

EDGE

M A G A Z I N E

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Josh Freese
on location
Long Beach, CA





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**Editor's Notes:
The Cutting Edge**

It's not just a play on words. The fact is, DW's mission statement is to solve problems for drummers, create the instruments and gear that can inspire musicians, and take the art form to new and uncharted places. So, how exactly does that work? It can be as simple as offering reliable, lightweight hardware for the working player, or a smoother, more accurate pedal that makes live performances that much more explosive. It can also come from an accessory product that changes a set-up just enough to open new creative doors, or a snare drum shell crafted from an alternative material.

It all comes down to innovation. We are always exploring new ideas and striving for improvement. If we don't continue to adapt to the way the instrument is evolving with today's players and their techniques, we're at risk of becoming musical dinosaurs. True, we've found some pretty old lumber for some of our Timeless Timber kits, but we're talking about offering drummers more choices, more sonic possibilities, and more ways to expand their percussive palette. Who knows, maybe we should change our slogan from The Drummer's Choice to The Drummer's Choices?

As you enjoy this 13th issue of Edge, we hope you'll gain some new insights and discover ideas that will change the way you approach the instrument and perhaps ignite an artistic spark that didn't previously exist. To us, "The Cutting Edge" isn't just a catch phrase or a way to label our latest product designs. It all goes back to our mission statement and our belief in a Darwinian approach to making drums and gear, while constantly refining and reinventing the tools needed to craft new rhythms and new beats. Play on.



Scott Donnell
Editor, Edge Magazine



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Carl Allen

NEW YORK

State of Mind

by Scott Donnell

Photo: Grantley Ivester

ARTIST FEATURE ||| CARL ALLEN

You've heard of a drummer's drummer? Well, Carl Allen is a thinking man's drummer. He's articulate, well-informed, and certainly in-tune with every aspect of the Jazz drumming institution. His reverence and insatiable appetite for the art form are readily apparent and therefore infectious. Professor Allen is a motivator and a realist; a seasoned player and an educator. Indeed, he resides in The Big Apple, but it's his practical, no-nonsense, and purist approach that qualifies him as having a New York state-of-mind.

Scott Donnell: Talk a little about how drummers can develop their own voice.

Carl Allen: This is an excellent question. I'd like to preface it by saying that in my opinion, specifically when we're talking about Jazz, one should possess some basic knowledge of the tradition, because part of what we are attempting to do when we play is to add to the existing language and vocabulary of the idiom. That being said, there are a number of ways to develop your own voice. I have often said that great musicians are also great thieves. In music, we steal or borrow ideas from what we hear. I don't think that the masters left us all of this great music for us to merely copy and regurgitate. We have to find a way to take ideas and make them our own. For example, take a solo from a recording. Learn it, and then find a way to change that same information, such as patterns, musical phrases or other ideas, and make them personal. This is nothing new, but it still works.

SD: How did you cultivate your playing style?

CA: As I mentioned, I took a lot of what I heard on recordings and in live performances from some of the masters. I transcribed them, learned their vocabulary, and explored a lot. One of the great lessons that I learned early on is that it takes courage to explore what it is that you are hearing, but it's very necessary. I grew up listening to and playing a lot of styles of music long before I started playing Jazz. Gospel, R&B, Soul, and Funk are where I 'lived' before I started visiting Jazz, so to speak. When I was around ten years old, I started to really hear melody and wanted to adapt that approach to the drums. I can recall a conversation that I once had with the great Freddie Hubbard. We were on the road and I remember telling him that I didn't think I was hearing the drums the way that I was supposed to hear them. He said, "What do you mean?" I replied, "I hear what Blakey, Tony, Elvin, Higgins, and others are doing, which I love. I want to do that, but also do what you, Miles, Monk, Dexter, Trane, and others are doing." He started laughing his head off. I thought, "Oh man, I am in trouble." He

then encouraged me to follow my vision and said that as long as I did what I was supposed to do as a drummer, that I could explore this conversation. In a way, he gave me permission to start asking what has become my favorite question: what if? Once I felt like I could explore more, I started learning 'non-drummer' solos, but playing them on the drums. This led me to taking ideas from other non-Jazz musicians and trying to apply it to what I was hearing. I still do it to this day.

SD: In a strange way, is there a Jazz drumming rulebook?

CA: I am not sure if there is a rulebook per se for Jazz drumming as much as there is for just making great music. I'm sure it may be different for others, but for me, it's simple. Here are a few of my rules:

The Ride Cymbal: This is where it starts for me when playing Jazz. I always say that you should be able to swing the whole band with just your ride cymbal. Play great time, make it feel good and make it dance.

Play Great Dynamics: Listen to others



Photo Credit: Tony Barbera

more that you listen to yourself.

Contribute to the Conversation at Hand:

This means playing something that makes sense conceptually, stylistically, and is pertinent to what's happening at that moment.

Sound: The sound of your instrument has to compliment the music. This goes not only for the tuning of the drums, but the tone as well.

Concept: Be aware of the concept of the music. In order for the music

to swing or dance it has to feel like Jazz. Be in the moment. Nothing else really matters.

Make others (musicians and the audience) feel something. Have fun.

SD: How do you teach Jazz?

CA: I think with Jazz music, like other genres, you learn by doing. It's a language, a culture, and it's social music. You have to be around it; listen to live performances, a ton of recordings, and be

prepared for a lot of trial and error. When I was with Freddie, he never told me how to play and he allowed me to explore and make mistakes. If something didn't work he'd just say, "Try something different," and I knew what that meant. It wasn't until years later that I understood the value of being able to just figure it out. More importantly, you have to want it. This also means accepting that phase where you will sound bad before you sound good. Some musicians have a hard time with this,

but I think that it's part of the growth process.

SD: In today's world, how do you achieve a career as a Jazz drummer?

CA: Although the music and the business have changed immensely over the past thirty, or so, years, many things still remain the same. Learn your instrument. Learn the music and the lineage. Learn as much about the business as you can. Show up on time, be prepared, and be nice. This is a people business; relationships and resources are cyclical, so this is very important.

SD: Does your kit change from gig-to-gig?

CA: I know that the obvious answer to this question would be, "Yes." However, in my case, it doesn't change much. I may add an additional floor tom, second snare, or go between one or two mounted toms, but that's about it. If it's a Big Band gig I may use a 20" bass drum. There are times, if I am doing a commercial or movie soundtrack, I may use a 22" bass drum, but that's rare in recent years. I try to adjust my touch more than anything. A friend of mine says, "Your touch produces your sound and not the other way around." He's a pianist, which means that he's playing a different instrument just about every day.

Years ago, I was on a gig in Paris along with Art Blakey and Billy Higgins. We all had to play the same drums, which were horrible (this, of course, was before I started playing DW). Both of those guys sounded amazing and I really sounded horrible. After the gig I was furious. I was kicking chairs and complaining about the drums. Art said, "What's wrong?" I proceeded to tell him about my drum rider. He laughed and said, "Do you play the drums or do the drums play you? If you could really play, it wouldn't matter." He walked away laughing. I was about twenty-two years old at the time. Lesson learned.

SD: Describe your sound.

CA: I would like to think of my sound as warm, clear, and recognizable. I never have any muffling on my drums or anything inside of them. I like for my drums to be open, resonant, and singing. I want those

around me to feel the wood and warmth of the drum.

SD: How do you create your signature sound?

CA: I create my signature sound through exploring. I've spent years experimenting with not only creating different sounds, but also changing up my set-up from time-to-time. I think that sometimes we take our set-up for granted. I like for it to feel like it's part of me and an extension of my body, if you will.

Art (Blakey) used to talk to me about posture and how important it is. This, I do believe, has had an effect on my sound. Speaking of sound, I also work on drawing a sound out of the drum by focusing on playing into the drum versus playing off of the drum. I use both techniques. I once asked Elvin Jones what he practiced with his feet and he said, "The same thing I do with my hands." I've always remembered this and try to do the same. For me, the key is having a balanced sound.

SD: Does a Jazz drummer have to use coated heads and tune up high?

CA: There was a time when I would say, "Definitely, yes." Hearing and spending time around Tony Williams changed all of that for me. In his later years, he used clear black dot heads. I dare anyone to say that he didn't get a great sound from the instrument or make it sound like Jazz. Al Foster is a great example of someone who tuned their drums low and still sounded amazing. There are many others, as well.

SD: What's the perfect workhorse snare drum?

CA: This is not a fair question. (Laughs). I love snare drums! For years, I swore by wood snare shells, but recently I have been going between a 5x14" Collector's Maple Mahogany and a 6.5x14" Nickel over Brass snare drum. I salivate whenever I play either of these drums. I have many snares and when I'm recording, I've been known to bring three or four with me.

SD: Who's the Elvin of 2016?

CA: If we're speaking specifically of

the younger guys, I'd say Eric Harland, Marcus Gilmore, or Kendrick Scott. Of course, there's also Jeff "Tain" Watts and Brian Blade. There are so many amazing drummers out there!

SD: Who's the Tony of 2016?

CA: Obed Calvaire is someone that I really dig. Some of the other younger guys in this vein are Jonathan Barber, Jason Brown, McClenty Hunter, Jerome Jennings, Bryan Carter, and Justin Brown. I am so proud of all of these guys. There is a kid named Kojo Roney, who is the son of Anton Roney and the nephew of trumpeter Wallace Roney; I think he's eleven now. It's just sick the way that he has really digested Tony's concept for tuning, comping, and just playing the instrument. Check him out. He's also a great kid and he's very well-balanced. There are others that I feel are also doing great things and blending styles together; guys like Marcus Baylor, Mark Whitfield, Jr., Terreon Gully, and Jamison Ross.

SD: Have you discovered new talent?

CA: Several years ago, I started a production company. My aim was to primarily focus on talent that I believed deserved more attention. This would not only be the younger musicians, but some of the older masters that I felt had been overlooked. This included Nicholas Payton, Roy Hargrove, Eric Harland (he was eighteen years old at the time), Brian Blade, Cyrus Chestnut, and many others.

I taught at The Juilliard School for twelve years; the last six as the Artistic Director of Jazz Studies. During my tenure there I was able to help nurture many of today's active players like Jerome Jennings, Ulysses Owens, McClenty Hunter, Lee Pearson, Marion Felder, Bryan Carter, Lawrence Leathers, Aaron Diehl, Mayuko Katakura, Ben Williams, Kris Bowers, Joe Saylor, Phil Kuehn, Jonathan Batiste, Etienne Charles, Marshall Gilkes, Yasushi Nakamura, and many others. I must say that I had a lot of help from a great faculty that included Ron Carter, Kenny Barron, Rodney Jones, Kenny Washington, Billy Drummond, Steve Wilson, Ron Blake, Steve Turre, Wycliffe Gordon, Eddie Henderson, and

I think of a lot of the young drummers who are out here working have studied with me at some point, and they're playing with the likes of Gregory Porter, Michael Bubl , Chris Botti, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, Kurt Elling, and many others. I am just trying to do for the next generation what Blakey, Elvin, Higgins, Tony, Max, Roy Haynes, Mel Lewis, and Philly Joe did for me. I am happy to say that I'm not alone in this endeavor. As the old adage says, "It takes a village."

SD: You've been with Drum Workshop for almost two decades. How has DW evolved in your eyes?

CA: For me, DW drums have always sounded great. I remember right after I signed with you guys, I visited the factory and we discussed sizes, sound, feel, etc. Don Lombardi and John Good said, "How about we just send you something and you can let us know what you like and don't like about them. Then, we can make some changes to make it your kit." The drums were perfect right out of the box!

I do think that DW has a much broader range of sounds now than they did twenty years ago. The Jazz Series are amazing, as are all of the other drums that they make. One major difference for me is the 13" mounted tom. Until I started playing DW, I found that the 13" toms of many other brands sounded somewhat tight or choked. DW had the first 13" tom that had a well-balanced, round, full, and warm sound. Sounds like I'm describing a person, huh? Funny! (Laughs). DW drums have so much personality to them. They defy the odds in the sense that you can tune the drums up or down and use the same kit in a variety of settings. Years ago, I played a short stack kit; I used these drums on Big Band, Funk, Pop, Gospel, and Jazz gigs and recordings. They're very versatile. I love those drums.

SD: Why did you choose DW so early on?

CA: When I first signed with DW they didn't have many Jazz drummers at all. I was intrigued by this. Initially, I just endorsed the hardware. On my first visit, I just stopped by the office when I was

driving from LA to San Francisco. John Good gave me a tour of the facility, and at one point we went into a room with drums set up. I just stared at them like I was in a trance. John said, "Why don't you sit down and try them?" I thought to myself, "Okay, I'll tap them for a bit." I had no plans on leaving the company that I was with at the time. Once I started playing I couldn't stop! I was playing with my eyes closed. I played non-stop for about 30-to-40 minutes. When I opened my eyes, the room was full of people! I had never had that feeling playing drums before. I was sweating and breathing hard. I looked at John and Don and said, "Where do I sign?" That was it. I was hooked and still am.

When I first got with DW they didn't have any lightweight hardware. I remember having a conversation with Don about this. I felt that this was a market that no one was addressing. I think he was somewhat skeptical, initially. I know that Jim Rupp had also spoken with him about it from a consumer's perspective. I was looking at it not only for me, but thinking of all of the guys that I would see taking drums on the subway in New York or taking them up five flights of stairs to their apartments. I'd see drummers come up with their own homemade version of hardware, so I knew that there was a need. Needless to say, DW has to keep up with the demand. The new Ultralight hardware is just mind-blowing for me. Not to mention that my drum tech (and his back) loves it. Thanks, you guys!

SD: Which DW Custom Shop shell configuration do you want to try next and why?

CA: I must admit that every day I look at what DW has posted on Facebook. The drums are a work of art. I'm very curious about the new Pure Oak drums. They seem like they'd be warm and resonant. I heard Sheila E. play some on the site and they sounded amazing. She's incredible, so I expected no less. As for snare drums, I'm interested in checking out the Concrete drum. I have some ideas for different kinds of combinations of materials, as well. I have a confession to make. Whenever I get new drums, guys come to me with

comments like, "Man, how did you come up with that idea?" I've been dealing with Garrison (DW Artist Relations Manager) for years and he's a wizard. Whenever we are discussing a new kit, I may give him an idea for a color and then say, "Just surprise me." What he comes up with always blows me away! Louie Garcia in the paint shop is also a genius. These guys deserve some kind of gold medal.

SD: What would you recommend to a drummer that wants to purchase their first DW kit?

CA: In terms of which model or series, I would say that it depends on the music that you're playing and your budget. I was never in agreement with the idea that PDP drums are a 'budget line' of drums. I've used them many times via backline companies and they all sounded great. I've never played a bad DW kit. I am curious about the Mini Pro kit, too. I haven't heard one yet. I'd like to see DW do more with the 16" bass drum. I would just recommend being open to possibilities because if one is not familiar with DW drums and they have a preconceived notion of what they want, they may be surprised...pleasantly so.

SD: What's on your schedule for 2016?

CA: 2016 is looking to be a busy year, starting with the Jazz Cruise with Christian McBride and Dianne Reeves. January-April, I'll be touring with The Mack Avenue Super Band with Christian McBride, Gary Burton, Sean Jones, Tia Fuller, and others. In between tour dates, I'll also be doing a lot of clinics at schools and music stores.

Other things on the horizon for 2016 include touring with a project called The Art of Elvin. It's a band that pays tribute to Art Blakey and Elvin Jones. We played PASIC in 2014 and had a great time. People were so supportive and showed so much love that I decided to try to keep this band going, so we will be touring throughout the year. I've also been playing with the legendary saxophonist Benny Golson for more than twenty years and we've recently recorded a new CD, so we'll tour for the new release, as well.



One of the gigs that I have been doing for about eleven years now is being part of the rhythm section for the Thelonious Monk competition. This happens every year, and part of my duties includes playing behind twelve-to-fifteen semi-finalists. We rehearse with each of them for thirty minutes and perform the following day. I enjoy it because it's a challenge to make each one of them feel comfortable, as if I am in their band. For me, it's all about serving the music. I love doing a lot of different kinds of gigs and projects, so there will be many great things happening.

SD: If you could do anything musically, what would it be?

CA: Art Blakey used to say, "Music

is supposed to wash away the dust of everyday life." I take this to heart. It may sound simple, but I want to play music on the highest possible level, while inspiring others to be the best that they can be. Playing music reminds me of growing up in church. My mother was a Gospel singer in the choir and she was my best friend. Whenever I play, I just want to make her proud. When she passed away in May of 2001, I was in New Zealand doing free clinics and performances. I was at a point in my life where I felt a pull in my spirit to give back. When my sister called to tell me of my mom's passing, she told me that I couldn't come home until I finished the tour. I had four more days to go, but we were taught to finish whatever we started. I get such a thrill playing and teaching. It's

kind of all the same for me.

SD: What's on your drumming bucket list?

CA: There's so much that I'd still like to do. I would love to play with Fred Hammond, Marvin Sapp, Sting, Bonnie Raitt, Paul Simon, and James Taylor, to name a few. Surprised? I love a lot of different kinds of music. Musicians tend to get typecast, but I love it all.

SD: What has been the most gratifying musical experience of your career?

CA: There have been many, but when I get to spend time with someone one-on-one or in a clinic situation and you get to see and hear the immediate change in their playing, it's an affirmation of the importance of sharing this gift that we have. Another one that comes to mind was playing with Freddie Hubbard in Berlin (with special guests Woody Shaw and Dizzy Gillespie). When Freddie introduced me to Dizzy he said, "Hey Diz, this is my drummer Carl Allen." Man, I thought I would pass out just hearing him say that to Dizzy. Wow! I played with him for eight years and during that time I was also the Road Manager and Musical Director. He even played some of my music! It's still unreal to this day.

One of the best life lessons that all of the aforementioned legendary musicians taught me is that music is a fraternity. It's a privilege and an honor to be a part of what so many great people have spent their lives building. It has to be respected and never taken for granted. I remember meeting the great Ndugu Chancler the first time and he was so nice and gracious to me that it scared me, because I had assumed that if he was this nice, he must have thought that I was someone else. (Laughs). I thought, "Once he finds out that I'm not that person, his approach to me will change." I said, "Hi, Mr. Chancler, my name is Carl Allen." He said, "I know who you are. How you doing?" I've never forgotten that love and that warmth. He and I are close to this day. The great Billy Higgins said this about playing music: "Carl, it beats laying bricks." I agree, and I know that I am a blessed man to be able to do so. **dw**



Discussing
THE MDD HI-HAT
WITH **RICH Sikra**
by Brook Dalton

On the heels of introducing the innovative Machined Direct-Drive (MDD) bass drum pedals, DW decided to focus on creating a hi-hat counterpart that matches not only their look and feel, but their adjustability and sturdiness, as well. Needless to say, the development of this stand was a new venture for us that could only come to fruition after countless hours of R&D and physical testing. I recently sat down with Rich Sikra, DW's Director of Research and Development, to discuss this state-of-the-art addition to our impressive roster of hi-hat stands.

