guys. You know, there’s just too many to count. Absolutely astounding musicians.

EDGE: Well, you’re taking a break, but you’re currently on the road with Mark Knopfler. Getting back to songs, how much emphasis do you place on replicating drum parts? I’m imagining you have to cop a ton of Dire Straits classics.

CC: I try to honor the parts that those guys wrote for those records, because there’s a feeling at the time those songs were recorded. And so, for example, when I play “Sultans of Swing” with Mark, that’s a very kind of jazzy-feeling track from the drum-kit. And it’s very on top of the beat, and very sort of light in style, lots of fills and a lot of movement in the kit. And that’s not my thing, really, but I took it upon myself to try to honor that feel because it plays a large role in the way the song sounds. And if I were to change the tack of the groove on that song, it would change the way Mark is able to sing it.

EDGE: Talk a little about playing with Neil Young.

CC: Well, playing with Neil to me is the ultimate soul music for white men. And the reason I say that is I did two records with him. I did the Freedom album, with a song called “Rockin’ In The Free World” on it, and then I did this record called Neil
It’s not so much about the drumming thing, it’s more about the song thing. It’s more about interpreting songs. ...It’s like, “Alright, this is not about crafting a record here, man. This is about taking a picture of a song being born.”

Young and The Bluenotes prior to that record.

EDGE: That was his blues record, right?

CC: Yeah, kind of a blues, big-band kind of a thing, with his obvious signature on it all. But yeah, just a blues record essentially. But, the thing is with him, he is the most “in-the-moment” cat I have ever worked with in my life. And we’re just in the middle of a project right now together—and I had forgotten, because it’s been almost fifteen years since we’ve been in the studio together—but it suddenly came rushing back to me and it’s like, “Alright, this is not about crafting a record here, man. This is about taking a picture of a song being born.” I mean, right out of the gate, you know? And to just get as much of the gold dust as it’s coming out as possible, and being happy and willing to live with the mistakes that come along with it. That is deep soul shoutin’ for a musician, man. You know, just hangin’ it out there.

EDGE: When you’re being a chameleon and you’re changing the style of play, how does your gear and your set-up transition? For example, how do you change your set-up live versus studio? And how do you do it according to each artist’s needs and what you need for that particular gig?

CC: Well, to give you an analogy, if I were going to go and do a be-bop session, assuming that I could do that, then I probably wouldn’t send a 22” kick drum and a 10”, and a 12”, and a 14” and 16” floor tom. I’d be more likely to send a 14x20”, 8x12” and 14x14”. You know, a little trap set that speaks to that style of playing and that type of music. And so, on a broader scale, every time I start a project with somebody, I try to get as much insight into what we’re gonna go for as I possibly can, ‘cause I’ll cast a drumset specifically for that artist. And I do that all the time. I mean, I do that on country records; I’ll even cast different drumsets for different country artists based on their vibe. One artist may be a really, really hard rockin’ vibe, where another artist may be incredibly inside and wanting something that has almost more to do with sound effects than with just a backbeat drumset. So, you know, everybody’s got their special needs. And Mark’s thing, for example, we built a kit with an older, traditional kick drum vibe. I went to a 14x22” kick drum for the backbone set because the last record that we did, really sort of was recorded in the tradition of ‘70s style recording, you know? Like The Band, and from that era, and we even cut the record at the Shangri La studio right there on Pacific Coast Highway at Zuma Beach.

EDGE: So it’s a lot of mic bleeding and lot of live recording?

CC: A lot of bleed over, a lot open, a lot of natural compression...

EDGE: So you’re not tracking, really, you’re just playing?

CC: We’re playing for performances. So with that in mind, if I send out an 18x22” rock’n’roll kit, there’s no way sonically you’re going to be able to reproduce what I did on the Shangri La record. So, I built the kit up so that I could cover everything from ‘70s style recording, including “Sultans of Swing,” or the new Shangri La record. Or if I needed it, I had the time configurations and cymbal configurations that would allow me to be playin’ “Money for Nothing” on one song, full-on blasting rock’n’roll on another song, and even jazz.

EDGE: So from jazz to heavier stuff, what do you look for in a snare drum?

CC: The snare drum. That’s the drum with the most personality, so that gets a little tricky for me [laughs] because this goes back to early ‘20s Ludwig Standards or Black Beauties. And they sort of became my language on snare drum. And then I got involved with DW, well it’s ten years ago now, and all of a sudden all these new opportunities for me sort of came along. And so, I’ve fallen into a thing where one day it’ll be an Edge snare drum, the next day it’ll be a solid shell 7x13”, you know? Just different kinds of approaches to snare drum than traditional, old-world methods. But what I’m leading up to is the VLT kit....

EDGE: [laughs] You’re answering my questions before I get to ‘em, but keep goin’...

CC: Well, I’m gettin’ ready to. I’m gonna go with ya because, I’m tellin’ ya, I’m your poster child for VLT drums. They’re my sound. And that’s been a quest for me. You know, I’ve had some great kits from DW, and I mean you guys have been great with sortin’ me out. But man, when I got a hold of the VLIs it was just like, “This is me. I want to make noise about VLT.” And the snare drums, I don’t know what’s up with that, but they’re unbelievable. And I’ve been using two kits on Mark’s tour,
one of which is the big backline set, and then I use a smaller, jazzy kind of set for a whole different part of the show. And the VLT is on that small kit for the whole set. And then recording, I’m using VLTs all the time. It’s the first time I played a snare drum that gave me back what my old ’20s Ludwigs do.