Brook Dalton: What was the biggest challenge in fabricating this stand? You weren't dealing with a few tweaks or upgrades, you had to design a new drive system for it to work.

Rich Sikra: We wanted to make a stand that had the ability to give the player a 'free floating' footboard feel and that offered more traditional 'solid stop' action in one stand. Getting a direct-drive pedal to have a floating feel was pretty challenging and took some time to accomplish. In the testing phase of the new pedal design we worked with a lot of drummers during the various stages of its inception and listened to their feedback. Once we figured out the best blueprint, we realized that we could carry over the basics of the design to a hi-hat stand.

BD: How is the adjustability on the MDD Hi-Hat different from a typical hi-hat stand?

RS: We really wanted to make it user-friendly. The spring adjustment is based on the MDD pedal system, so a simple turn of the drum key changes the tension. It also has a laser-marked scale to show what setting you are on. The footboard height adjustment is unique and easy for the drummer to set. We also added a folding feature on the foot plate that locks into place using a toe clamp lever like the one used on a bass drum hoop clamp. This makes its set-up for the drummer quick and easy.

BD: This is the first DW hi-hat stand that comes standard with the One-Touch Clutch. Why is the OTC a good fit for this piece of hardware?

RS: Adjusting the tension on the cymbals while playing isn't something that most drummers can do. It usually takes two hands to do this. We wanted to come up with a clutch that could be adjusted with

one hand while playing. We also wanted a clutch that would not loosen up while playing without adding extra locking screws. Since the clutch matches the hi-hat's goal of being more user-friendly, we thought it would make sense to release it on the MDD hi-hat first.

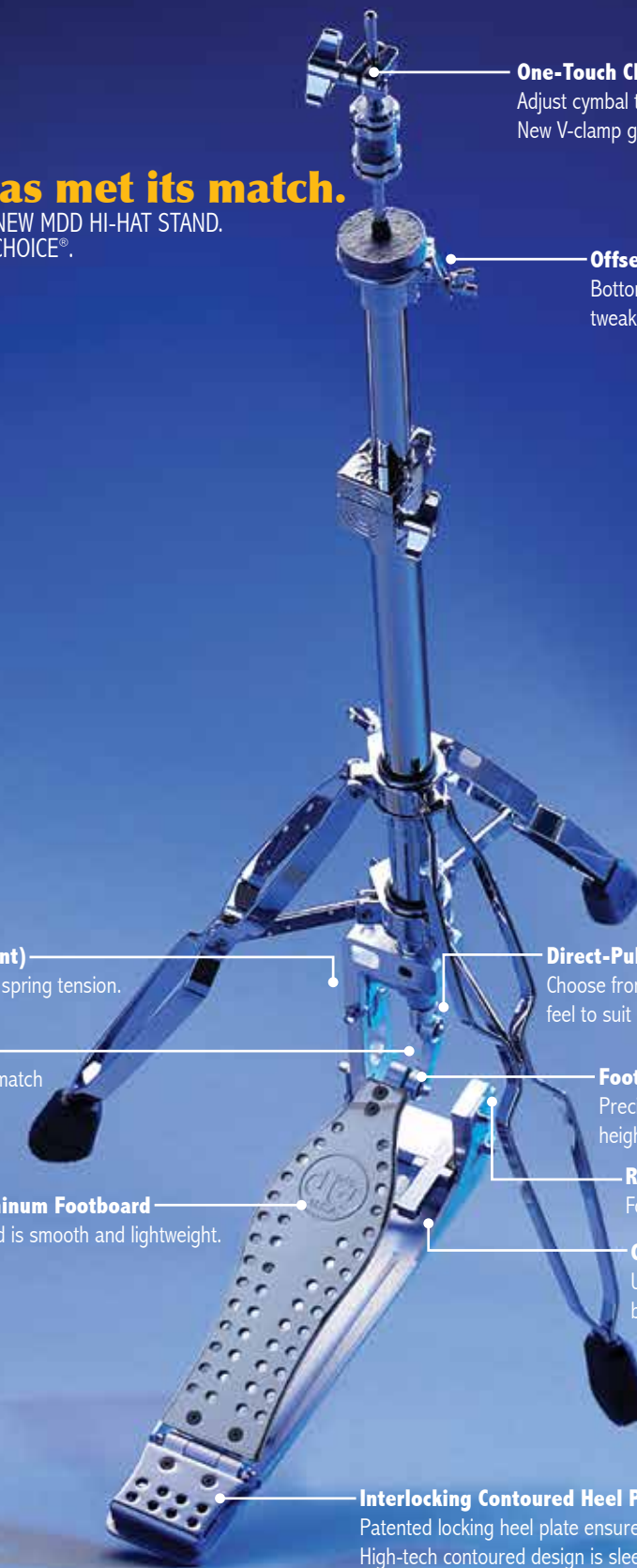
BD: How has the response been from artists or customers that have been playing this stand?

RS: We had received a lot of requests to put out a hi-hat in the MDD line before we invented it. So far, the feedback has been great! Of course, the drummers who already owned an MDD pedal really wanted a matching hi-hat, but we had to make it feel exceptionally good. Hopefully, we've met their expectations. **dw**



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www.DWDRUMS.COM/hardware/dwmtg/

JOSH FREESE

No Alternative
BY SCOTT DONNELLY



One day he's on a private jet with Sting, the next day he's in a cargo van with The Vandals. Josh Freese is the consummate working musician. He possesses a work ethic that just won't quit, is a genre-bending chameleon, and has a rock-solid reputation that precedes him. A drum geek from a very early age, he grew up in a musical family and harnessed his enthusiasm to help pave a fruitful and diverse career path. Yes, there are quite a few extremely talented players in the drumming universe, but for many artists and bands, there's truly no alternative.



Scott Donnell: Tell us about meeting your drumming idols at such a young age.

Josh Freese: Getting to meet some of my favorite drummers when I was a kid was a huge deal. Growing up in Southern California, I started going to NAMM shows when I was ten. I walked around with a cheap point-and-shoot camera and an autograph album that was a little bigger than a wallet. I followed Vinnie (Colaiuta) and Terry (Bozzio) around like a lost puppy dog and they were so cool to me. They didn't have to be, but they were! Those guys, along with Keltner, Porcaro, JR, and Gregg Bissonette were such a big deal to me, especially at that age. I even had their phone numbers and would call and bug them about stuff. My dad would drive me up to LA when I was 10-12 years old to see Vinnie play at the Baked Potato. He'd put me on the list and save a few seats right next to his drums. That stuff absolutely blew me away. Getting to watch him up close and actually pick his brain about stuff had a major impact on me.

SD: Do you still talk to Vinnie often? What do you guys talk about?

JF: I talk to Vinnie a few times a year and we keep in touch via email. It's funny because we're both so busy and, of course, we're never on the same gigs. We might cross paths if one of us played bass! (Laughs). He's one of those guys though; we can go a long time without seeing each other and when we hang out it's like no time has passed. He's forever my buddy and, arguably, my all-time favorite drummer.

SD: How do you feel about being a role model?

JF: It feels funny to think of myself as a possible role model for anyone. If I really wanted to read into it, it could freak me out. I'm not sure if I like that kind of responsibility, to be honest. To me, trying to be a good guy and a good father comes first and foremost. Hopefully, I can pass that on to others. If someone can be inspired by my drumming, my resume, work ethic, attitude, or music I've written, then great! My role models range anywhere from Steve Gadd to Bill Stevenson, Walt Disney to John Waters, Jaco Pastorius to John Lydon, and Chris Burden to Jeff Koons. Maybe some of those guys aren't necessarily 'role models' to me, but they're major sources of inspiration.

SD: Do drummers often ask for your advice? What do you tell them?

JF: I get asked for advice all the time and, as much as it sounds cliché, I always tell people to keep their ears and minds open. I'm a firm believer in hard work, but also in having fun. I tell guys to get out there and play with as many people as they can. Go out and meet people. Meet other players, producers, songwriters, engineers... you never know who will lead to what. Get involved and experience as much as you can. All of those relationships and experiences, combined with your playing, will help develop your sound and your style. I also say that it helps to find something you really like stylistically, something you also have a knack for, and then just go for it. Try and find your niche and dive in head first. You have to eat, sleep, and breathe it, especially in your younger, more formative years.

SD: Do you still do a lot of sessions?

JF: I feel fortunate to always be busy, but the landscape has changed. We all know it and anyone that tells you differently is lying. Everyone's on a tighter budget. I had one of the biggest names in music have their management call me recently to ask for a discount on my normal rate. A lot of records are still being made but recording sessions, like we once knew, are totally different. The budgets just aren't there the way they were in the past. It used to be hard for me to turn them down because everything paid so well. Now, the smaller sessions I do are only because I really like the artist and the music. It has worked out for me, and my lifestyle, because I honestly don't want to be doing two or three sessions a day like I used to. I've done that. I've put that time in. I have four kids and my priorities have changed pretty drastically in that regard. Of course, I'll do big-time sessions that come up and then, if I have the time and I really like the music, I'll say yes to the smaller budget stuff.

SD: Where can people hear your latest work?

JF: Some of the more notable artists I've been in the studio with recently are Wolfmother, Michael Bubl , Danny Elfman, Sublime with Rome, Rob Zombie, and The Offspring; all on either their latest releases or albums that are coming out soon. Some of those are full

records and others are just selected tracks and/or soundtrack stuff. I have some other records I'm trying to get made, but haven't been able to work it out; everything from a new Vandals record, to a new Sublime with Rome record, to my own instrumental record, and a project with my brother Jason who plays keys with Green Day and Joe Walsh. It'll also feature my dad and his tuba skills!

SD: Which kit is your 'go-to' at the moment? What is your preferred workhorse snare?

JF: I have a lot of kits that sound great, of course, and all of them are in the rotation, but the one I've been going back to most often is the same kit I've been touring with a lot in recent years with The Replacements and with Sublime with Rome. It's a Gun Metal Grey Collector's Series kit. It has a 22" kick, 12" and 13" toms, with 16" and 18" floor toms. That's my 'go-to' kit right now. With The Replacements, I just take the 13" tom away and have one up and two down. I use a variety of 14" snares but, for the most part, I lean towards the Collector's metal snare drums. I really like the Brass, Bronze, and the Aluminum snares. They seem to cut the most in a Rock n' Roll-type setting. You've got to compete with all those damn guitar amps!

SD: Talk about the relationship between a working player and a cartage company. Also, how do you build a successful working relationship with a new tech?

JF: My relationship with any tech, live or in the studio, is pretty simple and straight forward. Just like any working relationship, it's nice to have someone you've worked with for a while and that you have some sort of rapport with. Hopefully, it's someone that knows you and your playing well enough to be able to spot any possible hiccups or glitches ahead of time and take whatever precautions are needed to cut them off at the pass. First off, I'm never really using a giant kit with a bunch of bells and whistles, and I like to think that I'm not too high-maintenance. My tech needs to ensure that the drums sound good, feel comfortable to play, and make sure I've got some extra sticks lying around that are within reach. I don't need the heads to be changed all the time; as long as they're not dented and are holding up, then I'm good. I'm not a 'polish my cymbals and

drums' kind of guy. Never have been, never will be. I like some dirt and sweat to get in there. It needs the grit. It's Rock n' Roll after all, right?

SD: Are you a 'gear guy'?

JF: No, not to the extent that some guys are. I don't go out hunting for that 'perfect' snare; I just don't. I'm busy enough and, dare I say, lazy enough that I want to have great sounding stuff at my disposal at all times. I know the difference between the good stuff and the not-so-good stuff. There's a reason I've played DW my ENTIRE LIFE! Since I was in 6th grade I knew that DW was head-and-shoulders above the rest. There you go. I figured out what I thought were the best sounding drums to me and then just moved forward. Sure, there are other good companies, but for what I want to hear and how I want it to look, DW is it for me, no questions asked. I don't want to have to wonder. Who's got the time anyhow, right? I've got music to make, a family to raise, and P.F. Chang's to eat. (Laughs).



SD: Do you like tweaking your kit?

JF: I like tweaking my kit, but I don't tweak out too hard on it. Knowing me, I'll just make it sound worse than it sounded when I first sat down! I will say that I've had drum techs since I was sixteen or seventeen and, of course, I spent many years before that loading my own gear, setting up, tearing down...all of that. I do, however, like to sit down and change heads sometimes. It feels good. I feel connected to the drums when I do it.

SD: What is the perfect Josh Freese drum sound?

JF: I'm not sure what the perfect Josh Freese sound is. I like it all, really. I like

the ultra-tight stuff, but also the big, loud, bombastic route sometimes, as well. It all depends on the band I'm playing with. If pressed, I'll go with tighter and punchier drums rather than looser and bigger ones. I'll take the smaller room in the studio over the giant one with fifty-foot-tall ceilings.

SD: How do you build a rapport with the FOH (front of house) sound engineer?

JF: I have always just kept my fingers crossed and hoped that the FOH engineer is doing a good job. I'll ask around sometimes, but I don't want to be the guy after each show asking everyone, "How'd it sound? How'd it sound?" Chances are, they were hired because they have a good reputation and someone in the band and/or management has heard them in action before. At the beginning of a tour I'll usually have my tech, or a few different techs, wander out and report back as to how it's sounding. Once in a while, I'll have someone play the drums and I'll walk out front during the soundcheck. I'll usually talk to them a bit during rehearsals to make sure we're both on the same page, as far as the drums and the mix go. It's always a good sign when you have more than two people a night tell you that it sounded good out front. Not that the show was cool or the band kicked ass, but that the actual sound was great.

SD: Why Sublime? Why now?

JF: The Sublime with Rome thing happened at a perfect time. I'd just stopped working with Weezer and was doing some one-off stuff with Devo, The Vandals, and Sting, but I was basically at home and doing sessions. I'd been trying to stay off the road after leaving Nine Inch Nails, but you know how that goes. I've known the Sublime guys since the beginning of their career, pretty much. They used to play shows with The Vandals and because we were Long Beach residents and in the Punk Rock scene, we ran in some of the same circles. I watched their career rise and then come to a screeching halt. A few years ago, I saw some of their shows, when Rome started singing and playing guitar, and they were great. It was nice seeing so many people that loved their music get to see these songs performed live, because most people didn't get the chance, originally. They were just getting started when Brad died. After reforming, they toured for a bit and then Bud Gaugh was having a child with his wife and didn't want to be on the road

anymore. They caught me at a rare time when I didn't have any big commitments or immediate plans. I've always loved their songs and it was a slightly new style for me to play, so it sounded interesting. I've always loved Eric Wilson too. He's a great bass player, good dude, and a total character. Rome grew up learning to play guitar while listening to their records. He's an amazing talent, great writer, and he has an incredible voice.

SD: How has touring changed over the years?

JF: Touring can still be a lot of fun but, like anything, it can change as you get older and have done it for so many years. I don't go out as much as I used to. The party thing slows down once you have a family and start behaving yourself. In that respect, it has become a little too adult and boring for me at times, but oh well. Being away from my family is hard these days, but going out and playing gigs is definitely a necessity, now more than ever. You can't download or steal a live concert experience and with the recording end of things suffering, bands are really having to tour more often. The internet and technology have helped make touring easier on a lot of fronts: being able to communicate with everyone on tour and back at home, working on music, writing and recording on the road, etc. Passing the time in hotel rooms used to drive me crazy years ago and now there's no shortage of things to do, watch, and read.

SD: How has studio work changed? How have you adapted?

JF: Like I mentioned earlier, the studio scene has changed in the respect that budgets have shrunk incredibly because record sales are almost nonexistent. People steal it off the internet, so nobody is getting paid for their art. Everyone's on a tighter budget, but advancements in technology have made it incredibly easy to make records without having to book an expensive studio. Home studios are way more common now. At the end of the day, you can record whenever and where ever you want with your laptop and a few mics. People still like being able to record drums in a nice room with a good board and a lot of mics, so even if they're finishing the record at home, or in a smaller studio, people usually prefer to track the drums in a quality studio, if they can. The big and fancy studios are still around town, but I

see a lot more home studios than I used to. I also have my own studio, so people will hire me and just send me Pro Tools files. I know a lot of guys that are doing that because it's a huge money and time saver for artists on smaller budgets. I do sessions for songwriters and bands from all over the world that I've never met! They save a fortune by not having to pay for a plane ticket, hotel room, booking a studio, or cartage.

SD: Tell us a funny Tommy Lee story.

JF: I met Tommy through the people at Simmons Electronic Drums when I was thirteen. I'll never forget going up to his house in Woodland Hills when he was married to Heather Locklear. It was a time when Mötley Crüe was one of the biggest bands around and they were complete MTV superstars. The whole thing was pretty impressive, seeing as I was in 7th grade. I remember that he had this Corvette and was totally into showing off this over-the-top sound system he had put in it. It was a two-seater and had these gigantic speakers and subwoofers pushed right into your back, behind the seats, and under the seats. It was like getting a full-body massage when you turned up the volume! He had a refrigerator in the garage completely filled with Corona beer. No one in my neighborhood had a second refrigerator, especially one solely designated for beer! I'm pretty sure it was the first time I had a beer. I was thinking, "Wow, this dude is married to one of the hottest actresses around, has a Corvette with a PA system in it, and a mountain of beer in his garage...it must be fun to be Tommy Lee!" (Laughs). I still know him and always love running into him.

SD: Have you seen any young drummers recently that have impressed you?

JF: There's a young guy that a lot of people don't know, but should. His name is Jaydon Bean and he's a bad-ass. He's from Utah, but lives in LA now. He has great feel and amazing chops. He plays all over town and is one of the guys that are out there doing it. I met him through my brother; they were doing some recording together for some of my brother's stuff. He's really fluid and has a great command of the instrument. Obviously, I'm sure there are a ton of amazing up-and-comers that I'm just not aware of.

SD: How do you balance your career and your personal life?

JF: Finding a balance between my professional and personal life, now that I have a big family, is something I work on every day. It's a constant challenge. I don't want to regret not being around for my kids growing up, but then I have to work enough to support a family of six in 2016 in Southern California. I also have to satisfy my own personal artistic needs and I have a lot of things I want to be doing right now, but many of them have been sitting on my 'to do list' for a while.



I know I'll get to them eventually. Once again, your priorities start shifting once you decide to have a family and commit to being an involved parent. Whenever someone says, "What have you been up to?" My answer is always, "Drumming and daddy-ing." That's it!

SD: Tell us a bit about your relationship with DW and what it has meant to you over the years.

JF: Ever since I was a kid, Don Lombardi and John Good have always blown me away with their vision, hard work, and

dedication to making the best drums available. They've always been a few steps ahead of the game and, at this point, I don't think there's any arguing that. I said this in a recent DW ad but it's true, we grew up together. I got to watch DW go from a small operation to a bigger one, then to a bigger one, and then to an even bigger one! It's exciting to be part of a team like the one at DW. The history we have with one another is something I value very much and wouldn't trade it for the world. **dw**

Big Gigs

with **Joy Williams**
by Atom Willard

You think that you're busy, or maybe you've done enough practicing this week? Well, I'd like to introduce you to someone who will not only inspire you, but humbly shame you and your schedule. Meet Venzella Joy Williams. Joy plays for Beyoncé, but before she staked her claim as part of B's elaborate road show, she put in her time. She went to school and practiced. She worked and practiced. She earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a minor in music, and practiced; all the while writing and producing her own music. Here's my conversation with this newcomer that just won't stop!

Atom Willard: How long have you been with Beyoncé?

Venzella Joy Williams: I started playing with her in January of 2014, so just shy of two years.

AW: That's enough time to get a feel for the gig, right? What's your comfort level at this point?

VJW: Like you said, after that amount of time you do kind of get a feel for the artist, a feel for the rest of the band, and a feel for the direction that the Musical Director is headed. I'd say, at this point, I'm pretty good. I mean, I'm never comfortable enough that I wouldn't practice the tunes or anything; I just mean the music is always evolving and ever-changing, so I like to stay current and stay ahead of the curve. I'm always shedding.

AW: A lot of people get too comfortable

and don't practice as much as they probably should.

VJW: Yeah, I don't understand that. I still have to be really cognizant and very aware of any last-minute changes to things we're doing differently, but I do feel comfortable in the gig.

AW: So, how did this gig come about? Did you audition?

VJW: I sent in a video of myself playing "Diva" and "Crazy in Love" plus some other songs.

AW: Had you ever done an audition that way before, or auditions in general?

VJW: I've done several of the video-style auditions before, and some of those were for public contests. Like with my girl band, Heaven Bound, we would enter our video and then people would vote. So, I'm no stranger to that world.

AW: Do you have any audition tips for drummers that are coming up?

VJW: One: have the music fully learned and play it as if you were going to be performing it on stage with the artist. Two: let your personality shine through. Play with energy and stage presence. Music is entertainment, so you need to have a cool look, a cool vibe, and be a total package. Basically, give the artist a clear picture of what it would be like to have you on stage with them.

AW: I think that if you have that kind of confidence in the material, the people playing with you can feel it.

VJW: I agree 100%!

AW: Like me, and countless others, I'm sure you got your first drum kit on Christmas, right?

VJW: Yeah, I got a five-piece TKO drum kit

when I was ten years old.

AW: Did you expect it or were you surprised?

VJW: I'm the youngest in my family and when I would ask for something, I would usually get it. (Laughs). I had mentioned it to my parents, but I didn't know if it would actually happen. I wasn't allowed in the basement for a few days before Christmas, so that morning I woke up super early and went down there and was just ridiculously excited! I was so happy; just overjoyed! I played drums that whole day.

AW: I heard that you used to practice something like six-to-eight hours a day.

VJW: That was my regimen for a long time. I was playing music and I had other jobs too. At one point, I was working at GEICO and was also at a record store. My thing was that until I could do music full-time, I wanted to have a job so I could be comfortable. I worked at Guitar Center too, for a while. I had a later shift, so I would get my six hours in before work. I was just in that mindset; whatever I needed to do to get my practice time.

AW: Do you have a practice routine these days?

VJW: I try to get in at least two hours a day. Now, I'm playing with so many different artists here in LA that I'm constantly learning new music. There's a lot of "ear shedding" going on. I'm making notes on arrangements and listening to the songs, then I'll sit at the kit and work out patterns and things.

AW: What about lessons? Did you have a formal drumming education?

VJW: I was in band at school, so that helped with rudiments and reading. In high school I had a teacher named Gabe Wilson and we'd get together on Saturdays and work through charts and different grooves. In college I studied in Jazz band, so it all worked out. I think the theory and reading really did help. At that time, I was playing in church with my band, Heaven Bound, so I was developing both playing by ear and learning to read.

AW: I know you are playing to a lot of tracks with Beyoncé. Was that an easy transition for you?

VJW: Well, when I first started playing and practicing I was always playing along with CDs and MP3s. Then, with the band at church, I was already programming click tracks and adding synths and stuff. That was actually good preparation for the future gigs. For the worship service I would bring the Roland VS or have a laptop and have the praise singers singing along with the tracks that were in my ears, so by the time I got this gig with Beyoncé I was pretty comfortable with all of that.

AW: What do you have in your live mix?

VJW: We all use in-ears, so the loudest thing in my mix is the click. Next is the backing tracks, then the percussion and drum tracks. I like to have bass, keys, and the lead vocal in there somewhere, just sitting perfectly. I have a slate that counts us in, but the click is definitely the loudest.

AW: What would you say is your favorite part of the show? Is there anything you really look forward to?

VJW: The *On the Run* tour had Tony Royster and I playing with Jay-Z and B, and we'd perform "Holy Grail" together. It's a really dope song to begin with and the way B would sing the chorus was just magical. I guess that had to be my favorite part. On the *Mrs. Carter* tour, my favorite part was probably playing the song "Diva" because I got a drum solo.

AW: Do you stay true to the records when you play live?

VJW: Oh man, very true. I didn't realize the importance in that until like 2009. When I went into production myself, I would produce a song for a band and then I'd go see them live. I would listen for every little thing. I could really relate that to my playing, and really understood the importance, not only to the artist, but to the producer. So, when I'm playing a record live I want people to be able to recognize the song. If I'm improvising, that might not translate. In a live setting it's best to play them exactly how they are

on the recording, but try adding a little life to it. Stay true to the pattern, but add a little flair.

AW: You mentioned producing. Are you doing much songwriting for yourself or mostly working with other artists?

VJW: I'm doing a bit of both. I just co-produced an album for B. Slade called *My September Reissue*. I also did the drum programming for that. I'm also the Musical Director for a local LA artist and we'll play shows. I'm programming and producing her, and I'll also do some live arranging.

AW: When you're writing, what's your instrument of choice?

VJW: Usually I'll start a record on keyboards. Then, once I've established my chords and the lead lines, I'll work on a bass line, or have my sister, Vidie, add a bass line since she's a rad bass player! Then, I'll record or program the drums. That part comes easiest to me, so I just leave it for last.

AW: You said, "Rad." (Laughs). So, you're at the top of the game right now. Do you have any other goals as a drummer? Are there other things you want to accomplish?

VJW: It really was my dream to play with Beyoncé, so part of it has been realized, but I do want to go on and explore other things. I have a project called Orange Moon and have an EP available on iTunes. I wrote, produced, and performed the whole thing and tonight I'm actually doing vocals on the first song for my new EP that'll come out in a couple of months.

AW: Wait! Vocals?

VJW: That's a new journey for me; recording and performing vocals live. I'd also like to get more placements as a writer and a producer and, eventually, I'd like to do some artist development. I think after I've experienced more as a drummer, a producer, and a writer, I'll be able to give back some of that to younger people. They can benefit from what I've learned and I can help establish their artistry. **dw**

Big Gigs

with **Jonathan Tuitt**
by Atom Willard

At twenty-five years old, Jonathan Tuitt has already done so many things right. He's landed gigs with a ton of UK and U.S. touring artists, including Timothy Bloom, Katy B, and Jessie J among others. Most notably, he's been Emeli Sandé's go-to drummer for the past four years. Along with extensive touring, he finds himself trying to maintain a balance between home life, road life, and the rigors of being a travelling musician. I enjoyed the opportunity to talk shop with one of UK drumming's rising stars.



Atom Willard: How long have you been playing with Emeli?

Jonathan Tuitt: I've been with her since July of 2011, so it's been just about four years.

AW: How did this gig come about?

JT: The Musical Director was a guy I knew. He had initially received the call, and then he reached out to me. It's been weird, I've really never had to audition for a tour, an artist, or anything. It's always just come about from people I know.

AW: Wow, that's pretty lucky. Most players have to go through at least some auditioning and cut their teeth before they start getting calls.

JT: The first gig I got was from another drummer named Josh McKenzie. He had to leave this one gig, so he said, "Just come out to a rehearsal." The next day he called me and said, "Okay, just go ahead and run

the soundcheck for me." Then he said, "Oh, I'm not going to make the show, just go ahead and run the show." Right into the deep end! From then on, I was on the tour. Since then, it's kind of been like that, from tour-to-tour.

AW: What a good friend.

JT: I kind of see him like a mentor, really. I had told him once, "I'm looking for a gig, mate" and he said, "Ok Jon, I'll look after you." Even now, he still helps me keep stuff going.

AW: It's great to have someone you admire that you can turn to for career help.

JT: Yeah, for sure. He's been touring professionally since he was about fifteen and he's about twenty-eight now, so he's really doing well. He's probably one of the most renowned UK drummers, especially from the Gospel scene. Because of his

help, I've been on the road since I was eighteen. I'm pretty fortunate in that respect.

AW: I'm glad to hear you acknowledge that you appreciate the opportunities you've been given. A lot of guys just think, "Yeah, this is what I deserve."

JT: I'll see these guys playing in a cafe or Jazz bar, and their talent is crazy but they just can't get on a gig, so it's always felt like it's been a privilege for me. I'm blessed. Even if I were to never tour again, the amount that I've experienced already makes me feel pretty lucky.

AW: So, what would you say is the correct ratio between talent or playing ability and social skills?

JT: People skills will always overshadow talent, because once you go on a tour and you're in a bus and in hotels, it's more about how it is to hang with someone. Plus, so

much about this business is who you know. If people like you, they're going to want to help you out. So, whenever I'm doing clinics, I'll explain that it's not just who you know, but the kind of person you are to be around.

AW: Have you spent much time in the States?

JT: We were there in 2013 and the first part of 2014 for about six months, on and off. She had a good little run in America, between New York, Chicago, and Miami, but we were sort of based out of LA.

AW: Had you toured in the States before that?

JT: No, Em was the first one to bring me stateside. I had been through Europe and to Australia with other artists, but she was the first one to bring me out there, so she broke through that barrier for me. All through 2012-14 we were in America almost once a month, sometimes just for one day. Once we flew to Washington, and we were only there for like eight hours to do the show in front of the Capitol Building.

AW: Speaking of being on the road, I know you recently got married. How hard is it finding the balance with her and being away from home so much?

JT: It's come pretty naturally. My wife and I had met when I was touring, so she had become used to that idea a bit. It's just one of those things where I've had to put in the work. I'll surprise her while I'm away; do something to show I'm still thinking of her. Emeli is quite a family-orientated person and she's really great about having the girlfriends out on the road, so she'll come out now and then. Travelling is not an easy thing. Not every lady really understands this, and it's a hard thing to expect them to understand.

AW: What was your first live drumming experience?

JT: My first live drumming experience was playing for a Gospel choir by the name of Kainé Gospel Choir in Norway. I was fifteen. Before that, I was just playing in church and school.

AW: How do you decide what to play, or not to play, for the song?

JT: I started out around an older crowd of drummers and they always said, "Jon, the fancy stuff is good, the flashy chops are good, but you've got to play the song. The song pays the bills. You're not there for Jonathan, you're there for the song." It was a big change for me, because sometimes you want to play on a song, but you've got to have that discipline, and that was the hardest thing. People want to hear the record, and I think a lot of younger drummers forget that, or don't understand it. It's about backing up the artist. When I get off the road and I'm back in church, that's my time to play my heart out, and that's what keeps me going.

AW: I even try to go back and listen to the records. Whether I've recorded them or not, I make sure that the song hasn't evolved too much from the original version because that's the version the audience has fallen in love with.

JT: Exactly. You'll see people in the audience air drumming, and they're playing what they've heard on the record. It's what they expect to hear. If you play something different it might sound good to the few musicians in the crowd, but for all of the other people it's just too far out for them. You've got to find a balance; put your own sound on it, but not too much.

AW: What's one of your favorite parts of the show? Is there a favorite song to play?

JT: There are two songs, actually. One song is called "Wonder" and it's got this kind of a tribal sound and feel. The intro has some tribal afro beats and I've got a bit of a solo at the beginning of that one. We've even got some live percussion, and we both literally get to play out. Then there's another called "My Kind of Love." That one is really drum-heavy. It's got some Rock fills with emphasized phrases and that sort of thing.

AW: That one seems pretty cinematic.

JT: It's one of those songs that changes the whole set. It can really set us on the track

to be full-steam until the end of the show, and Emeli loves it too.

AW: Do you have a rigid practice schedule when you're off the road?

JT: I don't have a practice regimen, really. Normally, I'll just work on some rudiments or patterns on a pad when I have free time.

AW: Do you have any drumming goals that you still want to accomplish?

JT: I want to be able to play on more records, and play on my own records with my own music. I'd also like to go into Africa to play some shows. When I hear clips of certain young players there, guys that don't have big drum kits, some of their rhythms are just out of this world. That's something I definitely want to go and experience. I want to start exploring more music from Senegal and Cameroon.

AW: So, you write your own music as well? What other instruments do you play?

JT: I play bass and a bit of keyboard, but I've been trying to get more involved as a writer. I've been inspired by some of the musicians around me to create music that I want to hear, that I love. I'm not one of those guys who wants to be famous or be the front person, but I want to do my thing.

AW: Anything you want to say to young players coming up?

JT: Yeah, find that balance and always be true to the music. Something I wish I'd done when I was younger is to learn to read music. I find that a lot of the Gospel cats come from a place where they are exposed to a lot of high-quality music early on, but that they lose some of the fundamentals like rudiments and reading. As you get a bit older, you start to realize these are things you can use. Also, listen to all kinds of music. There's no point in just being the best R&B drummer, or Gospel drummer; it just puts you into a category. Whereas, being open to other types of playing styles can open horizons. You never know when your last gig is going to be, so just enjoy it. **dw**

Photo Credit: Matt Gervason



JOSE PASILLAS

Don't SWEAT

THE Technique

BY ATOM WILLARD

Ask anyone who has been in a band for more than twenty years and they will inevitably have a suitcase full of stories about their music biz ups, downs, and everything in-between. They'll probably talk about their waning interest in their craft, the songs they've played countless times, and the rigors of the road. This is not the case with Incubus mainstay, Jose Pasillas. He and his long-time bandmates have played high school parties, sold millions of records, and continue to push forward as a family unit. We recently waxed poetic about art, motorcycles, music, and cycling. Then we got heady, as we gabbed about life's challenges and how those experiences can shape our perceptions and, ultimately, our creative sensibilities.

Atom Willard: So, you started playing drums in high school?

Jose Pasillas: Yeah, I actually got my first drum kit when I was fifteen and just about to go into the 10th grade. I had been playing percussion at school since the 8th grade but I had always wanted to play the drums. I always felt in-tune with the drums and when I'd listen to songs I could decipher the snare and kick parts before I ever sat at a drum set. I could kind of play because I had been air drumming a lot.

AW: C'mon, no way! That's crazy!

JP: Yeah, so the first time I was at a drum kit I could play regular beats and I remember playing "Funky Cold Medina" by Ton Loc. That was the hot song back in the day and I remember doing that fill (beat-boxes the fill) right off the bat and then just sitting there like, "That was awesome!" (Laughs).

AW: You were like, "I can play drums!"

JP: Totally! And it was funny because I hadn't bought my first cassettes until about the 6th grade; and they were a Ramones record and a Led Zeppelin record.

AW: You're just saying that because it looks cool!

JP: No, they were! I had no idea how cool it was at the time, but my friend's older sister listened to Led Zeppelin and it was awesome! I was so into it; she was a rebel bad-ass. I remember sitting in front of a mirror and pretending that I was playing the drums along with that solo.

AW: Wow, what a trip. So you were drawn to the idea of drumming early on.

JP: Yeah, even before I realized it myself, really. Once, I found an old home movie and "Purple Rain" was playing in the background, and I was air drumming away. I was eight or nine years old and it really looks like I know what I'm doing! By the 7th grade I was saying, "I kind of want to play the drums" but I didn't want to be in the school band because I thought it was for nerds. In the 8th grade, I finally joined the school band until I could get my own drums. I played the toms, the bass drum, and vibraphone. Then I saw the older kids in snare ensemble; they'd go out and compete. They actually pulled me out of the band to replace their cymbal player. So I got to travel and go to these competitions, and ever since then I have loved marching; all the snares playing together and all the tricks. I really regret not going on and learning more of that stuff.

AW: So, no marching band in high school?

JP: No, that was right around the time that I was starting to get into skateboarding really heavily, and that's all I would do. I would play on my friend's drum kit, dream about the drums, and just skateboard

ARTISTFEATURE ||| JOSE PASILLAS

all the time. I didn't play soccer, I didn't take drum lessons like my parents wanted me to, I only wanted to skate and play my friend's drum kit.

AW: It seems like you connected the dots pretty well. What else helped motivate you to put sticks in your hands?

JP: Okay, so when I was growing up, Steven Adler was my neighbor.

AW: What?!

JP: I was in the 6th grade when he moved in. He would play drums in the middle of the night and our neighborhood was just livid, but I remember sitting up thinking it was f**king awesome! Everyone was calling the cops, but I was just listening and unconsciously dissecting it.

AW: Hang on! Were you a Guns N' Roses fan or were you introduced to them when he moved in next door?

JP: Sort of. *Appetite for Destruction* had just come out. He had been living there for about a year, then that record came out and he was just gone. All of the girls at my school loved G N' R and I was into them too. It was totally new to me, but it was awesome that the drummer lived next door! Then, when he got kicked out, he was home a lot. I had just inherited my guitar player's stepdad's old CB700 drum kit and I played it every day. He must have heard me playing at some point. I would end up next door and ask him if I could see his drum kit. He had this huge double-kick White Oyster DW set and I would just sit down behind it. I wouldn't even play it; I would just stare at it for about five minutes and I'd be like, "Okay cool, thanks man."

AW: He's just like, "Whatever, kid."