**EDGE**: Interesting, because the Ludwig snares, the Black Beauties, obviously were a brass shell.

**CC**: That’s right.

**EDGE**: And VLT is a ...

**CC**: ...maple shell. But there’s something in the feel of it. It’s the way when the stick lands on it, and the grace notes, and all the stuff that I do with a snare drum, you know? Because I’m a backbeat style player, sound is everything. I need options, you know? And it inspires me to play in different ways. And when I got a hold of the VLT drums, it got me into a place that made me want to go down a different path. It wasn’t like, “Oh that’s different. Well, that’s kind of interesting. Well, I don’t know if I can use that very often, but, you know, I’ll reach for it occasionally.” And consequently, I’ve got like 40 snare drums.

**EDGE**: We talked about some of the Staxx stuff early on that influenced you, but the backside of that question is, what influences you today? Do you listen to a lot of music?

**CC**: I do. Not quite as much right now as I’d like to, mainly because I’m a father, you know? And if I’m not workin’, then I’m bein’ a dad. So, listening to music basically centers around what they’re into listening to now, you know? So, when I’ve got the radio on, I’m hearing a lot of hip hop, and I’m hearing a lot of Ashlee Simpson. I’ve got young ones, nine and twelve years old, and so they’re into stuff that I might not necessarily reach for. But if I’m listening for my own pleasure, I seem to be listening to a lot of Miles Davis and Oscar Peterson right now... which is not my genre, but it’s like, “Man,” this feels good to listen to this.” It gets me in a good place. And I’m kinda waiting on my rock’n’roll buzz. There’s just not really much going on right now that’s killin’ me.

**EDGE**: What do you see yourself doing next? Do you look beyond the projects that you’re working on at the moment?

**CC**: You know what, this has been a very, very interesting time for me in how all this is coming together. I’ve gone through a real spiritual awakening right now as a musician, as well as a human being. And that would probably end up being a whole ‘nother topic to discuss another time, but musically-speaking, man, I don’t know where I’m headed. And that’s kind of been the constant theme throughout my whole career. It’s like, if you would’ve told me in 1985 that I was going to live five years later in Nashville, Tennessee, and start playing country music, I’d’ve told you you were out of your mind. And I totally dig livin’ here now. There’s some really cool stuff happenin’ in this town. I never expected to be back in the studio with Neil again, and here I am. Right in the middle of a project in my home town.

**EDGE**: Is this a whole new record you guys are working on?

**CC**: It’s a whole brand new thing. He just came [and] it was a very heavy experience over this past week. We got into these sessions and I’m really kinda on the edge right now of really needing to chill for a while. I’ve been pushin’ too hard. I get off of this tour that I’m fried from, and I’ve got Neil waiting on me to start recording. Well, I jump in the studio with Neil, and we’re recording these songs like mad, you know? Let me tell you—we cut the track, thirty minutes later EmmyLou Harris is comin’ through the door to sing background vocals and an hour after that, string players are arriving to do the strings. It’s, like, insane. And so, you know, where do I see myself in the future? I have absolutely no idea. I just know I’m gonna go into it with both eyes wide open and I’m gonna play my heart out. And if I can’t play my heart out—forget it!

**HARRY MCCARTHY**

Life on the road is tougher than ever these days. I recently told Chad that some days I feel like an old athlete that doesn’t know when to hang it up. I am very fortunate as I can pick and choose the gigs I do. And with owning Drum Paradise in Nashville, I don’t need the road but it’s in my blood and I do it for the financial rewards. Chad and I will usually discuss what he’s going after before I send his equipment to the studio, so his set up will depend on the project. He likes to play a 5-piece DW kit in the studio: 22”, 10”, 12” and 16” with a 5x14” snare. As far as his road set-up, he will add a 14” floor tom and maybe a few extra crash cymbals.

Chad has always been open minded about trying different drum head combinations. I will suggest sending certain drums to a session but Chad knows what he wants to use when he’s recording. On some record dates he may be there for a few days or longer so I may send more than one DW kit with some additional snare drums and cymbals.

Chad is a very spiritual and soulful player with no ego. His groove is serious and his approach to drumming is all about the song. He can play it all on the drums but you will never hear him over playing in the studio or live. He continues to have an amazing run here in Nashville and outside of Nashville and that is quite impressive these days.

Harry McCarthy, drum tech and owner of Drum Paradise Nashville, Inc., has been working with many of the world’s leading drummers in the studio and on the road for over 20 years. His most recent tours include Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band’s last two world tours.
WHEN THE BOYS IN MÖTLEY CRÜE DECIDED TO HIT THE ROAD ONCE AGAIN AFTER YEARS OF SIDE PROJECTS AND SOLO RECORDS, WE COULDN'T RESIST THE OPPORTUNITY TO CAPTURE TOMMY AND HIS NEW CARNIVAL OF SINS TOUR KIT IN ALL OF ITS GLORY. DW PHOTOGRAPHER ROB SHANAHAN MET UP WITH SIR THOMAS AND HIS COHORTS IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND TO BRAVE THE PYRO AND MAYHEM AND CAPTURE THE WILD SIDE OF ONE OF ROCK'S MOST INFAMOUS HOUSEHOLD NAMES. [TO SEE MORE EXCLUSIVE PHOTOS OF TOMMY AND THE ORIGINAL LINE-UP IN ACTION, CHECK OUT THE "BACKSTAGE PASS" LINK @ WWW.DWDRUMS.COM.]
**Built-In Bottom Delivers Enhanced Low-End Tone**

**VLT™ Technology Now Comes Standard in All Collector’s Series® Bass Drums and Floor Toms**

Since its inception, Vertical Low Timbre (VLT™) has offered drummers increased low-end exactly where they need it. Put simply, larger drums sound even bigger without unwanted overtones, but with all the high-end attack and clarity Collector’s Series drums have always been known to provide, VLT is a concept that was born out of experimentation with alternate drum making woods that had inherently vertical grain patterns. All DW shells are cross-laminated for strength, but by flipping the inner and outer plies, there was less tension put on the shell, thus a lower fundamental. VLT is an option on Collector’s Series drums and can be ordered on floor toms 14” and larger and on bass drums up to 24”.