JP: Totally. He always said, "Yeah man, go ahead!" So, one day he comes over to my house super early on a weekend morning when we were all eating breakfast. There's this knock on the door and my mom comes back and says, "Um, Steven's at the front door." I'm like, "Really?" He's standing there in this silk robe that was way too short, his hair is all teased-out and f**ked up, and he said, "Hey man, can I play your drums?" And before I could answer, he was just in the house. He walks into my house, goes right by my parents, doesn't say, "Hi"

or anything, heads right to my room and sits down at my old busted-up kit that had no stool, it just had a kitchen chair. He looks up at me and my parents and says, "Mr. Brownstone" and just starts smashing the drums, not even making contact with the heads. Half of the time, he was just thrashing for like 20-to-30 seconds, and then he just stood up and left. He didn't even say, "Goodbye" or anything.

AW: I would have completely lost it.

JP: Well, yeah! I was like, "That was one of the coolest things that has ever happened to me!"

AW: So crazy.

JP: But it gets better! A few days later, he knocks on my door again and brings me an old drum throne. He said, "You shouldn't be sitting on that chair." He gave me this totally rad DW drum throne and it was my first cherished possession. Around this time we had already been playing parties. I had that throne for at least a few years; it was easily the best part of my drum kit. So, we were playing a show in San Diego and we were the first of twenty bands, or whatever. Whoever was loading our gear out had put it on top of this big speaker. When we got home I was like, "Where is my throne?!" and our bass player said, "I knew you weren't going to find it, they put it up on a speaker. Why didn't you grab it?" I was devastated. Years later, Steven was pretty messed up and his mom had come to take care of him. His mom came over and said, "I know Steven gave you a drum stool and I'm going to need that back." I was like, "I'd love to give it to you, but it's gone; it got lost at a show." She said, "That's not okay. Seriously, I'm going to need that back." Then she just left.

AW: Too funny. Well, I guess there couldn't have been more signs that said you should be a drummer.

JP: When Mike gave me that old kit, I played it constantly. I mean, I was respectful to my parents and never played too early or late. And they were great; they never once told me to stop the racket.

AW: Did they ask if you wanted to take lessons?

JP: Sort of. After a year, I asked for lessons.

AW: Was Incubus already playing shows at that point?

JP: We were going into 10th grade and Mike and our bass player and I had been playing for a few months. We were friends with Brandon. I had known him since we were kids, and he was like, "Hey, do you mind if I come over to your practice and try to sing?" We agreed to it because up until



PHOTO CREDIT: SELFIE

then, we had just been playing Metallica and Megadeth covers. I was never really into that stuff, I liked Punk and Alternative. We had played a couple of parties and then, a few months later, Brandon joined. After that, we started writing original music and playing real shows. We didn't know what we were doing; we just thought it was fun.

AW: I did the exact same thing, but just wasn't able to stay in the same band my entire life! (Laughs).

JP: I know, dude. It's a rare occurrence for sure. Twenty-five years, you know.

AW: Which sounds like a really long time but, really, you were just a kid when you started.

JP: Yeah, we were fifteen years old and writing Incubus songs. Now we're pushing forty and we're still doing the same thing.

AW: Drums were your life back then. Do you still have some of those feelings today?

JP: I do. I mean, it's a blessing and a curse; all I do is think about drums. I don't

play any other instruments, which is sad. After all this time I can only play a handful of chords on a guitar and that's it. But I can't help it, no matter what kind of music I'm listening to, all I can do is focus on the drums. It's still exciting for me, I still get that child-like feeling; it's just never gone away. Even playing shows, the adrenaline and excitement, it's like nothing else.

AW: What are your favorite aspects of what we do as drummers? Is it recording, the live shows, or a bit of everything?

JP: My favorite part is definitely playing shows, traveling to crazy places, and playing the drums for people. Writing can be difficult. Sometimes the chemistry is there and it can be really fun, but it can also become arduous at times.

AW: When it works, it's great, but if it's not working, then it's a drag.

JP: Exactly. But even if it's 50 % of the time, it's hard, and pretty strenuous. And my part seems to get the least attention these days. We'll be banging out a song for a few hours and if it's good we'll just track it before I'm even that comfortable with playing it. That's only been the case on the last couple records. Before that, we would write 12-13 songs and just play them over and over until we knew them up-and-down, left-and-right, then we could go in and track them really quick, like in a couple of weeks. That was the way to get everyone's best performance. This new way has pushed me to be creative quickly. I've become pretty good at it, but it's not my favorite method. As soon as we go on the road and start playing the songs more, they take on a life of their own. So, I've always viewed the recording process and the live shows to be two completely different things. When we're playing live, I can change my parts to what I feel like they should have been on the recordings.

AW: We both share a love of motorcycles and things with two wheels. Do you see any parallels between riding motorbikes and playing the drums?

JP: You know, I think they are both art forms and an extension of myself. I don't know if I could say that about a more traditional 9-5 job. The freedom of playing the drums and the freedom of riding a motorcycle or bicycle in the canyons... there are definitely ties to both. I'm a bit of an adrenaline junky, too. So playing shows and dragging your knee around the corners at the track are both huge sources of adrenaline. Climbing 4000 feet on your bicycle is another, more suffering way to achieve it, but it's all the same.

AW: You've played so many shows in front of thousands of people, where does the adrenaline come in at this point? Isn't it all too familiar? Are you going for fills, or coming up with stuff at the last second?

JP: I'll do that in a couple of the extended songs where we stretch out and jam, but really getting through any song comfortably is a challenge. (Laughs).

AW: You've got to be joking. I would

never think that watching you play!

JP: Dude, totally. I'll play what I think is the worst show ever and everyone else can't tell. When we film stuff, I can remember points where I was definitely not having a good time, but it looks like I'm having fun. The internal feeling is so different. So, that's always been the challenge for me, to feel good after a song and feel like I've played really well.

AW: Can you separate the technical stuff from the emotional?

JP: I used to get really hung up on that, like messing up a fill, or whatever, but everyone is messing up all the time; we're not computers. It took a long time for me to be at ease with that. I used to watch Neil Peart years ago, and he's a machine, right? One time I saw him actually drop a stick and I was so stoked! (Laughs). I didn't think he was human before that. In a weird way, it made me feel a little better. I'm more at ease now than I've ever been. I don't get messed up before a show to calm the nerves. That's the hardest thing, having all this nervous energy right before a show. It can either make you play really well, or it can mess everything up. Over the past two years I've been really trying to challenge myself to make it work for me in a positive way; I'm taking it on as more of a challenge. Then, if I do make a mistake, I try not to let it mess up the rest of my show. It also depends on where we are in a tour. If we've been playing for a year, I always feel like I can control that stuff more and enjoy it.

AW: For me, being at the track requires such a high level of concentration; I get totally lost out there. I prefer no distractions whatsoever. It's all about being in the moment, completely immersed in it. Do you find your mind wandering during a show, or is it more like riding where you are super focused?

JP: It really depends on where I'm at, like riding on a new track. For a while, I'm just learning when to brake, when the turn-in point is, and after twenty-five laps I'm like, "Okay, this is way more comfortable." A tour is the same way; the second half is easier. During the first few months of shows I'm really thinking about the parts and what I'm playing. When I start really thinking about what I'm doing, that's when

I f**k up. I need to get past that hurdle of learning the new set, which can be 30-40 songs in the rehearsals, before it becomes second-nature and I can relax.

AW: Do you guys tend to keep the same set for an entire tour, or do you mix it up?

JP: We try to mix it up. We have about a twenty-two song skeleton that we follow, but there are usually five or six spots that we rotate. That's mostly controlled by Brandon, depending on how his voice is feeling. He has to pace himself a certain way and the direction that the set flows has a lot to do with that. We have a lot of songs that people are expecting to hear, so writing a set is actually one of the most difficult things for us. We need to play specific things, but there are so many songs to choose from that it ends up taking us a few weeks to figure out what is and isn't working. There can be things that we all think are awesome but the crowd doesn't react to them, so we'll change them up.

AW: Do you get any weird vibes from the other band members for riding motorcycles or going to the track?

JP: No, not really; a few of us commute on bikes. Ben (Kenney) and (DJ) Kil have both been riding for a long time. It's always in the back of our minds, for sure. I mean it is a precarious mode of transportation, especially when we're writing a record. I've crashed my bike on freeways, canyons, and on the track and that has made me a better rider. But when there's a tour coming up and there's a lot of money and people involved, I'll be a bit more conscious of that and I'll be a little more cautious. But I love riding, it's what I do. If I mellow out on the motorcycle, I'll still go ride my road bike on Mulholland Highway five days a week.

AW: That is equally as sketchy!

JP: It might even be worse because the cars are closer and I'm basically wearing no protection. So I have to draw that line about what's good for me in my life. If I get hit, I get hit; I'll deal with it. But the love that I have for cycling and the peace I get from it means I'm going to keep doing it.

AW: Well, it's an escape right? It's a way to get out of your head, or get deeper into**your head...however you want to look at it.**

JP: A lot of my 'therapy' happens while cycling. I spend hours thinking about stuff. There's nothing I've found that's better for my mood and happiness. When I come back from a ride, I'm just good. I'm also constantly thinking about either art pieces, drum parts, or other life issues, but especially on the creative side. I think that cycling and riding motorcycles falls under the same creative umbrella.

AW: Have you always been into art and painting?

JP: I've been drawing since I was a little kid; it's something I've always loved. Painting and working on bigger pieces has been a more recent endeavor, like within the last 8-10 years. If I wasn't in music, I would be in art somewhere, like a graphic artist or designer. Kind of like with skateboarding. I was getting really good and I had it in my mind that I was going to become a pro. That's another creative art form, but as I started playing the drums more, the skateboarding became less important.

AW: How important is it to have another creative outlet besides drumming? Do you think it helps your music 'brain' to have different avenues?

JP: It probably does in a subconscious kind of way. I mean, whenever I'm doing something creative there's music on in the background. Actually, there's always music on. That's how I grew up, really. There was always music on at home growing up; it just made life better. If I had to mow the lawn, I hated it, but if I had a Walkman, it was cool.

AW: Do you have any defined goals with your drumming?

JP: For sure, I always want to become a better drummer. That's always what every musician wants, right?

AW: Well yeah, but everyone may have a different idea of what 'better' means. How would you define it?

JP: It would mean being able to sit down at the drum kit and just play what I'm thinking. After we've had a break, I'll sit at the drums and have all these fills and ideas in my head but I just can't translate them to the kit. After I get back into playing more regularly, I feel like I can try





PHOTO CREDIT: JULIAN SCHRÄTTER

stuff and it just works out. If it could be more immediate, that would be a goal.

AW: How about with art?

JP: For years I've been asked to share and sell my art, and there's a part of me that really wants to do that. It's just a matter of putting all the pieces together at once to do it. I've also thought about designing a line of T-shirts. I've delved into making canvases with my photography and want to evolve that into incorporating my photos with painting on canvas. I know those are things I'll do in the near future, I've just been working it all out.

AW: Switching it up, you have to have one the weirdest set-ups ever. The strangest thing is, you look completely at home behind it. You seem to have total ease getting around the kit; your

economy of movement is so smooth. But when I sat at your kit, I felt like I was on Mars! I've also read that you're not so picky about how your drums are set up. Exactly how did your kit evolve, and how can you seemingly adapt to it so easily?

JP: I've been playing for twenty-five years, and the kit constantly evolved for the first ten years. When I was starting out I would change my kit to be like my favorite drummers, just to try it out. From there I figured out what did and didn't work. I play with my heels up, so I need to have a good center of gravity. That means I have to sit really low. The only thing I knew I didn't want were toms that were facing me! (Laughs). I always hated the way that looked. Actually, one of the things that turned me off to Metal music was those giant power toms facing the drummer. Aesthetically, there was something wrong

with that, in my mind. I was young but I knew that wasn't what I wanted, and when I discovered the rim shot, I applied it to everything. I would never hit the middle of the toms or anything, it was all rim shots. I actually took a lesson from Bernie Driesel when we were doing our first record. He was watching me play and said, "Wow that's really weird, I've never seen anyone do that." I was like, "Oh really? That's just what I do." So, it all just kept evolving. I used to have three rack toms and as I started playing a little harder, I took one tom away and moved things a little lower. It was all very gradual. When I went a bit deeper with my snare drum, it made me sit a little higher. I started messing with tilting it forward, like Jazz guys, and then I actually began cutting my snare stands lower.

AW: The weirdest thing is that you can sit down at a traditional set-up and play fine!

JP: I would always be annoyed with someone who was a 'shredder' on drums, guitar, bass, or whatever. They're like, "Oh, it's not my kit so I can't play it." Drum sets are weird because there are so many pieces, but I thought really early on that it would be cool if I could sit down at any drum kit and make it sound rad. We've done our last few records with Brendan O'Brien and he always has these drum kits that sound really good. So, I said, "If you can make it sound great, I'll play it." One time I tried to adjust one of those kits to be more like mine, and I couldn't get comfortable so I just decided to not even try. I just sit down and play how the tech sets them up. In the studio I'm playing a DW Classics kit with a big 22" kick and full-size toms. There's no way I'm going to get that set-up remotely close to my own kit, so I just leave it. It helps me to overcome those challenges and make it work. I recently got onstage with Prashant Aswani, who I have been working with. We did an instrumental record called Visions that he produced and engineered. I went up and played a song with his band, and I was glad I didn't have to move the kit around. I just got up there and said, "Let's go!" Those are the kinds of challenges I welcome. I always want to work through it and overcome any fear that I may have. And I'm always glad that I did. **dw**



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Exercise 2.1

Try using this exercise for double-time drills.
The click will become beats 1 and 3.



Exercise 2.2

This example can be used for playing Jazz and Latin styles.



Exercise 2.3

This example can also be used for playing Jazz and Latin styles.



Exercise 2.4

The click is on the E's and the Duh's of the beat.
If you're with the click, you've turned the beat around.



Exercise 2.5

The middle triplet is the most difficult to feel.
On the play along, you'll sometimes hear the downbeat.



Exercise 2.6

The last beat of the triplet is much easier to feel.
Try playing different shuffle feels. You'll have fun with this one.



Playing the middle of the beat: We often hear phrases like 'play on top of the beat' or 'lay back'. What does all of this actually mean? I'd like to offer a few suggestions on how to move the time around. Often, in the studio or live gigs, I have to judge how, why, and when to change the feel. Here are some reasons to think about why the feel may, or may not, need to change:

- 1) What's the mood of the song?
- 2) What's the key of the song (Major or Minor)?
- 3) What are the composer's thoughts about the song?

We can go on and on about the reasons you'd change the feel in a song, so let's get started as to how to make the moods change. Play a simple drum pattern while using the play along as a guide. The cross-stick is the key in all of these exercises; it is placed directly in the middle of the beat.

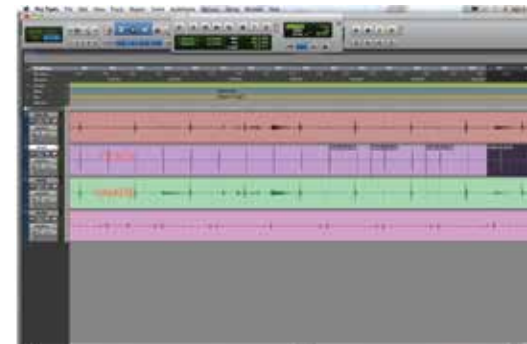


Exercise 5.1

Notice how the snare drum is right down the middle; it's lined-up perfectly with the click. After many years of trials, I've learned that your body position can play a significant part in determining where the time is felt. For example, try sitting up straight, this will help you play the middle of the beat.

Exercise 5.2

Now, notice how the snare drum in this example is slightly behind the click. This is called playing 'behind the beat'. Playing behind the beat gives the listener a feeling of calmness or a feeling of being cool. I often hear some strange suggestions given to drummers about how to play this way. Things like playing flams between the hi-hat and snare drum. Just imagine what that would sound like, especially while recording with \$1000 microphones that magnify your slightest move. Again, let's use the body-positioning tool. Try leaning back slightly while hitting the snare. This may take some getting used to, but it really works.



Exercise 5.3

Notice the snare drum in this shot; it comes slightly before the click. This is called playing 'on top of the beat'. Again, let's try the body-positioning tool. Try leaning forward slightly; it will help you play on top of the beat. This will take some time to get used to, but it works.

Drum Fills and Playing the Space:

Exercise 1.1

When playing a one beat drum fill, think simple.



Exercise 1.2

When playing a two beat drum fill, think simple.



Exercise 1.3

When playing a one measure or a one bar beat drum fill, think simple.



Exercise 2.1

When playing a one beat drum fill, think simple.



Fred Dinkins has been playing professionally for over thirty years and is one of the top drum instructors at P.I.T./Musician's Institute in Hollywood, California. He has performed with such notable acts as Al Green, Peaches & Herb, Paul Jackson, Jr., Heat Wave, Deneice Williams, and countless others. In addition to being a sought-after instructor, session artist, and touring musician, Fred is also the author of the book, *It's About Time*.
For more information on Fred Dinkins, visit: www.freddinkins.com.



20 QUESTIONS: THOMAS PRIDGEN

EDGE: If you could work with any bass player, who would it be?

Thomas Pridgen: I would love to work with Pino Palladino or Anthony Jackson. They're gods.

EDGE: What is the best facet of being a clinician?

TP: My favorite aspect of doing clinics is being able to talk to people one-on-one. Sometimes the questions they ask will spark things in me that make me play better and/or make me a better musician.

EDGE: Do you still get nervous before taking the stage?

TP: I don't get nervous unless I don't know the music well. Sometimes I get thrown into situations and I won't get a good chance to learn the music correctly beforehand.

EDGE: What type of shell is your workhorse snare made of: wood, metal, acrylic?

TP: I usually play the DW metal drums. I love the Stainless Steel 6.5x14" snare! It's definitely the most multi-purpose metal drum I have.

EDGE: Have you ever thought of an invention or upgrade for the drum kit?

TP: All the time! I think of so many different drum gadgets, ideas, and ways to improve a kit...I'll tell people my ideas and sometimes they fall on deaf ears, but sometimes they don't.

EDGE: How far can you throw a bass drum?

TP: I haven't thrown a drum in a while, but I'm sure I could shoot a free throw with a bass drum.

EDGE: What is the most difficult song that you've played live?

TP: Difficult?? I don't know. I don't see difficulties, I see challenges and I can't really name many that pop up in my mind.

EDGE: Is playing the drums your primary form of exercise?

TP: Yes. I play drums a lot. I also work out sometimes, just to help stay in shape.

EDGE: Which drummers have inspired you recently?

TP: Lately, I've been watching Shariq Tucker, Mike Mitchell, and Maison Guidry. I think they'll be the next big things in drumming. They have a bunch of ideas and great techniques, but they also have a lot of love for tradition and you can really hear that in their playing.



20 QUESTIONS ||| THOMAS PRIDGEN

EDGE: How important is muscle memory to your style of playing?

TP: I think it's super important because I always have to learn so much music. It's difficult having so many songs from different artists in your head and using muscle memory definitely helps.

EDGE: Do you always use the same size drum sticks, or do they vary for different playing situations?

TP: I have a signature model with Promark that is my primary stick, but I will play smaller sticks in small clubs in order to control the dynamics a little bit more.

EDGE: Do you use much technology to help with your drumming? Websites, apps, GoPro cameras...?

TP: I don't feel like I'm using technology to improve my drumming, but I do use it to help showcase what I'm doing. Everyone is so caught up in filming and technology these days!

EDGE: What city do you look forward to visiting

when you're on tour?

TP: Well, we're currently playing eight shows all over Russia and one show in Baku. I'm very curious about those areas.

EDGE: How did the recording of the Sopko Laswell Pridgen album differ from tracking previous records that you've played on?

TP: When we recorded that album, we just jammed. We didn't rehearse or plan anything! That's what made it such a different experience.

EDGE: Do you have a favorite Punk drummer?

TP: Brooks Wackerman and Earl Hudson.

EDGE: Was winning a Grammy a big surprise for you or was it one of your career goals?

TP: It was never a personal goal of mine and I was surprised when we (The Mars Volta) were nominated. But, when I saw our nomination I just knew that we'd win it.

EDGE: How often do you need to change your drum heads?

TP: When I'm on tour I'll change snare heads after every show because breaking heads in the middle of a show can be horrible on stage. My tom and kick heads get changed every other week. But when I'm at home I'll keep the heads on forever!

EDGE: Do you prefer the spring tension on your pedals to be tight or loose?

TP: I actually play my pedals straight out of the box. I don't really adjust them much.

EDGE: If you played guitar in a band, what type of music would you play?

TP: Rock and Blues.

EDGE: What sort of impact did attending Berklee have on your life as a musician?

TP: I met people there that I'll never be able to replace...people that I call my brothers and sisters, even beyond music. I have other reasons that Berklee was good for me, but networking and meeting the important people that I met there go beyond anything else. **dw**

Heir

Daniel de los Reyes

Manos

and Walfredo Reyes, Jr.

by Brad Ranola

The De Los Reyes family has some seriously deep musical roots dating back several generations. Working percussionists to the core, these two brothers share a history in music, but have created their own stories as to how they arrived. Younger brother, Daniel de los Reyes, resides in Atlanta while Walfredo Reyes, Jr. lives in LA. We were able to meet up, in a short window between their various projects, and talk about family, career, and music.

Brad Ranola: Let's start at the beginning, guys. It's no secret that your dad, Walfredo de los Reyes, Sr., had an influence on you two becoming percussionists, but how far back do we really go?

Daniel De Los Reyes: Just so you know, my brother and I are third generation musicians from the De Los Reyes Family.

BR: Ok. Were they all percussionists?

Walfredo De Los Reyes, Jr: No, my grandfather, Walfredo, III played trumpet, his brother played trombone and his other brother, Emilio de Los Reyes also played trumpet. My great grandmother played piano and taught all the kids. They all came out musicians.

DDR: I don't know the exact reason my father opted to go in the direction of the drums, but I could take a stab at it. When they used to travel a lot, back-and-forth to New York from Havana, my

dad loved the movies in those days. He probably saw Gene Krupa. Gene was bigger than life and, you know, such an incredible character to watch. I think he probably had a big impact on my dad, on the drums. Maybe Miguelito [Valdés], as well. Miguelito was the lead singer in my grandfather's orchestra. My grandfather was one of the leaders and creators of the orchestra called Casino de la Playa. Miguelito was a good-looking guy, being the singer, and he also played the drums. He probably had a big impact.

WR: Yeah, when my dad lived in New York City, I think he was ten years old, or something like that. Of course, there was not only Latin [music], there was Jazz, Big Band, and many other styles of music. He used to talk a lot about Gene Krupa and his Big Band. So, he started studying with Henry Adler in New York City. By the time he was eighteen, he went back to

Cuba and he was a drum set player. That's when he mixed all the styles. You know, in Cuba and in Puerto Rico, it wasn't just Latin music that was performed. You have to remember, all the American artists went over there to do shows in the hotel showrooms. So, my dad had to play all of the American styles like Jazz, Foxtrot, Swing, etc. Then, when they had the Latin section, that's when he started mixing the drum set with the Latin style. Instead of playing exclusively different instruments, he brought them over to the drum set.

DDR: And, again, it's just a guess why my dad chose to do go in that direction with the drums, but I'm glad he did. I never asked him why. Obviously, we ended up taking the torch and following in his footsteps. By the way, he's still got plenty of energy and still kicking plenty of ass! But, you know, my grandfather was a great balladeer, a crooner. Miguelito was the

up-tempo guy with the huge voice and he was also the drummer. In those days, the drum set wasn't really incorporated into the orchestras or bands as it is today; it was beginning to evolve into that. My dad was obviously one of the people that pioneered that whole playing style, and he probably looked up to Miguelito.

BR: At this time, quite a few musicians were coming from Cuba and influencing American music. Do you think, because your family was playing music in Havana, this is what brought those musical opportunities and influences to your dad?

DDR: You're talking about Mantanzas in the 1950's, and even Havana was very rural. Not everyone was able to do what my dad was doing. So people that were playing in, say, the backstreets of Havana, they didn't just hop on a plane and travel back-and-forth to New York all the time. Now, you had a few that did. They were the incredible pioneers like Armando Peraza, Francisco Aguabella, Candido Camero, Julio Collazo, Carlos "Patato" Valdes, Oscar Valdes, Marcelino Valdes, Mongo Santamaría, and Chano Pozo, to name a few. Yes, those guys are very traditional, but they were also playing

the shows in Havana. So, they were also being, not commercialized, but being able to play that kind of music for the masses. They got opportunities to travel to New York, and it just kept growing from there.

BR: Your dad eventually moved to the US. This was in the 1960's?

DDR: Yes, I was born in 1962, so that would've been 1961. My dad moved to New York and then he was offered a show in in San Juan, Puerto Rico at the Tropicoro showroom. He went there with the piano player that used to be in Casino de la Playa. He got the showroom gig over there and asked my dad to be the drummer in the Orchestra band. So we moved to Puerto Rico in 1962. I was born and immediately, within months, we went straight to live in San Juan.

Just so you know, as a musician, you were always going where there was music or where there was work. And in those days, Cuba closed up, so Havana was no longer accessible. New York was an option, but New York wasn't paying that much, especially with a growing family. That job in Puerto Rico offered a decent paycheck and it was the hometown of

my mother. After ten years, what do you do? The job was ending, so my dad had to go someplace. It was either back to New York, Atlantic City, Los Angeles, or Las Vegas! Las Vegas was thriving in those days. Those were the days of Elvis Presley, Ann Margret, and Frank Sinatra, so my dad got the house gig there. That's why we ended up moving.

BR: In Las Vegas, Danny would've been about ten and Wally around sixteen. At this point, how far along were each of you in your playing? Had you started yet?

DDR: My brother, for sure. I was dabbling. Since we were little, we were always around drumming. All of my dad's friends, like Alan Dawson, Louie Bellson, Roy Burns, Alex Acuña, Rudy Regalado, Orestes Vilató, and many, many others were coming to the house to practice, study, talk, and hang out. Let's say your dad's a plumber and you go with him to his job. Well, my dad would take us to the showrooms. So, our playgrounds were the showrooms watching Paul Anka, Sammy Davis, and Debbie Reynolds. In those days, we were fortunate that you could make a living being a musician, and that's what he did. He wasn't an engineer

on the side; my dad was a drummer/percussionist. It would've been kind of tough for us not to be drummers and percussionists! (Laughs). I was always kind of dabbling. I would pick up the pad and play around with his musical instruments, but he always wanted to formally teach me. That was tough because of the father/son thing. It's not the easiest of things to grab your son and sit down at a pad and practice rudiments, and such. At least for me, it was a little tough. My dad put me on the piano and that was a tough one, too. Again, because it was very rigid. He chose a piano teacher that was very strict. So I was going in and out of music, but I was also into sports. It wasn't until I was sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen when I started to take it seriously and began practicing. That whole time, I was looking up to my brother, who was six years older. When you're young, six years older is a lot. I always remember him as being a drummer. He was always practicing, so when I was ten and he was sixteen, he was already woodshedding.

BR: Wally, when were you first introduced to the drums?

WR: Like Danny said, the instruments were all over the place. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a veterinarian. So, I had many animals. You don't realize, if you're the son of a doctor, you probably will absorb a lot of that. Walfredo number one, our great grandfather, was a dentist. So, my grandfather knew how to do a lot of medical things, but he became a musician. Similarly, in my case, I wanted to be a veterinarian, but with percussion being around, I started to play for fun. Then, it just grew on me. During Christmas, in Puerto Rico, we would play Christmas songs with the guiro, tambora, and maracas. When I was thirteen, and the Rock n' Roll thing hit big in Puerto Rico, I saw The Grass Roots, The Beatles, The Stones, all those groups on TV. I said, "Hey, I want to play drums!" The drums were around so much already in my house; it was the closest way to get into a band. If my dad were to play piano, we probably would've played piano; if he played guitar, we probably would've played guitar.

When I said, "I want drum lessons" I soon got the reading book, the practice pad, and the metronome. I went, "Is that what Ringo did? Are you sure that's what Ringo

and Charlie Watts did? They sat for six months with this pad?" He said, "Yeah!" So, I actually went for it. Around that time, I remember I actually set up the drum set for the first time and tried to figure out "Honky Tonk Woman". I thought the cowbell was played by the drummer, so I started playing with my right hand on the hi-hat and snare and my left hand on the cowbell. That was the most difficult thing! Of course, the cowbell was an overdub. Charlie Watts didn't play the cowbell.

By the time we moved to Vegas, I started with a formal teacher. Like Danny said, it was very difficult. Being a dad, I see it now with my daughter who is singing and playing percussion with George Benson. It's a difficult thing to teach [your kids]. My dad decided to put me in formal lessons and that was the best thing for me. In Las Vegas, we had a studio that was soundproofed with many percussion instruments. It was very different than in Puerto Rico with open windows in the house, with the neighbors hearing everything. From then on, I started training and studying and playing percussion with local bands and Rock bands that were my age. Everybody had access to our studio. Danny went in there, and Kamar was learning trumpet, but he picked up percussion too. So, we had a lot more jamming in Las Vegas and a lot more influence. When Alex Acuña moved to Vegas, he would set up his drum kit at our house because he had an apartment and couldn't practice at his place. To me, that was an incredible experience.

DDR: We always had some sort of jam situation going on. That was one thing that my dad always incorporated into his life. People would come over and they would end up playing. Then, they would include us. As my dad worked more and we had a little bit more money, the 'room' evolved and so did the jams. Every time someone would come through town, they would come over either to get together with my dad or to take a lesson with him. Of course, we'd be there too. So, we would go into the jam room for hours and hours. We got a good taste of what it was like to communicate with each other and with these incredible players. They would help us along! Like my brother said, Alex was a mainstay in our life when we were teenagers. Man, I really remember Louie

Bellson too. Louie Bellson was one of my best, best friends and to have him there, jamming at the house with Armando Peraza and Cachao...

BR: That's amazing! I know that both of you are highly-accomplished drum set players and percussionists. Would you say there was any point where your focus was on one or the other?

DDR: During that time, my brother got into it way more seriously than I did. My brother started to practice about eight-to-ten hours a day! He'd be in that studio; I'd come home and it would never be my turn to get the room. I started on the drum set, but probably just out of necessity. I ended up liking hitting something with my hand as opposed to hitting something with a stick. Maybe it was because my brother was in that room for so many hours, so I had to have access to something outside of the room. Who knows? I hate to even say drummer or percussionist. My brother is just as much of a percussionist. Really, we're all just rythmitists. My brother started working all over town. He was the drummer in the university band. He was definitely serious and going in that direction. He was a full-on musician.

BR: Which university did you attend, Wally?

WR: I went to UNLV. I actually started playing congas and percussion before the drum set in the Valley High School Jazz Band. My friend, Adam, was the Jazz Band drummer. He's an amazing drummer. I learned from the drummers as I was on stage playing percussion. Then, I joined every band I could in town. After that, I started working professionally with Debbie Reynolds and other artists on the Vegas Strip.

So, that's what I tell all of the students now. They say, "Well, I'm a Rock drummer, I'm a Metal drummer..." I say, "Are you kidding me?" Anything with the word music, you join. Otherwise, you're going to need a job outside of music. Do you want to work in the music business while you actually work to get to where you want to be in music, or do you want to work 'outside' of music? Which I tried! I bussed tables at the MGM hotel for a whole summer to buy my first car. It was the only job I ever had outside of music. That was a turning point. I saw people

older than me, who had kids, doing that! I thought, "This is not where I want to be." So, I really had to crank it up on my instrument and get better! After actually working as a busboy, I thought, "I can't put in only eight hours, that isn't enough." So, I lived on the drums. My mom used to say, "Okay, I have your dinner. Where do you want it, on the snare drum or on the floor tom?"

My dad is a 2nd degree Black Belt in Judo, so Danny and I had to practice Judo too. Kamar was saved! (Both laugh). My dad kind of forced us to do Judo at age five. There was a Judo quote on the refrigerator that said, "While you're not practicing, someone else is. When you two shall meet, guess who will win." So, every time I was not practicing my lessons, my reading, my rudiments, my drumming, my beats, my percussion...someone else would be. When there's going to be an audition, guess who will win? It's got to be me! I practice in my sleep. In the car, I practice listening. You can memorize tunes while you're driving and that's practicing your listening skills. When you're in the gym, you're bettering your physical self; you know what I'm saying? Everything points back to getting better at your instrument.

BR: It's clear that you had set a career path toward being a musician at a certain point. How about you, Danny?

DDR: I was a very late bloomer. My brother matured way faster than me. I didn't get my ass kicked until I tried to move to Los Angeles. In Las Vegas, I had a roof over my head and a plate of food, so I could be immature. I would work as a percussionist in local bands but it wasn't a necessity, it was just something I liked to do. It was cool. I loved music, but I really didn't think, "I'm going to be a musician for the rest of my life." During my teen years, I was doing different kinds of jobs around town. I'd make \$500-\$600 and, as a teenager I was like, "Awesome!" So, I wasn't really growing up.

My brother had left Las Vegas and he went to LA. He had a plan and some money saved up. Then, I tried moving over there and I got my ass kicked. I had to run like a dog with his tail between his legs three different times back to Las Vegas! I couldn't make it. I needed to practice. I

needed to get better. That was the best thing that could've happened, because it started making me open my eyes. I had to go practice and I had to start learning different styles. The competition is really good because you start seeing that you need to up the ante!

BR: It's refreshing to hear that you both were not just handed gigs due to your lineage. I think most drummers might assume that. Clearly, you've had to pay the same dues and pound as much pavement as anyone. As the De Los Reyes Family grows, do you see similar experiences for the next generation?

WR: When you have a lot of music in the house, it happens consciously and unconsciously. My oldest two kids are musicians. My son, Joseph, he had drums, he had Giovanni Hidalgo, Danny, and my dad. I mean, music is like a pacifier. Instead of a pacifier, he used to take a set of drum sticks to preschool. It's in the air; you absorb it.

DDR: Absolutely! My brother helped out a little bit. My dad helped out a little bit, but from there, he (Wally) took it! We admire each other, we respect each other, and, obviously, we love each other. When we come together, we're three different entities that are reaching and searching and gathering all the time. I mean, my dad is eighty-three years old and he still does it.

WR: Yeah, we all found our own way. My dad basically put the goods on the table for us to create our own dish.

BR: That's a great analogy!

DDR: Yeah, I don't know if you've noticed, but drummers and percussionists are really good cooks! They're really good cooks because they try things, different amounts, and they're constantly changing it up. It doesn't have to be this exact thing. They just like to experiment.

BR: In your current projects, do you find yourself utilizing that kind of experimentation? Danny, is that the case with the Zac Brown Band?

DDR: Yeah, the Zac Brown project keeps me plenty busy. We're starting to branch out and tour the world outside the United States, which is very cool for a band that is primarily known in the Country/Southern

Rock genres. We're very excited about that. It's actually very rare that we're not working, like we are now. And listen, thank god! Like my brother says, "It's such a blessing that we're working as musicians, and we know it." Being able to pay some bills, it's a serious blessing. Besides being true and responsible to my job with the Zac Brown Band, I'm building my music schools, www.DayGlow.org, and putting them into afterschool programs. Each one of them is a full-time gig. We're also working on a song that David Garfield is producing. My brother and I are playing on it and Wally's beautiful daughter, Lilliana, is singing. Hopefully, my dad will join us and my brother, Kamar, is going to sing too. I'm super excited about that. It's always cool to watch how the family gets together.

BR: Wally, you're playing percussion with Chicago. Do you feel like you get to experiment a lot with them?

WR: Well, yeah. All of the artists give you some freedom. You add things little-by-little and, if they like it, they keep it in there. With Chicago, I play the percussion and everything is great but even after a year, Jimmy Pankow might say, "You know, on this song, don't play congas." So, I'll say, "Okay! I won't play congas." You have to play what the artist you are working with wants you to play. I also have my own little band that I play with right now, Wallyworld. In Wallyworld, I take suggestions from the guys in the band, but I'm actually the leader. Even in my own band, the guitar player might tell me, "I think if we do this and this, it would be better." And I'll listen! I'll say, "Let's try that!"

BR: I have to say, this has been a real pleasure. It's been less of an interview and more of an inside glimpse into your musical family lives. Family and community seem to be a big priority in your lives.

WR: Family is one thing, but I think the drumming community is really a tight community, too. When I was playing with Joe Sample, he used to say, "What is it with you drummers? You've got drum conventions, drum circles, drum meetings, drum this, drum that, you're always hanging out together!" **dw**

Sean Winchester Playing **PUNK**

by Brook Dalton

I first met Sean Winchester when I was playing a weeknight Hollywood bar show and he approached me to talk about my drum kit. Not long into our conversation, we had a shared epiphany and realized our DW connection. Sean cut his teeth playing in the Ventura and LA county music scenes and after years of focused studying and a scholarship to Berklee College of Music, he landed the coveted gigs of drumming in Bow Wow Wow and Everclear. While his list of accomplishments is impressive, I was fascinated to hear about his current venture. Sean has signed on as the pit drummer in a new theatrical musical. This seemed a bit odd to me, until I discovered that the play in question is none other than Home Street Home. The production is the brainchild of NOFX's notorious frontman, Fat Mike, and is already making waves in the theater community. While the play is stocked with heartfelt emotion, comedy, and sheer entertainment, its songs are a daunting task for the musicians to pull-off. I recently spoke with Sean about his new undertaking and the excitement and uncertainties that surround it.