“So of our biggest artists are on tour with VLT kits this summer,” says Executive Vice President and drum designer John Good. He explains further, “Built-In Bottom is another way for us to utilize VLT technology in every drum we make.” Big-name players such as Neil Peart (Rush) and Nigel Olsson (Elton John) are already big proponents of the new drum-making concept.

So, what’s the difference between VLT and Built-In Bottom? In a nutshell, the optional VLT feature utilizes vertical plies on the inside and outside of the shell, while Built-In Bottom only has vertical plies inside the shell. Now the sound the pros are calling a revolutionary way to achieve even more low-end response on stage and in the studio is available to all drummers on every custom Collector’s kit. “DW has put that tonal quality in there that I was always looking for. Now I don’t have to tune the drums way, way down like I used to in the beginning because now the technology’s in there,” comments Olsson.

Hear Built-In Bottom at your authorized DW Drums dealer today, or to get the low-down on this exciting new advancement in drum technology, visit www.dwdrums.com.

**9702 Multi Stand Is Just That**

**It’s a Heavy-Duty Cymbal Stand and So Much More**

Based on many of the design innovations that have made the heavy-duty 9700 cymbal stand a touring requirement for the world’s top pros, DW recently unveiled its versatile 9702 Twin Cymbal Multi Stand. Similar to the 9700, the stand features oversized 1.25” tubing, dual-vise, integrated memory locks, oversized tube joints and an even harderier “Mega-Base” tripod for increased stability needed for multiple cymbal set-ups.

The 9702 not only holds two cymbals, but can be configured in almost limitless ways when paired with DW Factory Accessories, such as an additional 912 Cymbal Arm, 2034 Cymbal Tilter Clamp or 2035 Percussion Mounting Arm (9.5 mm). The new 2030 Counterweight can also be added for balance and to extend cymbal arm reach.

DW Founder and President Don Lombardi says, “Bottom line, we’re always trying to find ways to make a drummer’s life easier. With this stand, several cymbals and percussion accessories can be mounted in almost limitless ways with minimal hardware...it’s all about options.”
DW’s commitment to finding superior wood has reached new heights. Executive VP and resident woodologist John Good is now pre-selecting all wood that will eventually find its way to the DW custom shell shop. “It’s really the only way we can assure that all face material is as beautiful as it can be. The beauty is that now we can really be certain that a kit will have matching grain patterns throughout,” explains Good. He continues, “Our mills have always worked closely with us to get us the very best maple and birch, but now we’ve really stepped it up a notch. I personally travel to the mill to select logs and veneer that are perfect for what we do here at DW.” New Select Timber that’s Timbre Matched® is available now on all Collector’s Series drums.

Hard Satin continues DW’s legacy of high-quality finishes in between Lacquer and Satin Oil. This new proprietary finish is pure DW.

Hard Satin is a completely new Collector’s Series finish type that can simply be described as a matte lacquer finish. It provides the durability of Lacquer and the understated elegance of Satin Oil. The proprietary lacquer process can be ordered in combination with any Collector’s Series shell configuration, standard or custom color choices, or even with Graphics and Exotic finishes. The possibilities are truly limitless and the look is pure DW.

DW drum designer and Executive Vice President John Good Timbre Matches Select Timber drum shells at the DW factory.

(Continued on page 33)
The snare drum is the cornerstone of every drummer’s sound. And quite literally, the snare stand is its very foundation. From making quick snare changes on stage with its unique removable basket to simply performing on the road night after night without fail, the 9300 is *the* essential snare stand. Why? Because we designed it that way.

_Artist:_ Nisan Stewart  
_Date/Time:_ 11/13/04 19:11:26  
_Location:_ Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles, California  
_Jimmy Kimmel show performance with Nelly_
AIR LIFT THRONEs: THE BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE

DW has added two pneumatically adjustable models to its 9000 Series line of thrones, aptly titled “Air Lift.” The 9120AL Air Lift Tractor Seat and 9100AL with 14” traditional round throne top can be combined with an adjustable backrest (sold separately) for those players that desire back support. Air Lift thrones are constructed using heavy-gauge tubing, solid ear castings, oversized rubber feet and a new, dual-foam construction, effortless pneumatic height adjustment system and upward folding base with sturdy four-leg design.

NEW CYMBAL STAND ACCESSORIES LIGHTEN THE LOAD

PERFECT FOR EXPANDING YOUR NEW 9702 OR ANY DW CYMBAL STAND

Originally designed to maximize the flexibility of the 9702 Multi Stand, DW’s new selection of Factory Accessories also offers drummers a low-cost way to accessorize their existing DW cymbal stands. For example, the SM2030 Counterweight can be added to the back of any DW cymbal stand to extend boom length, while creating the perfect balance for far-reaching cymbal set-ups. The SM2031 “Puppy Bone” has a pivoting stacker that mounts to any 1/2” rod, and the SM2034 Cymbal Tilter are both excellent for mounting small splashes and effects cymbals. The SM2035 Percussion Arm (9.5 mm) can be used in a multitude of ways to mount tambourines, cow bells, tempo blocks and other percussion items. All are available wherever DW Factory Accessories are sold.

above left: 9120AL Air Lift Tractor Seat Throne shown with optional backrest (sold separately)
above right: 9100AL Air Lift Throne

SM2031 “Puppy Bone” Cymbal Arm, SM2034 Cymbal Tilter and SM2035 Percussion Arm

SM2030 Counterweight shown on 9700 Cymbal Stand

> DRUM NEWS

DW BY DESIGN: ACCESSORIES

TRUE-TONE® SNARE WIRES

10, 12, 13 AND 14" TRUE-TONE® WIRES

The snare drum is considered a drummer’s unique voice. It’s a means of expression that can be customized in countless ways to achieve a variety of sounds. Take snare wires, for example. DW True-Tone® snare wires are manufactured to be the strongest, most consistent wires on the market. With their solid brass clips and stainless steel strands, True-Tone® wires are designed to bring out the best in any snare drum. So if your voice isn’t everything you want it to be, strap on some True-Tone® wires and listen to your snare drum sing!