Brook Dalton: So, how did you become involved with Home Street Home? Was Fat Mike, or the powers-that-be, more impressed with your resume, the fact that you attended Berklee, or did they know you from the LA music scene?

Sean Winchester: Thankfully, they were interested in me on multiple levels. It all started because I was rehearsing next to Marc Orrell, the ex-guitarist for Dropkick Murphys. We had neighboring rehearsal spaces, so we naturally hit it off and became friends. I eventually joined his original band, Wild Roses. Marc mentioned to me that he had been doing this project with Fat Mike and asked if I wanted to be involved. At the time, Everclear wasn't playing a lot so I said, "Hell yes!" Marc was basically in charge of finding good players to become the pit band for the show. He pulled in Jeff Roffredo (Tiger Army, Aggrolites) on bass and Chris Cheney (The Living End) on guitar. So, the four of us started rehearsals but we really didn't even know what was happening at the time! Mike would shoot us some songs so we kept learning them, but it wasn't until there was a residency booked at Z Space in San Francisco that we realized that it was an actual event.

BD: What is it like to work for Fat Mike?

SW: Mike is easily one of the best bosses I've ever had. It's great because he really doesn't have much of an ego, so he doesn't need to be micro-managing everything. He has a good business infrastructure and he trusts everybody to do their jobs.

BD: Was somebody singing along with you while you were rehearsing, since you hadn't worked with the cast yet?

SW: Yeah, the cast wasn't there for our Los Angeles rehearsals so David O, the Musical Director, sang for us. He's such a rad guy. He's known for doing a bunch of avant garde musicals so it was great to have him sing for us. Plus, that was the first time that we had heard the words to the songs, and these lyrics are really messed up! They deal with drugs and some heavy sexual stuff, but we needed to know them for the vocal cues. We were sitting there in disbelief the first time David was singing them. That was when we started asking who this play was catered to! Who is the target audience here? It's great because Mike doesn't care about that sort of thing. He just wanted to make a musical that is entertaining and cool. I actually didn't even meet Mike until a week before the San Francisco residency began!



BD: Did he have extensive notes for you once he heard the band and how it was coming along?

SW: No, because he trusted the Musical Director so much. All of the notes were trickled down through him beforehand and it turned out great. He actually had tears in his eyes when he heard us play the songs.

BD: Have you ever played in a stage production before or is this a completely new experience for you?

SW: Funny enough, my first stage production was for a performance of My Fair Lady that was being held in Ojai. I was eighteen and I got called in to sub for the drummer. The production was actually directed by Mario Calire's dad. At the time, I didn't know who he was and I completely fell on my ass! I sucked at it and almost got fired after the first day. I thought that I only had to sight-read, even though they had given me a CD with the music on it. That's when I realized that it's better to learn the music from top-to-bottom and only use the sheet music for reference. I was so scared, but I redeemed myself the next day. That was my only stage experience until now.

BD: Would you say that Home Street Home is comparable to any other musical? Obviously, it's not a run-of-the-mill performance, but there have been shows that have pushed boundaries in the past.

SW: I would say that Rocky Horror is the closest, but it's not comparable. Not

only for the subject matter and the material, but the songs themselves are very Punk in their nature. Even the more 'show tune'-type songs in the show all have a clear Southern California Punk stamp on them. Fat Mike's writing is still very obvious, which helps to set it apart.

BD: When I first heard that Fat Mike was doing this project, I automatically assumed that it would be a snotty, sardonic, maybe irreverent nose-thumbing to musicals as a genre. More like a Book of Mormon type of play. After looking into it, I quickly realized that I was wrong to think that. There are comedic moments, but there's something very real and poignant about it too.

SW: Right, there are moments with a lot of comedy, but there's much more going on with it. It gained enough interest that it sold out almost every night for two weeks straight in San Francisco. During one of the nights, a bunch of the 'famous' Punk bands came to check it out. People from Rancid, Green Day, Pennywise, etc. were there. I remember walking around during the intermission and seeing some of these punkers with tears in their eyes. A lot of people thought ahead of time that it would be kind of cute, but they found out that he actually made a really good musical with a valuable story. He pulled it off.

BD: What is your drum set-up like for the show?

SW: For the San Francisco run, I actually played a 24" kick that was at the venue,

but I used the toms from my kit. I played my Black Nickel over Brass snare the whole time.

BD: Did you have a lot of freedom with what your kit consisted of, or did the MD advise you about what was needed to best fit the songs?

SW: Fat Mike actually just wanted me to be a drummer in a show. He wanted a Punk drummer, so I just played a 'one-up, one-down' with two crashes and a ride cymbal. He specifically didn't want any bells and whistles on the kit. There might be a small change or two in the future, but for those performances it didn't feel like anything was missing at all. We had rehearsals before every single show and they actually asked me to try different things or make revisions during those run-throughs. For example, the MD asked me to match up some tom fills to a fight scene that happens on stage to enhance the feeling of the moment.

BD: So, you guys were constantly tweaking the music, even after the play had opened its run?

SW: Yeah, and it wasn't only the music. The actors and Mike were changing stuff before shows all the time! Here's something that I found really interesting: the Musical Director and I are the only ones that went to school for music, and he was the only one that used charts. This includes any revisions that we made along the way. We're talking about a bunch of Punk dudes who played this whole show by retention. David O asked me if I wanted to use charts and I said, "Not really. I'd rather be on the same page as everyone else." I did use a sketch pad for some notes but, at the end of the day, I was barely using it. It was a live band situation with constant revisions that required a ton of memory. But, everybody stepped up to the occasion and made it happen. You would never guess that none of the band members were reading music.

BD: Once a change was made for the show, did it stick or did you try things in the live setting and then decide against them the next night?

SW: No, there were a lot of changes that didn't stick around. It was hair-raising! Plus, we were going out to the bars every night after the shows and these

guys would always show up to the noon rehearsals on time and nail their parts. It was easily one of the best experiences of my life.

BD: How much freedom do you have the drum parts? Once the music has been revised, is there a hardline attitude about it or is there some allowance for the 'feel' of the piece?

SW: I have more freedom than I thought I would, but that came after I had earned their trust. If they tell me to play quiet, I'll play quiet. If I'm told a fill has to end at a certain measure, I'll do it. But beyond that, I'll throw in a little something extra occasionally on an interlude or an intro and the guys love it. It's because of that accepting attitude that I know I would never want to play in another musical again, aside from this one. I know that other productions are more strict.

BD: I know the band is on the stage during the show. Where are you actually situated during the course of the play?

SW: We ended up building a room for me that was lined with this denim-like soundproofing material with a Plexiglas front on stage right. It was so hot; it was like playing in a pizza box! I was in this scaffolding rig and I had to climb up eleven feet on a ladder to get into this little cubby where my drum set lived. I had my in-ears, my TV monitor, my mixer, and I could see parts of the stage and the audience, so I was set. Jeff Roffredo is afraid of heights and they had him twenty feet in the air! He was so bummed. They had to use a pulley system to get his upright bass up there. David O was even higher than him!

BD: At one point, Fat Mike said that he had written forty songs for Home Street Home. How many numbers are in the final version?

SW: I'd say, including bits and pieces, that there are twenty-five songs. There's plenty of music. The show runs about two hours and a lot of the songs are fast with a quick duration, so we can fit more of them into our show than a typical musical can.

BD: What are the biggest differences between playing in a show like this and touring/gigging

with a band?

SW: Not being able to see everybody in the band while we're playing is a trip. At times, musical theater feels very counter-intuitive to me, in regards to tempo and fills. It's like they want you to be out of the way all of the time, except for specific moments when it's your time to shine. In those cases, you have to be a super-human and play crazy parts, then back off and return to the shadows. You almost have to think of your instrument as a character.

BD: I'm guessing that you need to be aware of your dynamics more than you do in a band situation. You can't really feed off of the crowd's energy and reciprocate by getting louder or faster because you're also dealing with scripts and actors.

SW: Well, I think that this play goes against that law of musical theater. The crowd would clap, cheer, and get up and dance. It's encouraged. In fact, at the end of one of the last performances, members of the audience actually ran up on stage and danced with the actors. Mike was super stoked on it!

BD: I've heard Fat Mike say that this isn't a Punk musical, it's a musical. Do you agree with that statement?

SW: Yes. It deals with punks and squatters but I know that Mike doesn't want to pigeonhole this work. I think this play can cater to everyone. You don't need to be into Punk to enjoy

this musical. My girlfriend has gone to almost every performance because she's a musical enthusiast.

BD: Did you record on the soundtrack album?

SW: Well, I didn't play on the original soundtrack but I've been recording with Mike in the studio for the next soundtrack release. The live band is the studio band for this record. That's been really exciting.

BD: Can you name some Punk drummers that have influenced you over the years?

SW: I really like Brooks Wackerman and Josh Freese. Spit Stix from FEAR and Topper Headon from The Clash are awesome, too. Because I'm in Bow Wow Wow, I find myself being inspired by Dave Barbarossa, their original drummer. He's super creative and still holds that Punk energy.

BD: What does the future hold for Home Street Home?

SW: There is an LA residency happening next year, which we're all excited about. After that, Mike wants to take it on tour. Once the tour is done, there is talk of it heading to Broadway. I'm very grateful that I get to work with Mike on this venture because he really is one of my favorite people. He's a fair boss and a great dude and, ultimately, that's what you want when you're working with someone on a project like this. **dw**

PHOTO CREDIT: TIMOTHY DAVID FARMER



LEFT TO RIGHT: JEFF ROFFREDO (BASS), JC AUGUST (NOT IN MUSICAL), MARK ORRELL (GUITAR, UKULELE, CLARINET, ETC.), CHRIS CHENEY (GUITAR), SEAN WINCHESTER (DRUMS)

KEVIN PLUTTA KELLS _F
 PIER PAOLO FERRO INDEPENDENT _F
 JORDI GEUENS INDEPENDENT _F
 EDWIN VALLE INDEPENDENT _F
 CHRIS TRZCINSKI INDEPENDENT _F
 STANLEY RANDOLPH STEVIE WONDER, NKOTB _F
 MARINA ALDIOUS _F
 STEVE FERRONE TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS _{PH}
 JOSH MACINTYRE MARMOZETS _F
 DAVEY BROZOWSKI MODEST MOUSE _{PH}
 REMI AGUILELLA DAUGHTER _F
 MATT BILLINGSLEA TAYLOR SWIFT _{PH}
 VALERIE SEPULVEDA DIAMANTE, THE VIBRANT SOUND _F
 PINO ROVERETO CAMILO SESTO, DAVID DE MARIA _{PH}
 DYLAN ELISE BLOOD SWEAT & TEARS _F
 ANDRES PATRICK FORERO HAMILTON, BOOK OF MORMON _{PH}
 RICHARD JUPP ELBOW _{PH}
 TOBI DERER BEYOND THE BLACK _F
 BERNARD PURDIE INDEPENDENT _F
 ASH SOAN THE WATERBOYS _{PH}
 DERRICK WRIGHT ADELE _F
 NEIL WILKINSON INDEPENDENT _{PH}
 GLEN SOBEL ALICE COOPER _F

PICTURED: STANLEY RANDOLPH
 PHOTO CREDIT: NOEL THORCK

F = FULL LINE
 PH = PEDALS & HARDWARE



NEW ARTISTS **dw** ENOUGH SAID.

Gary Wallis

Mr. Wallis' Wild Ride

by Ian Croft

Gary Wallis only ever wanted to sing along with The Beatles. Needless to say, that love for 'the song' has never wavered. However, it would be drums and percussion that brought him before millions at Live Aid, and playing to millions more in front of Egypt's pyramids with Jean Michel Jarre at the turn of the millennium. With a resume that boasts Sir Tom Jones, Pink Floyd, Il Divo, Nik Kershaw, 10CC, Westlife, Mike & The Mechanics, Dusty Springfield, and so many more, Wallis' formidable talent is obvious as a consummate drummer, percussionist, producer, and the current Musical Director for four notable international artists. How did this UK-based upstart arrive at the most distinguished echelon of hired-gun drummers? Well, let's just say it's been a wild ride.

Ian Croft: What were you listening to during your formative years?

Gary Wallis: Pretty much my brother's record collection. He had the whole Beatles collection, along with early Free records, Bad Company, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and ironically enough, some Pink Floyd records. My exposure was to all those early and great English Rock bands and, at that time, surprisingly not many American bands. It has never really strayed much further from that!

IC: Was there a particular record that made you want to become a drummer?

GW: No. Unequivocally, it was the entire collection of Beatles records. I remember the beginning of Help and how that excited me, musically. I was never really driven by the actual instrumentation; it was songs that got me excited. If I could sing them, I would love them and I wanted to sing along. I remember being four or five years old and hearing Sergeant Pepper's being played in the house. So it was The Beatles and Ringo Starr and, to this day, that has never wavered.

IC: Did you get involved with music at school?

GW: Yes, I took an hourly drum lesson each week from a teacher named Dave Barry. He took me through the Jim Chapin book and he was quite a 'turned-on' guy and a great Be-Bop player. Once you go through that book, you never go back; it's the bible. Dave was quite a taskmaster and he drilled me week after week. He actually bought me the book because we didn't have much money growing up in South London. He would give me five pages to work on each week and if I had not learned them by the following week, he'd crack me over the head with a stick! And then, I'd have ten pages to work through by the following week. He instilled in me a great sense of discipline and a high work ethic to get it right. It made me want to keep improving.

IC: Were you just hitting on a practice pad at home?

GW: No, but to go back to earlier days, I used to break my mother's knitting needles banging on things, and then I'd hide them back into her knitting supplies. So, for my third Christmas, my parents bought me a toy drum set, which I proceeded to smash into pieces about ten minutes after it came out of the box! I was a little heavy-handed as a child. Some years later, my dad took his life savings of £26 out of the bank and took me to Drum City in Charing Cross Road, London and bought me a Broadway bass drum, Olympic snare drum, Ajax cymbal, and a pair of Krut hi-hats. He told me, "Now, you practice every day!" Having that kind of support was incredible and he was very adamant that I practiced daily. He didn't care that it sounded like someone building a shed in the next room. (Laughs). After that, every year we'd go and troll pawn shops to find an old rack tom or floor tom, and my dad would re-cover the drums in Fablon (a thin, sticky-backed plastic covering), so that it looked like a matching set of new drums, like those I saw on television. It didn't matter that the drums were all different brands; the set had a uniform look and made me feel like a drummer on the TV.

At my school, there were a lot of kids into music and we'd play at break times, after school, and during the holidays. From the time I was about thirteen years old, I was always in bands of one form or another, and it gave me a great focus. Music was a great outlet from everything bad around me. I had all of this positive stuff going through my mind instead of negative, destructive things.

IC: Your first major professional gig was with The Truth at sixteen years old. So really, you've never had to do a 'proper' job in your life.

GW: No, I've only ever played the bloody drums! (Laughs). I'm rubbish at everything else.

IC: You started getting gigs playing percussion. How did that begin?

GW: My dad came home one day with a set of congas and put them down in front of me. My parents had some old Edmundo Ros records with songs such as

"One Note Samba" and "Tico-Tico". As cheesy as the top line was, the bottom line held the authentic rhythms, and that's how I learned my first montunos at the age of twelve. At fourteen, I auditioned and was accepted to the Royal Academy of Music. I'd study on weekends with a potential for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. My good friend and fellow drummer, Steve White, was also invited. We were sight-reading classical scores, playing tympani, glockenspiel, vibraphone, and tubular bells.

IC: So, you had this full-on education coming at you from every angle.

GW: Yes, I had Led Zeppelin in the bedroom, Edmundo Ros in the living room, and I was sight-reading Beethoven on the weekends with the junior Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The orchestra had guest conductors, and one week Leonard Bernstein came in and Steve and I had to sight-read West Side Story in front of him. I was paralyzed with fear! Steve and I became great friends during this time, but we didn't take up the offer of further education with the Academy as the world of Pop and Rock was calling. Steve got the gig with Paul Weller's Style Council, and Paul called me and asked if I wanted to come and play percussion. So, I finally got my 'Ros chops' out and put them to good use alongside Steve playing the drum set. We both got to do our first world tour with The Style Council and I was only seventeen years old! I remember getting drunk on sake in Japan and thinking, "How on earth did I get here?" (Laughs).

IC: You then went on to work with Nik Kershaw, right?

GW: I was eighteen by then and Nik was the biggest-selling artist of that time with eleven number one hits. I was projected into that 'super-player' world and it was an amazing ride. We were touring in Australia and I bumped into David Bowie back at the hotel; he was there with bassist Carmine Rojas and guitarist Carlos Alomar. They asked how I'd feel about playing some percussion with Tony Thompson, Bernard Edwards, and Robert Palmer in the band Power Station. I asked when the gig would start and they told me, "Three days' time!" So I flew back to London, saw my mum, gave her a kiss, packed my bag, and

flew to New York the very next morning. Suddenly, there I was with the chic crew, and that same year, we played Live Aid, which was my first stadium gig...with the whole world watching, mind you! Jack Nicholson helped me set my drums up! I watched all my mates play the London end of the show and then it was our turn at JFK. After the Power Station set I had a shower, changed my clothes, and then played a six-song set with Duran Duran. So I got to play Live Aid twice!

IC: After that, the world must have been your oyster.

GW: I came back and I was cutting a lot of records with many different artists. In those glorious days, there was a lot of work around.

IC: At that time, artists were still making and recording 'demos', which must have given you great insight into the studio system and how it operated.

GW: I would do demos, some even for free, so that I could learn about the studio craft. Depending upon the outcome of the demos, I might get hired to cut the record. I quickly had to learn what a 'drop-in' was and how to fix things. You had to cut the track and make it sound and feel good right from the start. I learned about mics and mic placement, room sounds, different recording machines... everything connected with recording. That's all gone now! That experience proved so useful for me in later years. Most importantly, as a drummer, you're entrusted with the groove. Those experiences taught me that if it doesn't feel good from where you sit, then it won't feel good to anyone else. End of story!

IC: Let's talk about the Pink Floyd gig and how that landed in your lap.

GW: I was with Nik Kershaw at The Secret Policeman's Ball and we were labouring through a lengthy soundcheck, when this bloke with a big beard and overcoat said, "These things take forever don't they!" I said, "Yeah, they do. Who are you?" He replied, "I'm David Gilmour and I'm here to play with Peter Gabriel and see Kate Bush." After the soundcheck, I had a beer with him and he wished me good luck with the show; I thought no more of it. The next day, I was on a recording date and David called me up and invited

me over to listen to the new Floyd record. That's where I met Nick Mason and to this day, Nick has been an absolute gentleman with me. I can't say enough nice things about him. He's a hell of a drummer; nobody strokes a ride cymbal like he does. It's got its own place in time for which there are no numbers or techniques to explain it. It's so laid back; it's in the song before! (Laughs). I kept thinking that I wished I could do that. Anyway, they played me the record and

GW: I built that in my head on the way over. I had to be able to cover percussion and some drum parts, as well, so the rig had to combine both elements. We were playing stadiums, so I had to make it look big and I wanted something that nobody had seen before. That was my guideline.

IC: It seems that you've got to play with all of these incredible artists that hire you for what you do and who you are. You've not really had to compromise.

was the future of rhythm and I tried to excel at using it. I just looked at it as a different discipline than playing acoustic drums and having a good command of both allowed me to work extensively. Luckily, producers would call. Whatever they wanted, I could supply: drums, percussion, and electronics. But, the producers also knew that I was totally passionate about playing music. Having said all that, I still only want to sing the chorus! (Laughs).



PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID PHILLIPS

they said that they were going on tour for the next eighteen months and asked if I wanted to be part of the band. I said, "I'm in!" And that was it!

IC: How did the whole concept of that Pink Floyd drum/percussion rig come about?

GW: None of them ever told me what to do and I've always had the opportunity to use my own artistic palette. I had the first Linn LM-1 in the UK and everyone seemed to think it was a toaster! I learnt it in a week and by week two I was in studios programming with it. For me, it wasn't the future of drumming, it

IC: You've played with so many diverse artists, yet you've remained a player that has never been pigeonholed as just a Rock drummer, Pop drummer, or a percussionist. That has to be refreshing.

GW: I've been very lucky. Currently, I'm out as drummer and MD with Sir

Tom Jones. I'm also MD for a few other artists, but I have the drum chair subbed out for those gigs while I tour with Tom.

IC: How do you manage to keep everything running smoothly?

GW: I'm very careful about whom I use to sub for those artists and I make sure that the drummers I use are fully prepared. I keep in constant touch with the sub and with the main artist every week, so I know how things are going. I'm one for preparation, especially as MD. Last night, I was listening back to tapes of three recent Tom Jones shows and wrote notes, not only for myself, but for the other band members too. That helps me to see how the set may have slipped or moved in different directions, even from a tempo point of view. There always needs to be an intellectual focus. You can go into autopilot mode, but that should never happen. If you don't have attention to detail, you won't have a career!

IC: Do you have a preference for studio or live work?

GW: I love playing live and being at the kit. It's so much more rewarding for me than being in the studio. It's that instant gratification of making music and receiving an immediate emotional response from the crowd. It's a conversation between the artist and the audience. Plus, I get to play with some truly great musicians along the way.

IC: You have been with DW for many years now. How did that come about?

GW: I first met John Good at Live Aid when he was the drum tech for Jonathan Moffett. My tech, Paul Davis, and John became good friends. My friendship with John became greater through Paul, and John and I started hanging out together whenever I'd be in California. When Nick Mason left Ludwig, Paul suggested to Nick that he should check out DW and Paul hooked Nick up with John, as well. Nick went with DW and was very happy, so when my second Floyd tour started to happen, Nick asked if I'd also go with the company, as Nick wanted everything to be unified. I

already knew John well and liked the product, so Nick and I flew over to LA and worked with John to design the Pink Floyd sets that we used for that tour. That was the start of our long and happy relationship together.

IC: I noticed that you're using a pretty interesting set-up for this Tom Jones tour.

GW: Tom has had such a big career, but the set-list isn't all of his hits. It's comprised of a lot of music that he grew up listening to; music that influenced him to become a singer. So, it's very diverse, with tunes from artists such as Lonnie Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. It is pre-Rock n' Roll Americana, so I need to be able to recreate different sounds between both set-ups. With the main kit, I am using an 18x24" bass drum, 8x12" rack tom, 16x16" and 16x18" floor toms, and a 6x14" Chrome snare drum; all of which have coated Remo heads. The snare and rack tom are tuned really tight so that I get a nice ringing vintage tone, but I keep the floor toms tuned really low. The bass drum has no padding whatsoever; the batter head is really loose and the front resonant head is really tight. It sounds like a cannon! I play 'off the head' with

that drum to get a New Orleans-type marching band sound.

Then I swivel 90° to my left, where I have a smaller set with a 16x22" bass drum, 8x10" rack tom, 14x14" floor tom, and 5x14" snare. All of those drums are fitted with coated Remo heads, too, and tuned to get a 'pop' sound with quite a bit of dampening to them for the more modern tunes. That kit has a lot of volume, but with a very short signal. I use old heads where I've cut the hoop away and just use the head area which I can drop onto the snare or floor tom and get a very quick change of sound, depending upon the song. Sometimes, I drop a tea towel down behind the bass drum so that the beater has to play through the towel which, again, gives me a different sound. It's the quickest and easiest way to change textures to suit the songs.

IC: Finally, what words of advice would you give to a young player starting out today?

GW: Good Luck! (Laughs). That, and keep your head down, work on your craft, practice hard and, above all, be disciplined. Remember that it's music you are playing, not drums! **dw**

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A DRUMMER'S Guide to Social Etiquette

by Nick Ruffini

On average, people spend 1.72 hours per day engaged in social media. So, what does this mean for you and other fellow drummers? It means that there are plenty of opportunities to interact and create relationships with fans, customers, trendsetters, and tastemakers. But before you rush to social media to start pushing your latest record or telling people to buy your merch, there are a few things to keep in mind.

Add Value

Adding value is by far the most important piece of the social puzzle. This can take on many forms, including entertainment, pertinent information, problem solving, and other relevant content. The more value you bring to your followers, the more connected they become with your brand/band/product and, eventually, they can become evangelists. I created a podcast two years ago and, to date, have broadcast 145 podcasts. This content is 100% free. Why? Simple, it adds value for drummers. It pays off big time when I launch a new product, sell a book, or pitch something. I've given a thousand times more value to my audience than what I ask from them in return. Because of that, they're all too happy to buy my products, help spread the word, and be part of my social media marketing team. The more value and interaction you can provide to your followers, the better. Adding value for your audience is paramount for cutting through all of the social noise out there. Before you post something, ask yourself: "Is this adding value?" If the answer is no, don't post it.

Be Social, Not a Pitchman

Social media is more of a cocktail party than a shopping cart. Your job is to offer something of worth to the

people who follow you and to engage with them on a personal level. Who would you rather talk to at a party, the person with something interesting to say or the person who is trying to sell you something as soon as they introduce themselves? There tends to be a lot of "buy our new thing" or "check out our latest product" or even "vote for us on this site" out there. If you're continually asking people to do things and constantly selling stuff on your social channels, it's the equivalent to a TV station that plays nothing but commercials. How long would YOU stay tuned-in for that kind of unrelenting sales pitch? The more you pitch, the less people will stay engaged.

Does this mean you can never sell? Of course it doesn't. Again, think of it as a reciprocal relationship. Keep in mind, this is a long-term strategy and it takes months or even years to play out, but it works! If you're known as the source for free content, expert advice, etc., then when it's time make a sale, fans will be lining up to support you.

Give the People What They Want

Users expect certain types of posts on certain platforms. This is known as native content, which is a fancy way of saying that users have very specific expectations. Instagram followers want amazing, inspiring pictures and videos. Twitter users want to see short spurts of information and want to interact one-on-one with others. Facebookers can digest longer-form content and engage in extended discussions. If your content is native, it won't disrupt the experience and won't seem out of place. The typical strategy is to place the same content on every social channel. That's not only the wrong approach, it's also boring. I suggest posting content that is created specifically for each platform. This will

ensure that you're posting native content and will give your audience multiple ways to engage with you, rather than seeing the same thing on every channel. It also aids in being a credible source of content for your audience. You never want to appear to be recycling or repurposing your messages.

Start Slow and Be Patient

There are multiple platforms to manage and if you're a one-man-band, it may prove to be overwhelming. I suggest selecting one or two platforms to concentrate on and forget the rest. Take some time to learn Facebook and Instagram or Twitter and Pinterest, get a good handle on what you're doing, and work on growing your audience from there. You can move to new accounts once you've established a good base on these platforms. Also, remember that you don't have to post every day. Posting once a week is better than not posting at all, posting twice a week is better than once a week...you get the idea. If you can only dedicate time for one or two days per week, do that. You can always increase the quantity of posts as you become more proficient. The social media game is a marathon, not a sprint. Yes, there are people who have exploded on social media seemingly overnight, but these are anomalies. Typically, it takes time to find your cadence, learn your audience's likes and dislikes, and discover your voice. Ultimately, you'll want to strive to continuously produce high-quality content, and I promise you that your social following will grow over time. **dw**

For more in-depth social media training, check out: DrummersSMBC.com.

Nick Ruffini | DrummersResource.com



Like it or not, the need to be socially active is not 'coming soon', it's here. Eyes, ears, and attention spans are riveted to social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and a host of others.

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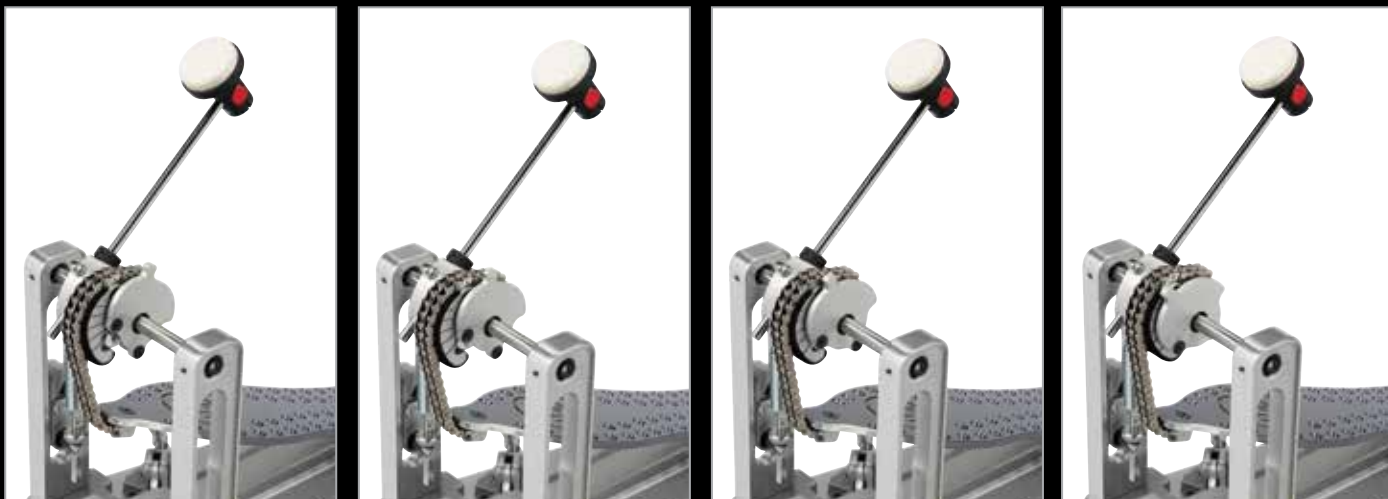
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DW Director of R&D, Rich Sikra, explains, “We knew this would be the next logical step when we were introducing the MDD pedals. So many of our artists absolutely love their 9000 pedals, but they’re also enamored with the form and function of DW MFG. Plus, we knew that the direct-drive feel wasn’t for everyone. It’s been a really fun and challenging project for the R&D team.”

Other notable features include a racing-style, all-aluminum, perforated footboard with matching contoured heel plate, Tri-Pivot Swivel Toe-Clamp™, V.E.R.T. Vertical Spring Adjustment™, 110 Control Beater™, and more. A DW MFG carrying case is also included and the recently released MDD Hi-Hat complements the MCD pedals perfectly. **dw**

For more information and exact specifications, visit: www.dwdrums.com/hardware/dwmfg





Advancing the Gig

by Brendan Buckley

A freelance musician can sometimes get a call to perform with one artist for eight months straight. Other times, he or she could get called to perform with eight different artists within one week. It helps to have a system of organization to handle this type of workload. Over the years, I have developed my own process that enables me to assimilate tons of songs and bounce from one job to the next. Here are a few key points to consider.

The Details:

Firstly, the details could always use some clarification. Let's say a phone call or email comes in asking, "Are you available from February 15th through the 20th?" That does not tell me very much about the job. Therefore, I often begin by digging for more information. What is this mystery gig? Are the proposed dates for rehearsals, a concert, a couple of recording sessions? Will this event take place in Los Angeles, or somewhere out of town? And if the job is out of town, when would I need to leave, and when would I return? Also, keep in mind the issue of time zones, and the international date line. For instance, it takes an extra day to fly west over the Pacific Ocean but, on the contrary, you land the same day you take off if flying from Shanghai to Chicago. Who else

is on this gig? The 'hang' is often as important as the music. What is the pay? Would it be hourly, daily, weekly? What are the travel arrangements? Would we be driving in a van to San Francisco, or flying to Barcelona? Is there some type of cancellation policy between now and then if the entire project falls through or gets postponed? It's considerate and professional if they offer somewhere between 50-100% of the income in the case of a cancellation.

The Music:

Now that you've accepted the gig, the next step of the process would be to get ahold of the music. Normally, a batch of MP3s is sent to me by email. However, for recording sessions, I might receive entire Pro Tools files via a service such as WeTransfer. I like to put all the music

in a playlist form on iTunes. And, if possible, I prefer to get a set-list order too. That helps me later on while trying to memorize the music. I'll sync up my iPod (yep, still use one of those) so that I can take this music around with me on car rides, hikes, or plane flights.

The Learning:

Now comes the real 'homework' of the job. I set aside a period of time to chart out all of the songs. First, I start with a stack of plain white printer paper (although I have been known to use a napkin, a torn sheet from a journal, or the backside of junk mail), a black pen, good headphones that allow me to distinguish kick drum patterns and bass lines, and any tap-tempo metronome. Then I go down the list of songs, writing out charts using my own version of notation and

hieroglyphics. My charts are usually as detailed as they need to be, but not unnecessarily detailed. I still follow a system similar to the one that I learned for reading high school Big Band/Jazz charts. Left-to-right, top-to-bottom, with sections like: introduction, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, bridge, solo, outro, etc. How many bars are in each section? Include rests, accents, and unison figures. Jot down dynamics (ppp vs fff). I notate specific beats and signature drum fills. What would my hands be doing at any given time? RH on closed hi-hat and LH on cross-stick. Or RH on ride cymbal and LH on snare drum. Or RH on floor tom and LH on tambourine. I notate the tempo markings. And, if time allows, I will even check out alternate versions of the songs (remixes, live versions, cover versions) on Spotify or YouTube.

Part #2 of this learning process takes place on the actual drum set. I take my folder of charts, throw on the headphones, and play along with the iPod, seeing how the songs feel on the instrument. At first, I approach the songs exactly like the album versions (as note-for-note as possible). Then, I gradually adjust them in ways that I believe would make them even more musical. That might mean changing the subdivision of the hi-hat from 16ths to 8ths, or adding ghost notes to the snare part, or simplifying the kick drum pattern, or coming up with an alternate drum fill that does not clash with the acoustic guitar part or the vocal melody. In general, I prefer to have all of the songs learned well enough to the point where I can do them exactly like the record, or differently from the recorded versions in case the artist, producer, or Musical Director requests a fresh approach. Brainstorm for multiple options. The artist could either be completely sold on their album version, or they could be utterly bored with it. You can't be sure, so it's a good idea to have choices.

Part #3 of the learning process is the memorization. Even though I've been working on my reading since I was in middle school, I prefer to not read any charts on stage or during recording sessions. Staring at a page makes me feel as though I have not internalized the music. Therefore, I go through a process of memorization. It's a good brain

exercise (like Sudoku)! First, I spend a good deal of time running through the music in headphones while staring at my charts. Then, I close the folder and spend time playing the music, still with headphones, but without the charts. This can be a bit bumpy at first, but it helps highlight the trickiest parts of the songs. Finally, I will switch from the iPod to a metronome, and just play through all of the songs with only a click track while singing the melody and arrangements in my head. This can be the toughest part, but it's only when I do this that I feel as though I actually know the songs. It's as though I am inside all of the phrasing. And, practically speaking, if things go wrong on stage (bad monitor mix, guitarist breaks a string, singer gets lost), I'll know exactly where we are, and I'll be able to hold everyone together. As a drummer, you are often steering the ship!

The Gear:

Ok, so we've confirmed the dates for this upcoming performance and we've learned all of the music. Now we have to organize the logistics of the equipment. You'll probably have to find out if the venue/studio has its own backline or will you rent a drum kit? Or do you need to bring your own gear to the gig? Then, according to the music, I will decide on drum sound options. The kick drum size, and its tuning. The amount of toms, and their sizes. Coated Ambassadors vs. Clear Pinstripes? A metal or wood snare drum? How about a side snare drum turned off and cranked like a timbale, or should it be deep and chunky? Which cymbals would work well, and how many? Maybe an extra mounted hi-hat would be cool. Double pedal? Are there mounted percussion elements that would add to the music, such as tambourines, cowbells, rototoms, more cowbells? Of course, we'll need a gong bass drum. Trashy cymbal effects and cymbal stacks are in vogue. So are treated drum heads with elements like car keys, jingles, splash cymbals, drum wallets, BigFatSnares, and Keplinger metal creations. Should I add a few electronic trigger pads and trigger pedals? Maybe I could use some alternate stick choices like brushes, rods, maracas, or jingle sticks. Maybe a song would sound better if I left the drum set altogether and only played cajón, or marching snare, or pandeiro. Will

we have in-ear monitors? Will there be computer tracks? Will I be asked to run them?

The Look:

At some point, the topic of 'Look' will probably come up and a person called a 'Stylist' will probably tell you to "wear all black" and "just look cool." Rock & Roll.