SOLID BRASS CLIP ACCEPTS CABLE TIES OR MYLAR STRAP

STAINLESS STEEL STRANDS

SM2031 “Puppy Bone” Cymbal Arm, SM2034 Cymbal Tilter and SM2035 Percussion Arm

SM2030 Counterweight shown on 9700 Cymbal Stand

above left: 9120AL Air Lift Tractor Seat Throne shown with optional backrest (sold separately)
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SM2031 “Puppy Bone” Cymbal Arm, SM2034 Cymbal Tilter and SM2035 Percussion Arm

SM2030 Counterweight shown on 9700 Cymbal Stand
MAY’S NEW IN/EX BLEND MODULE HELPS DRUMMERS GET CONTROL OF THEIR SOUND

INTERNAL MIKING MEETS EXTERNAL MIKING LIKE NEVER BEFORE

The all-new MAY IN/EX blend module is a two input, one output, high headroom, Class A microphone preamplifier designed by award-winning manufacturer PreSonus Audio. The module is designed to mix two snare microphones (one MAY internal and any external) together into one channel to achieve the ultimate snare tone for live performance and recording applications. The high-quality Class A preamps are designed to handle high SPLs delivering an open and tonally rich snare sound. Other features include microphone input gain on each channel, 48V phantom power on one input, mix control (blend), phase inversion, main output, headphone output and fast-acting analog VU meter. It’s an exciting new tool to help drummers combine the best tonal characteristics of both internal and external miking.

To see the full line of MAY internal shock-mounted microphones, visit www.dwdrums.com.

THE SECRET TO TRUER SOUND, INSIDE AND OUT.

Above: Snare drum cross section showing internal MAY XL57SD with external Shure SM57. Left top: IN/EX module front panel featuring analog VU meter and headphone jack with built-in preamp. Left bottom: Back panel showing phantom power to accommodate condenser microphones. Below: IN/EX module attached to tom stand via convenient mounting bracket (sold separately).
NEW LINE OF PRACTICE PRODUCTS MAKES PRACTICING ANY PLACE, ANY TIME THAT MUCH EASIER

DEADHEAD™ PRACTICE PADS ALLOW FOR QUIET, YET REALISTIC, PLAY

DeadHead™ pads are part of a complete line of drum practice products available from DW Smart Practice™. These extremely versatile pads can be placed directly on top of any drumset, providing realistic rebound with a low-volume, yet audible pitch. “Seldom do pads mimic the high-to-low pitch tonality of a drumset. It’s a valuable tool for effective practice,” states DW President Don Lombardi.

DeadHead pads are versatile because they can be placed on the kit, in a snare basket, on a table top, or just about anywhere, while the Bass Drum Practice Pad mounts easily to any 20-24” counterhoop via rubber-coated clamps. The bass pad provides exceptional feel and the ability to use a pedal one is used to playing. DeadHead pads are available in a 4-piece set complete with 10”, 12”, 13” and 14” pads (the 14” pad is also sold separately).

Also new from Smart Practice are DeadHead cymbal pads. The 5-piece set includes two crash cymbal pads, one ride cymbal pad and top and bottom hi-hat pads, and the 2-piece set comes with one crash and one ride cymbal pad. Both feature a foam rubber surface to completely muffle the cymbal, while still allowing maximum rebound. The 4-piece DeadHead pad set, 5-piece cymbal pad set and Bass Drum Practice Pad are also available together as the DeadHead Complete Package, designed to outfit an entire set (shown above).

SMART PRACTICE™ PACK IS A STUDENT’S DREAM

The Smart Practice™ Pack is a convenient practice solution that comes with a 12” DeadHead™ Practice Pad, snare stand, drumsticks and a carrying bag. It’s everything a beginner or working player needs to warm up or just polish up on the fundamentals. “We configured this pack with both drum instructors and students in mind, explains Lombardi. “We really wanted to have an all-in-one practice kit at an affordable price.”

GO ANYWHERE™ PRACTICE KIT IS A NEW TAKE ON A FAMILIAR IDEA

The newly-developed Smart Practice Go Anywhere™ Kit (shown at far right) is designed to easily set up for on-the-go or small-space practice applications. Great for beginners and perfect for warm-up, the five pads have a durable rubber surface designed for realistic feel and natural rebound. Any existing bass drum pedal can be mounted directly to the stand to avoid creep on non-carpeted floors. A durable nylon-carrying bag for the Go Anywhere set is sold separately.

Outfit an entire drum kit for practice with the DeadHead™ Complete Package.

Marco Minnemann perfecting his monster chops on the portable Go Anywhere™ Practice Kit.
“MY DW DRUMS ARE A UNIVERSE OF SOUND”
- TERRY BOZZIO
Few bands in recent memory have made their mark on the scene like Queens of the Stone Age. With their latest effort, entitled *Lullabies to Paralyze*, debuting at number five on the Billboard charts, the roller coaster ride is just beginning for heavy hitter Joey Castillo. Here's your ticket to ride along with Joey as he shoots QOTSA's latest video and plays a sold-out show in his hometown of L.A. Join the tour bus for more Backstage Pass at www.dwdrums.com.
First, let’s discuss the left hand. It’s always a good idea to build strength in both hands. Try playing hi-hat patterns that you now play with the right hand, with the left hand instead. (Ex. 1)

Notice how playing the hi-hat with the left hand frees the right to move around the kit, as illustrated in Ex. 2 and 3.

Also, practice hi-hat opening exercises with the left hand (Ex. 4 and 5).

Now, let’s look at a technique borrowed from our rudimental tradition. This technique utilizes basic double strokes. Notice in Ex. 6 and 7 how common rhythmic figures take on a new sound and feel through the use of doubles.

You can see and hear how these doubles are used in the groove patterns in Ex. 8, 9 and 10.

Now, let’s look at “Ghost Strokes” or “Ghosting” a stroke, as it is sometimes called. A “Ghost Stroke” is more implied, rather than an accented or unaccented note. Played very softly, it is almost inaudible compared to the other strokes in a pattern. A good example of this concept is shown in the figure below.

The hi-hat on the “and” of the beat should be barely audible, so that it sounds like the figure below.

WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IS PLACING GREATER DEMANDS ON DRUMMERS OF ALL MUSICAL STYLES. WHETHER IT’S HIP-HOP, POP, FUNK, ROCK, FUSION, BLUES, LATIN OR JAZZ, STUDYING FUNDAMENTAL TECHNIQUES, SUCH AS DOUBLE STROKES AND GHOST STROKES, WILL BE HELPFUL IN REACHING YOUR GOALS. BELOW ARE SOME USEFUL CONCEPTS TO GET YOU STARTED.

First, let’s discuss the left hand. It’s always a good idea to build strength in both hands. Try playing hi-hat patterns that you now play with the right hand, with the left hand instead. (Ex. 1)

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The hi-hat on the “and” of the beat should be barely audible, so that it sounds like the figure below.

Check out the groove Ex. 11 and 12.

After you have a chance to play through these brief exercises, I’m sure you’ll see how these techniques can be incorporated to bring about some great new and innovative grooves, patterns and fills of your own. Have fun and remember to always practice slowly and consistently at first, gradually bringing things up to the desired tempo. Groove on!

These concepts and exercises are taken from Rick’s books “Advanced Funk Studies” and “Contemporary Drumset Techniques.” More intensive study of these concepts can be found in these books as well as the accompanying 25th Anniversary DVD.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick Latham is a drumset artist performing, recording, producing and teaching in the Los Angeles area since 1984. Once a featured member of The Edgar Winter Band, Rick is currently the founder and driving force of his own contemporary jazz “supergroup”, Rick Latham and the Groove Doctors. Throughout his career Rick has performed with B.B. King, Quincy Jones, Neal Schon and Pat Travers, among many others.
To hear Rick play these exercises and to download a larger print version, go to: www.dwdrums.com/eddept/
SET-UP SPECS:
Pacific LX Series Maple drums in Regal-Royal Fade
18x22” Bass Drum
5x14” Snare Drum
8x10”, 12x14”, 14x16” Tom-Toms
SP900 Single Pedal
HH920 Hi-Hat Stand
CB900 Straight/Boom Cymbal Stand (x3)
DT900S Standard Drum Throne
EDGE: First question, describe what you’re wearing.

CB: I graduated high school, and I was working at a grocery store and had saved up some money because I saw an ad in “Modern Drummer” magazine for a Percussion Institute of Technology in Hollywood. So I worked for two years and then had enough for my tuition to go to PIT in ’84.

EDGE: What about engineering? Do you put in some time listening and look and be willing to learn. And have to be able to read to some degree.

CB: Absolutely. ‘Cause I think in music we’re always influenced by other styles of music, whether it’s brand new or really old, and it just gets re-hashed into this new form. So you always have to keep abreast of what’s happening, you know, in this moment. In the skateboarding community, which I’m a big part of, there’s lots of music going on that’s new for me, that’s really happening. So, you have to just keep up on it and listen and look and be willing to learn. And not stay stuck.

EDGE: Whether it’s an artist, producer or tech, what are some of the tips that you can give people about being personable and adapting to different personalities and situations? Because you’re played with a variety of artists, both live and in the studio, and you’re dealing with engineers and producers who have strong opinions about things, how do you relate?

CB: Well, you just try to give them what they’re looking for and try to make suggestions and be as musical as possible. No matter which type of artist I’m working with, I always try to understand what they’re listening to these days, what their influences are, where they’re coming from artistically and try to follow within that vein of drumming, yet stay out of the way of their creative idea ‘cause in the end it’s their record. Even though you’re drumming on it, it’s their vision and you have to help them see their vision to the end.

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EDGE: What about engineering? Do you do that as well?

CB: Definitely. Jeff Poccaro played a huge role in bringing me in on sessions. He brought me in on a record that he started to produce with Boz Scaggs right before his untimely death, unfortunately. But he brought me in on that, and he was recommending me prior to that to a lot of other producers, songwriters and arrangers, and getting me on some really cool, high-profile session gigs.

EDGE: So, sounds like you do a fair amount of research. Do you put in some time listening to that style of music and mastering that style?

CB: Absolutely. ‘Cause I think in music we’re always influenced by other styles of music, whether it’s brand new or really old, and it just gets re-hashed into this new form. So you always have to keep abreast of what’s happening, you know, in this moment. In the skateboarding community, which I’m a big part of, there’s lots of music going on that’s new for me, that’s really happening. So, you have to just keep up on it and listen and look and be willing to learn. And not stay stuck.

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CB: Yes, I operate ProTools and Logic and have recorded and produced a few records of my own, as well as some other artists.

EDGE: Does that affect your drumming in any way? In other words, does that change the way you play your instrument?

CB: Yes. By understanding the program or platform that the engineers are using, I can gauge how fast or how slow I need to go. Because I know ProTools and Logic, I know what they’re going for. I know what to play and for how long, so they can get their end result and chop up, edit and do what they need to do. Or if they’re going for takes, then I know that I have to nail it on the first take so the project can go by faster and the artist can be more creative and spend more time on the songs.