The Show:

Countless articles have been written about the professionalism needed to maintain a career as a working musician. This includes concepts such as 'punctuality', 'getting along with others', and 'not vomiting in the artist's dressing room or getting arrested at the airport.' Assuming we've already read and internalized these nuggets, I'll just skip ahead to showtime. Hint: I like to write my own set-lists and tape them where I can see them. It's a habit that makes me comfortable. On these set-lists, I will often scribble a note for each song such as, "count off the guitarist for this one", or "switch to mallets", or "don't forget those crazy hits at the end." These are just reminders to glance at from time to time. And, beyond learning the songs, I also take the time to walk through the moments that occur between the songs. For instance, does the singer tell a story or joke between songs #2 and #3? Or, is there a non-stop segue between songs 7-8-9? I like to be in charge of the time between the songs in order to help keep a good flow. It's almost a choreography that I develop: tighten the loose snare drum lugs here, drink a sip of water, fix the hi-hat clutch, switch to brushes, add a sizzle chain to the ride cymbal, switch the patches on my sampler, crack an inside joke at the bass player. This all happens seamlessly during the few seconds between songs. Beyond that, I would say: (1) shake hands with all the band and crew members before you go on. So many people are in their own worlds before a show. Smart phones, ugh! This is a team effort. (2) Expect that things will go wrong on stage, and embrace those moments. They can be a whole lot of fun! And, (3) hug and celebrate with your gang of musicians once the show is completed. It's not just a collection of songs. It's an event!

The Compensation:

Lastly, get paid. This sounds simple, but it's important. And you'd be surprised how difficult this part can be. For musicians, it's not common to get paid before you do the work. Therefore, you'll probably have to type up and send an invoice. There is a myriad of ways to transfer payment such as: direct deposit, PayPal, Western Union, cash, or "the check is in the mail." Keep track of all outstanding payments because certain people will space out and forget.

I hope this gives you a brief look into what I do to prepare for a performance. You'll find that most pro drummers out there have a similar approach and work ethic. And keep in mind this helpful sports quote: "Don't practice until you get it right. Practice until you can't get it wrong."

Here's an example of a sample drum rider that I have sent to a rental company:

Brendan Buckley:
Drum Rider (Shelby Lynne 2016 U.S. Tour)

DW (Jazz, Classics, or Collector's Maple series):

- 14"x22" bass drum (hole in front head, with pillow inside)
- 9"x13" rack tom (on snare stand)
- 16"x16" floor tom (on 3 legs)
- 6"x14" black nickel snare drum
- 5"x13" titanium snare drum

DW Hardware:

- cymbal boom stands (x5)
- snare drum stands (x3)
- hi-hat stand
- DW5002 double pedal (x2)
- throne

Sabian Cymbals:

- 15" Artisan hi-hats (or HHX)
- 22" Artisan ride cymbal (or HHX)
- 18" Artisan crash (or Evolution)
- 19" Evolution crash (or HHX)
- 19" HHX Extreme crash
- 8" splash

Remo Drum Heads:

- Coated Ambassadors on all tops
- Clear Ambassadors on all bottoms
- Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter side

Vic Firth sticks:

- 5A wood tips
- T1 Timpani mallets
- Heritage wire brushes

LP:

- mounted cyclops tambourine
- shaker

Accessories:

- drum rug
- gaff tape
- drum key
- towel
- water
- miniature electric fan

Brendan Buckley – Drummer for Shakira, Roberto Carlos, Leehom Wang, Shelby Lynne, Aleks Syntek, Leighton Meester, Minnie Driver, The Bodeans, JJ Lin

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*Thanks to Kevin Stevens and Stewart Jean from Musicians Institute for the addition help.



Mika Fineo

Positively Charged
by Brook Dalton

While there are a myriad of characteristics that are arguably essential for a great drummer to possess, it's hard to imagine one that doesn't demonstrate strong determination, focused talent, and consistent creativity. Mika Fineo's check-list has all of these traits marked off, along with countless others. Based out of Nashville and Los Angeles, this eclectic and multi-faceted factotum knows exactly what sort of work ethic and attitude it takes to succeed in today's entertainment industries. His impressive resume includes having worked with a range of acts such as Filter, Karmin, Blake Lewis, and Puddle of Mudd. Naturally, Mika is proud of his credits but he is also continually expanding his potential and looking forward to his musical future. I consider myself fortunate to have touched base and talked shop with this genuine and motivated go-getter.

Brook Dalton: I know that you started playing music at an early age but decided to switch from focusing on the piano to the drums. What was it about the drums that was so appealing to you?

Mika Fineo: Ah man, I'll probably sound like some technical stiff here, but I can honestly relate it to this: the piano requires that you have ten fingers working keys that trigger hammers to strike a series of strings in a rather percussive fashion. In addition to the fingers, your feet are working the pedals of the piano for sustain, etc. So, when playing this instrument, you're taking all of these mechanics and getting them to work together in rhythmic harmony and tempo. With the drum set, you're using two hands and two feet that, again, must work in rhythmic harmony with each other. The hands use sticks to strike the head of a drum or a cymbal while the feet work pedals to play the kick and the hi-hat's sustain/chick. When I first sat down on the drum set (already some years deep into a classical piano foundation and lessons) I sensed a connection. What was so appealing about the drums to me? I was a decent piano player (nothing great) but when I played the drum set for the very first time, I excelled at it. All the discipline and mechanics I learned from classical piano training led me to be able to play the kit at a pretty advanced stage, for a beginner. The instant connection and gratification that I felt with the drums consumed me. I fell in love with drumming right then and there! I was just taken over by its power and command. The drums were so much cooler to me!

BD: Do you still play the piano, or other instruments, much?

MF: Absolutely. The piano will always be a passion of mine and it helps me to communicate to other musicians in terms of melody, key, scale, song structure, harmony, etc. I use it more to write nowadays, but I'll say that there are few things more therapeutic to my soul than to sit down on a killer grand piano in an empty concert hall and just play away. The reverberation of its sound in a magical environment is haunting to me.

BD: In your opinion, how important is it to be able to play different types of music? Is it more valuable to concentrate on one category or are you better served in being

able to spread out your abilities to a lesser extent?

MF: I feel that it's wise to learn as many styles of music as you can. You can never master all of them, but having a sense and knowledge of as many styles as possible will allow you to be a well-rounded player and better able to communicate. Of course, we all find a few styles that we end up gravitating towards. But if we start to narrow our musical direction (stylistically), we tend to hit plateaus by focusing on only one thing. I try not to get trapped into this because you sort of 'typecast' yourself if you want to try out for future gigs that are out of your comfort zone. So yeah, learn as many styles as you can and try to actually become them when you're studying them. Get submerged in the style for a bit and strive to understand the musical language that the artist or band is trying to communicate with.

BD: When you joined Filter, did you have a previous knowledge of their material or did you have to suddenly learn the set from scratch?

MF: I was always a big believer in the Filter sound from the very beginning. I really felt that it was cutting-edge stuff. I had known all the material inside-and-out from the first record through *The Amalgamut*, which was the most recent album at the time when I joined. The first album only had programmed drums; the real drums came in on the following albums. I felt that, from a drummer's standpoint, the second and third albums held some of the most magical drumming and production out there. It was a sound I longed to further develop with Filter. The crazy thing is that I always imagined that I'd actually be their drummer, at some point. So, it was chilling when I got the call from Richard (Patrick) shortly after moving to LA. When we all got into a room for the first time to rehearse, we pretty much had the first three albums down in a day.

BD: What are the primary differences between the Nashville and Los Angeles music scenes? Do the different settings affect your particular playing style much?

MF: Yeah, there are some differences. So far, I find them mostly to be from the touring standpoint. You're sort of a 'weekend warrior' as far as tours go in Nashville. No matter how big the tour or artist, you're out for three-to-four days every week, back home for three, and then repeat. When I'm working with artists based in LA, I tend to go out for much longer periods of time and don't return for weeks or months. Also, Nashville still holds a fairly dominant Country music scene. So your Country chops have to be on-point and you must be able to play for what the music calls for. You need to have that discipline. But things are changing very rapidly with so much of the industry now relocating from places like Los Angeles and New York to Nashville. So, the scene is sort of all over the place at the moment for working musicians and the genre of artists that are basing themselves there. I never wanted to get locked down into the Nashville Country scene, so I still work out of LA a lot. But I will say that I have been very blessed since only living there for such a short time and already having done some really solid arena tours with some fantastic Nashville-based artists. I've also been fortunate in that the artists I've worked for in Nashville have allowed me to shine and just be me, really letting me bring my vibe and style out into the music, as opposed to having to go for more of the 'scale it back, get out of the way, and give us the meat and potatoes approach' that I see a lot within Nashville's Country scene.

BD: Does your gear or kit set-up change from gig-to-gig, or are you most comfortable with a particular configuration?

MF: Man, the gear and set-up options these days are endless and you can get lost in all of the beautiful products out there. But, so far, I don't change my set-up a whole bunch, other than shell materials, head types, and cymbals. I try to keep a common theme that allows me a good amount of options to go in any direction, stylistically. I seem to constantly land work with artists that have a lot of diversity in their sound. So, my kit has to be able to go from a tight

snare/resonant Pop/R&B tom thing to being able to turn around and deliver a deep Rock 'thud' at the same time. So far, I find that using a 22" kick, 10" and 12" racks with 16" and 18" floor toms can cover a fairly wide palette. I throw a sampler pad up, as well, to open even more options for the artist.

BD: What was it like to work with Snoop Dogg?

MF: Man, Snoop is such a nice dude. He's talented as hell. I worked with Snoop back when my band in LA owned a green screen studio that we ran out of our warehouse. We also had a pretty elaborate recording studio and large practice facility there, as we were writing an album and signed to Geffen at the time. We booked a lot of artists for the green screen for our day jobs, everyone from The Mars Volta to Andrew Dice Clay. One day, Snoop booked our facility to shoot one of his music videos. Whenever talent came in, we always used our live rehearsal room as sort of a 'green room' for them. When Snoop showed up, he quickly discovered all of our live instruments mic'd and set up in the room and he flipped. We had a hell of a set-up there. So he came to us and asked if we could jam together! We were in shock and jumped at the opportunity. We powered up the PA and proceeded to play for hours. There was footage upon footage captured from it because his camera crew filmed the whole performance. I think you can probably watch some of it online somewhere. It was a such a dope experience to jam with him and we just played into the night together. Such a great memory.

BD: What is the best piece of drumming-related advice that you've received?

MF: Oh man, that's a tough one. But here's something I'd say is imperative and highly overlooked, in relation to your practice routine: play to a metronome. You should seek to master being able to count out loud, everything from whole notes all the way up to 16th notes over whatever you're playing on the kit. Start slow and work up the tempo little by little. When you master that, try to count out loud in triplets. That's a game-



changer and harder than it sounds when you're ripping off heads with your chops. With this exercise you'll start to fine-tune your 'internal metronome' and you will always know where you are within the beat. When it comes time to play the easy stuff your groove will be so freakin' dialed!

BD: What hobbies or interests do you have outside of music?

MF: It's so cliché, but I am fascinated with travel and foreign culture. Just sitting down to an odd meal in a foreign country with a friendly local while embracing their traditions...I love that. When I'm not playing music, you'll find me constantly working with my hands. I'm always building something, fixing something, or creating some kind of gadget that helps make my life easier. I've been wanting to start a company that specializes in unique travel products I've created to help organize and streamline the constant traveler. Nerdy, I know!

BD: If you could sit in with any band, or group of musicians, and play a show with them, who would it be?

MF: Well, funny enough, this has already happened to me twice. I dreamed of playing with Filter and then...boom! I dreamed of playing with Karmin and again...BOOM! So, in the element of things happening in threes, my next dream is to work with Ed Sheeran. What that dude does as a one-piece is just nuts. I'd be all over that should he ever decide to put a band together!

BD: I know that you will incorporate electronic elements like programming, slates, and click tracks into your drumming. How much do you feel that technology has influenced your playing? Would you say that you are dependent on some of those features?

MF: I love adding the element of electronics, especially in today's music. The options become limitless then. By having slates within the live tracks you can allow the band to learn the songs much faster. With slates you get these 'cheats' because there can be a verbal count-in to let you know that a chorus or bridge is about to hit, or the song is ending, etc.

That helps to speed up the learning curve at times, but artists don't always use it. You should never become dependent on these things, however. Being able to play to a click is essential but you should also sound great and be able to not fluctuate your tempo without one. And knowing how to play behind, on, and just in front of the beat is something you will be called to do at some point, or another.

BD: What does your current drum kit configuration look like?

MF: I passionately use all DW 9000 and 5000 hardware throughout my kit along with big, dark, and thin Sabian cymbals, typically. Various two-ply Evans heads are usually on the kit, but the Evans Heavyweight head on my snare is imperative for me in live settings. It's incredible! Vater Fusion wood tip sticks are my current wood. For live drums, I mostly use DW Collector's Series snare drums and for the toms and kicks I've been taking out the PDP Concept Maple Series drums for the last couple of years. With all of the wear and tear that happens on the road, I try not to take out the Rolls-Royce of DW drum kits often. I mainly use them for studio sessions. The PDP Concept Maple drums are like the Lexus of DW, so to say. They get the job done very well but if they take a hit or get a deep scratch, I don't freak out and look for replacements. (Laughs). I also love the Kickport product, as well as Cympad felts. For my in-ears, I'm using 1964 Ears (now 64 Audio) V6 stage models. My actual drum set-up is two-up, two-down, a high and low tuned snare, and a sampler pad. One thing I tend to always demand is a larger ride that's thin enough to crash on but has a thick/strong bell that cuts. A ride cymbal with that kind of versatility is such a go-to for me. Sabian has mastered this with the Omni cymbal! Cymbal sizes and weights are always changing for me, depending on the gig. When I'm tracking, I seem to use Ableton most of the time.

BD: How often do you play drums when you're not touring?

MF: Oh boy, not as often as I wish I could. I'm currently working on building a studio in my new home and seek to have it as a place that I can practice and

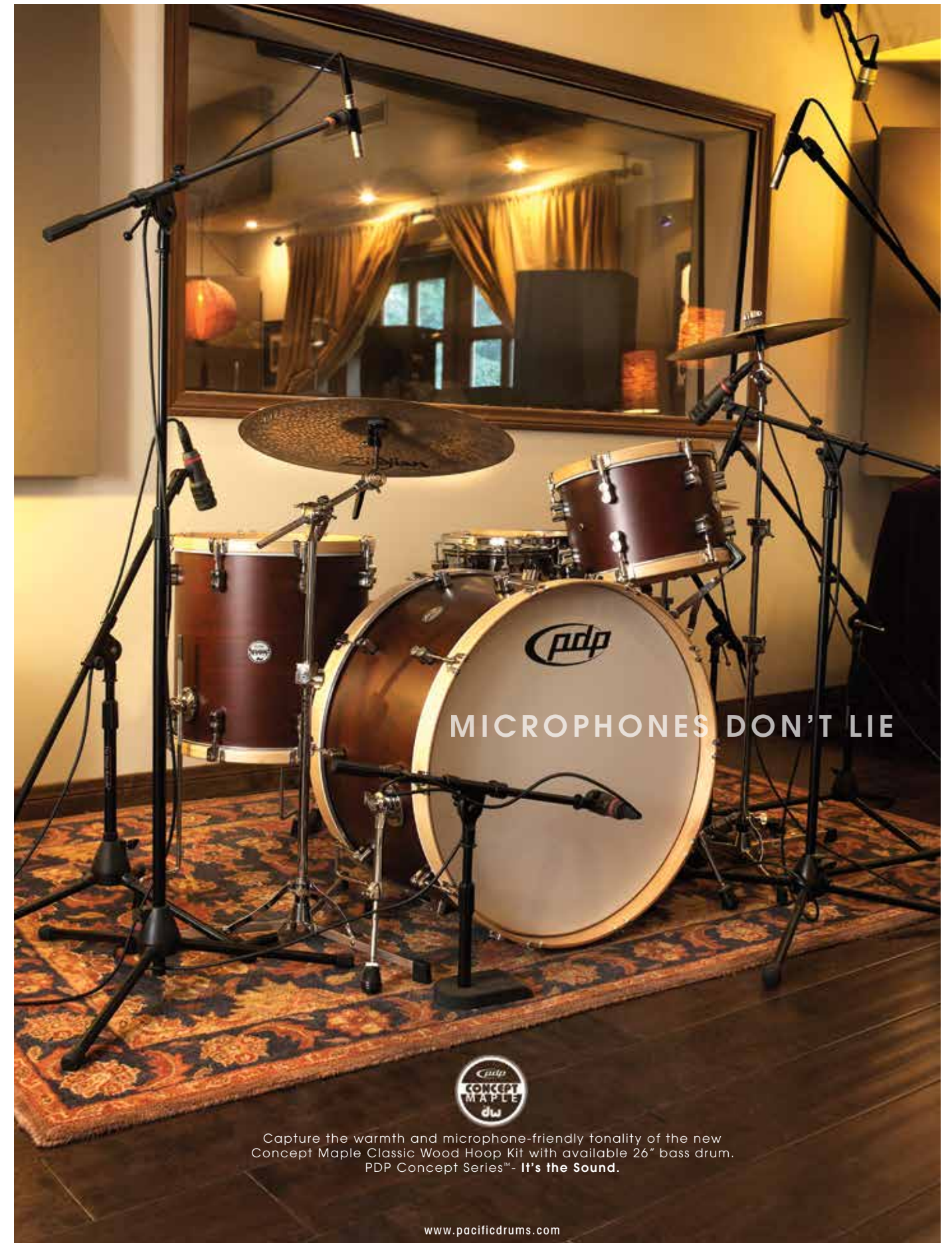
track in 24 hours-a-day. That's been a life-long goal of mine.

BD: What are your musical plans for the immediate future?

MF: They're kind of all over the place at the moment. In addition to touring, I'd like to start doing clinics and consulting. I also plan on getting back to my own material, at some point, and putting out an album. I want to collaborate with all of the talented friends I've met over the years.

BD: What are your hopes or goals for your long-term future as a drummer?

MF: One thing that I've been narrowing down within this musical journey is my motivation. I'm constantly asking myself, "What am I looking to achieve and why is it that I do what I do? How can I use my gift to improve the lives of others?" For me, travelling to far-off lands and sharing the gift of music with people, seeing the smile it puts on their faces, the pulse that the drums inject into their soul causing them to dance out-of-control and forget about life for a bit...that's the stuff for me! When an individual can step away from the day-to-day mess that life can create and free themselves within the music you're performing...that's my reward and I plan to continue with it for as long as I can. It's always a goal of mine to work with artists in the future that have a message of hope and positivity. There's enough darkness out there on this planet. Positive music can be so healing to the soul and doesn't need to be cheesy to achieve it. Just look at U2! **dw**



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