EDGE: You’ve toured with Elton, you’ve toured with Tom Petty, Mick Jagger and a long list of names, but, as we’ve talked about, you’re also a “go-to” studio player. Do you have a preference, or do you like things for different reasons?

CB: I love playing in front of 90,000 people in the stadium, and I love the scrutiny of being in a studio and being asked to perform and execute precisely. By the same token, they’re one and the same because people paid a lot of money to come see the artist you’re playing behind, and they want it to sound like the record. And when you’re making a record in the studio, you want it to be the end-all signature drum sound—signature licks, signature sound—so they kind of come hand in hand.

EDGE: Many people outside the drumming community may not know that you and Abe Laboriel, Jr, are like brothers. You guys have very similar personalities and relate in a very close way. Give us some insight into your relationship with Abe, creatively and otherwise, and why you guys vibe together so well.

CB: Abe is definitely my drum brother as well as a personal brother. We just share so many things. We love all the same things, the same things make us laugh and the same things make us cry. But drumming-wise, I think we’re entirely different in terms of where he’s come from and where I’ve come from, our backgrounds, you know. His father is a very, very well-known bass player, Abe Laboriel, Sr. So, I came up listening to his dad playing with Steve Gadd. So I came up listening to those guys, as well as Abe did, but Abe was also influenced by the stuff that he was groovin’ to—a lot of the metal stuff and punk. And so we have that affinity for one

People paid a lot of money to come see the artist you’re playing behind, and they want it to sound like the record. And when you’re making a record in the studio, you want it to be the end-all signature drum sound.
another, respecting each other’s taste in music and food, so it just all goes hand in hand. And the thing about Abe and me is if I can’t do a gig, he’ll cover for me. Or vice-versa, if he can’t do one I’ll cover for him because we can play each other’s style but add our own flavor to it, as well as take it in an entirely different direction because we make music together. We played in Chocolate Genius together, switching off on bass and drums, so I think that really helped solidify our relationship both musically and as friends.

EDGE: Let’s move into gear for a little bit and talk more specifically about how much gear you keep in your studio and live arsenal. Also, what are your favorites—the items you use on a regular basis?

CB: Right now, my go-to kit is a Pacific kit. And this kit smokes so many drum kits out there it’s not even funny. I’ll show up at the studio and the engineer is like, “What kit is that?” And I’m like, “Man, this is my Pacific LX Series, baby!” And they’re like, “You’re kidding me!” And they just flip about that. And they come out and look at it and hear it, and they’re just so blown away. So that’s my go-to kit right now. I have my arsenal of snares, and, of course, the Edge is always the one that goes up first. And there’s this new hi-hat coming out, the remote hi-hat that you will be unleashing soon...

EDGE: The Universal Hi-Hat...

CB: The Universal Hi-Hat that both Abe and I helped R&D. I think this is gonna change the way drummers play drums ‘cause it’s a remote hi-hat, but it’ll add another musical realm to your drumming.

EDGE: Do you have a typical studio set-up?

CB: Yeah, my studio set-up usually consists of the “two-up, one-down.” So again, with the Pacific kit it’ll be a 10", 12", 14".

EDGE: What bass drum pedal are you using these days?

CB: 9000. Loving it. 9000 and loving it.

EDGE: Have you messed with it quite a bit or is it factory settings?

CB: Out of the box, factory settings, ruling! That’s the bottom line. But it’s always been that way, ever since the 5000 pedal, you know. Before I was even an endorser for DW, I was always a big fan of the 5000 pedal. And out of the box it was always right.

EDGE: What’s your next dream gig? Where do you see yourself in a couple of years?

CB: Things usually just come to me and I prefer it that way. I’m not one to dig and search, and seek and destroy for gigs. I tend to just allow them to come to me and that seems to work best ‘cause I’m not that good of a self-promoter. But whatever comes my way seems to always be the right gig. So, you know, I see myself in the next couple of years playing some huge arena gig again in the States, and maybe a record following behind that. I don’t know who yet, but I’m sure that’ll be coming up soon.

EDGE: Do you have advice for guys coming up—you know, guys that want to follow in your footsteps and start stealing your gigs? [laughs]

CB: Absolutely. Listen to as much music as you can. Don’t be prejudiced about any music because you could pull from all of it. Right now, I’m listening to a lot of speed metal. I find that these guys have seriously thick, funky grooves going on. With all of that madness going on with the kick drums, behind that is a serious funky backbeat. A lot of my friends disagree, but that’s what I’m hearing in it.

EDGE: And a lot of chops.

CB: A lot of chops. And I have much respect for that. I mean, I can’t play a drum solo to save my life. But these guys, I have such respect for them because they’re technically happening and their sounds are happening, and I’m pulling from that and learning that I could apply that to my pop recordings or my pop gigs, and I try to pull that in. So, my suggestion is to listen to as much music as you can and not be prejudiced to any sort of music. And have as big ears as you can and try to play different types of music ‘cause that’ll help you appreciate the music that you really do love.

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EDGE: What’s your next dream gig? Where do you see yourself in a couple of years?
B.O.A.: NOT YOUR ORDINARY PEDAL
NO SPRING. NO HINGE. YET FULLY ADJUSTABLE. HOW DOES IT WORK?
Only the patented technology of Flex-Tech™ makes such an idea possible. The result of years of intense research and development, the B.O.A. pedal system is a new concept that embraces feel, quickness and power and defies traditional pedal theory.

So, what is B.O.A. technology? B.O.A. means Bow Oriented Action and there are no springs or hinges, because they’re simply not needed. The footboard is made from a unique composite material called Flex-Tech™ and acts as the spring and hinge all in one. Flex-Tech™ material is made to flex many, many times without wear, all while enduring incredible amounts of stress. It’s the same material the automotive industry has used for years to make leaf spring suspension systems for cars and trucks.

So, how does it work? Tension is adjusted where the footboard meets the Bow Action retaining plate. Sliding the footboard forward creates less tension; sliding it back into the retaining plate creates more tension. The footboard is designed to flex at the point just above the retaining plate, replacing the traditional hinge. The result is a pedal with fewer moving parts, more direct response and completely silent action.

You might say the B.O.A. is flexible in more ways than one. Using a combination of settings at the cam and Bow Action retaining plate, the B.O.A. can be tweaked in almost limitless ways. Whether you desire longer throw, additional torque or varied rebound, all can be easily accomplished using the provided standard drum key and hex wrench. Even B.O.A.’s toe clamp mechanism can be slid back and forth to compensate for varying bass drum hoop depths.

The B.O.A. pedal system isn’t just about flexibility. The absence of a spring and hinge, and the use of a frictionless ball-bearing axle make this pedal completely silent. The adjustable direct-drive cam (A) reduces play in the throw of the beater, allowing for more precision and control while eliminating the noise of a conventional chain drive pedal.

The pedal comes standard with the dynamic range of HardCore™ beater (B). Played softly, the beater’s rubber outer layer hits the drumhead similar to a felt beater. Played harder, the hard plastic core hits the drumhead and sounds like a hard beater.

The B.O.A. 900 Series Hi-Hat incorporates the same technology as the bass drum pedal, as far as the flexing footboard and tension adjustment. The hi-hat’s chainless linkage makes for a more silent, precise action. Up top, the hi-hat features the same cymbal seat adjustment as the DW 5000 Series hi-hats. Both are now available at authorized Pacific dealers, or visit www.pacificdrums.com to learn more.
The all-new LX Exotic Series is an 8-ply all-maple shell finished in stunning Kuirillian Birch with a flawless Charcoal to Natural Lacquer Fade. The drums come in a standard 5-piece kit configuration with a heavy-duty 900 Series hardware pack and available 8” and 16” add-ons.

Packing all the features of PDP’s top-of-the-line LX Series with an exceptional finish, LXE has a serious sound that rivals much more expensive offerings.

From the moment you sit behind an all-new LX Exotic, you’ll realize that this is no ordinary drumkit. It’s Pacific’s all-maple series taken to the next level.

**FXR SERIES BUILT TO ROCK**

4-PIECE ALL-BIRCH, LACQUER FINISH ROCK SET-UPS

The new FXR Series features bigger sizes and an all-birch shell, providing plenty of high-end articulation to cut through at loud volumes. In addition to being perfect for rock performance, FXR drums pack a host of professional features, including S.T.M. (Suspension Tom Mounts), True-Pitch™ tension rods, Remo heads, non-drilled 10-lug bass drum and PDP’s signature oval lug.

The 4-piece kits come complete with a 9x12” F.A.S.T.-sized rack tom, 14x16” floor tom on legs, 18x22” bass drum, matching 6x14” snare drum and 8.155 hardware pack. The lacquered kits are offered in either Cherry Red or Tobacco Fade. 8x10” and 12x14” (suspended or with legs) add-on toms are also available.

Serious hardware, all-birch shell, lacquer finishes. Make no mistake—FXR is built to rock.

**MX SERIES ADDS CUSTOM LOOKS EMERALD AND TOBACCO FADES JOIN THE LINE-UP OF MATTE FINISHES**

In addition to Deep Red, Sea Blue, Baja Gold and Deep Purple, the line of MX Series drums are now available in two striking new fades: Emerald to Black and Natural to Tobacco. Based on DW’s Collector’s Series® Satin Oil, the finishes are applied during a two-part process that includes hand applying a base coat, then spraying an additional color to create the fade effect.

“Fades have traditionally been associated with more expensive drum kits in the past. We oftentimes highlight an
Exotic using a fade,” comments John Good, DW Executive VP and drum designer. He adds, “We’re so incredibly excited to bring these custom-looking finishes to our factory in Baja...There’s no end to what we can do down there, and we’re really just getting started.”

All MX Series drums come in F.A.S.T.-sized 5-piece kit configurations (8x10”, 9x12”, 11x14” with 18x22” kick and 5x14” matching wood snare). 7x8” and 14x16” add-ons are also offered.

FS SERIES UPGRADED
STMS, HEAVY-DUTY BASS DRUM MOUNT AND REMO HEADS ARE NOW STANDARD ON FS SERIES

The popular FS Series is packed with new pro features. The entry-priced sets, which already feature an all-birch shell in Drum Workshop’s trademark F.A.S.T. sizes, now come standard with STM (suspension tom mounts), newly designed heavy-duty ball-and-socket BDM (bass drum mount) and Remo heads. In addition, the set comes complete with an all-new 8.155 hardware pack that includes a CB800 straight/boom cymbal stand, CS800 straight cymbal stand, HH800 3-leg hi-hat, SS800 snare stand, AC991 accessory clamp and SP450 pedal. The upgraded hardware now boasts heavier-gauge tubing and integrated memory locks.

Good explains, “We started with the best price for an all-birch shell, and each year we’ve continued to upgrade our value-priced kits. First, it was PDM (Pacific Drum Mounts) and small details like sportier badges. Now we’re including a much more substantial hardware pack and pro STM tom mounts. It’s a really great bang for the buck.”

Ebony FS with upgraded STM mounts
EDGE: You are a busy man these days. What’s been your focus over the past few months?

Omar Phillips: The past few months have been spent finalizing a drum loop project co-produced with my partner, Juan “Tall Boy” Adams. It’s the first release under our new production company entitled Funk Junkyz Productions. Also, we wrapped up co-producing Donnie’s follow-up project to his first release, The Colored Section, for Giant Step Records. It’s pushing the gate even harder than his first CD.

When I’m home, I also spend a significant amount of time working with Arrested Development. We released an album this past September in Germany entitled Among the Trees, and it actually picked up very nicely, spreading through Australia and Japan. We’ve also been spending a lot of time on the road. We did two weeks in Australia and we just finished two weeks in Japan, and we actually have a few more European shows scheduled. We pretty much stayed in Europe for the bottom half of last year. So, overall, I’ve been involved in a number of different things.

EDGE: Has Atlanta’s exploding music scene seen an influx of new drummers?

OP: I honestly don’t get to stay up on a lot of what’s going on with the local scene since I’m on the road so much and am a studio hermit when I’m home. The only time I’m really out there is when I’m gigging. However, there are a couple of cats. In particular, there is a brother of mine by the name of Che Marshall. He’s killing these days, and he’s a real cool cat. Jorell Flynn is another brother who I’ve truly enjoyed playing percussion with on the Funk Jazz Café series. Tricky Stewart is also knocking hard pockets in the studios these days.

EDGE: What’s the difference between southern R&B and hip-hop vs. what we’re familiar with from either coast?

OP: It’s a country feel. It’s almost like a hillbilly groove but it’s funk at the same time. There’s a difference in how the 2 lays into the 2 and the 4 lays on the 4, if that makes any sense. It’s something about the side stick—primarily, the syncopation of the side stick. A prime example would be the music of Outkast. My brother and fellow Pacific Drums artist, Vic Alexander, and I have recorded for a few of their albums what we call “country funk” or “ATL funk.” It’s something I’m very proud to be a part of. Overall, you’ll find that each region has their individual flavor of hip-hop and other music. As long as it’s good music, it’s all cool with me.

EDGE: You’ve been recording and touring with your Pacific LX Series drums for years. What’s been the response from sound engineers?

OP: Everybody loves them because of how full they sound. It’s the warmth of the maple shells. Some drums, even with thick, clear heads, can sound a bit tingy at times. Pacific drums haven’t done that. I’ve literally had these drums in every context you can think of—outdoor arenas, studios, smoky jazz clubs—and the sound is sustainable in every scenario.

SET-UP SPECS:
PDP LX Series Maple Drums in Natural Lacquer
18x22” Bass Drum
5x14” Bronze Snare Drum with Maple counterhoops
8x10”, 12x14”, 14x16” Tom-Toms
SP900 Single Pedal
HH920 Hi-Hat Stand
TS990 Double Tom Stand (x2)
CB900 Straight/Boom Cymbal Stand (x2)
DT900 Standard Drum Throne
I’ve been touring with the same kit for the last two years, with both Donnie and Arrested Development, and they look and sound just as good as the day I took them out of the box.

EDGE: Do other drummers comment on your sound?

OP: Always, and I owe a big part of that to the Pacific and DW accessories. I use your wooden rim on a bronze snare drum, and it’s given me a unique identity that I never would have dreamed of. So yes, I receive a lot of positive feedback in reference to the gear and the sound that I’ve been able to develop and own because of it.

EDGE: What’s your “go-to” snare?

OP: Right now I’m digging two: the 5x14” bronze with the wooden hoops and the 4x14” maple with diecast hoops. It’s tight and it’s right in your face. However, with the diecast hoops it’s not too overbearing.

EDGE: Do you have any tuning secrets?

OP: Not really. In terms of getting feel in the tone, there’s something about the Pacific maples that say, “Yes! That’s the tone right there!” Depending on the artist, I’ll use all kinds of kits and all kinds of sizes. For example, with Donnie, I’ve used the basic kit for the entire two years. With the SOS Band, it’s two kick drums, three racks and two floors...the whole nine. The Pacific maples are very versatile and guarantee the right tones that I’m looking for every time.

EDGE: If you were not a drummer, what would you be doing?

OP: That’s a hard question to answer because I can’t imagine my life any other way. However, if I had to consider an alternative, it would be managing other drummers. It’s really hard to say. Lately I’ve been producing, as well, so my horizons are broadening. Regardless, if I weren’t drumming, music would still be my focus. Most importantly, I’m blessed to be doing what I love to do, and that’s the key to success.
ORDERING INFORMATION

ALL DW DRUMWEAR AND DW DVD ITEMS CAN BE ORDERED AT WWW.DWDRUMS.COM OR BY CALLING 1-866-4-DW-SWAG.
SELECTED ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH AUTHORIZED DW DEALERS.
PLEASE ALLOW 10-14 DAYS FOR DELIVERY ON ALL ORDERS. WE CANNOT OFFER DIRECT SALES TO COUNTRIES OTHER THAN THE U.S.A. OR CANADA. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR TO ORDER OUTSIDE THE U.S.A. OR CANADA.
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- Andy James • Independent [2]
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- Blake Plonsky • New Dead Radio [4]
- Buddy Miles • independent
- Dan Trapp • Senses Fail
- Dave Schroyen • Millionaire
- Emilio Garcia • Marco Solis
- Garrett Whitlock • Submersed [5]
- Jimmy Cobb • jazz legend
- Jordan Mancino • As I Lay Dying [6]
- Jorge Ortiz Aguilar • independent
- Joshua Wills • Story of The Year [7]
- Lez Warner • The Erocktica Show [8]
- Mark O'Connell • Taking Back Sunday [9]
- Mike Johnston • Headrush/educator [10]
- Riley Breckenridge • Thrice
- Ringo Garza • Los Lonely Boys [11]
- Scott Phillips • Alter Bridge [12]
- Tobias Ralph • Defunkt/24•7 Spyz [13]
- Todd Hennig • Death By Stereo
- Tom Gryskiewicz • The Starting Line
- Tony Palermo • Unwritten Law/Pulley/Hot Potty [14]
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