

EDGE

— M A G A Z I N E —

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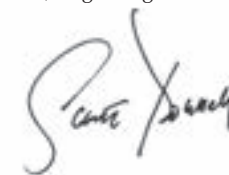
Editor's Notes: All in the Family

There is a lot of talk about family at Drum Workshop: joining the DW family, the DW family of artists, the family of DW products, etc. Not so ironically, we are a family business. We are privately-owned-and-operated and generations of several families have worked here for decades. That's not so unique in our line of business, so why bother shining a light on it? Because family is at the core of everything we do. We want the remarkable stable of talented artists that we work with to feel like they are part of a very special group and we aspire to have the drummers that choose to play our products enjoy that same feeling of community and belonging. Some may never meet their drumming idols, but they can appreciate knowing that they play the same instruments and share the same love of the craft. Other musicians are always amazed at how drummers will flock to see each other perform and endlessly talk shop with each other. Call it a common language, a common bond, or an extended family; it's a connection that cannot be denied.

Those that visit the DW factory often tell us that they can feel the solidarity here, the sense that everyone is working with a shared purpose and an understanding that what they are doing is important to so many people. It is humbling to think that so many drummers the world over have made Drum Workshop part of their personal musical journey. We realize that this collective commonality is an intangible concept. You can't package it and you can't sell it. That's a good thing, because we wouldn't want to. It's not a marketing ploy or something whipped up by today's corporate creative types. It is a feeling that you can only experience as a drummer, an understanding that offers a secure sense of knowing that you are part of a tight-knit musical community.

Extraordinary and magical things happen when an audience identifies with a brand so closely. This sort of fascination can only take root when it involves something as passionate as playing music. In the end, we can only hope that cultivating new ideas and working closely with like-minded drumming fanatics will further expand the art form and the family of drummers that comes along with it.

Scott Donnell
Editor, Edge Magazine



Contents

ARTIST FEATURES

- 4 BAND OF BROTHERS: ERIC HERNANDEZ**
Bruno Mars plays older brother and boss in this unorthodox musical family business
- 8 APPETITE FOR PERCUSSION: BRENT FITZ**
This multi-talented rocker is helping Slash set the world on fire
- 12 DW'S SUMMER TOUR: CRAIG MACINTYRE, JAMAL MOORE, AND DE'MAR HAMILTON**
What happens on this all-DW summer tour stays in Vegas
- 18 HEADS UP: DAE-DAE HADDON**
Atom Willard sheds some light on one of Pop drumming's brightest stars
- 22 NATURAL BORN DRUMMER: TONY ROYSTER, JR.**
Enjoying the view from the top of the Hip-Hop stratosphere
- 32 FAMILY TIES: RICHIE AND ROLAND GARCIA**
A father and son in perfect rhythm
- 36 NOTEWORTHY: STREET DRUM CORPS**
Frank Zumbo's post-apocalyptic percussion ensemble is making more noise than ever
- 46 I AM PUNK: ATOM WILLARD**
Punk roots and a can-do attitude define this hard-working basher
- 50 FOCUS: DEEN CASTRONOVO**
An unsung hero gets vocal about playing for the song
- 58 HEADS UP: DANNY WALKER**
Discovering one of Progressive Metal's newest odd-time keepers

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 27 DRUM CLINIC:** Zoro's half-time shuffle
- 30 20 QUESTIONS:** Steve Misamore
- 40 NEW ARTISTS**
- 42 SPOTLIGHT:** Ben Thompson

PRODUCT NEWS

- 2 JAZZ SERIES**
- 34 MDD PEDALS**
- 36 GAME OF THRONES: MARIO CALIRE**

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Jazz Series

I'VE FOUND

my sound.

by Mario Calire



Mahogany Jazz



Maple Jazz



Cherry Jazz

I have a lot of drummer friends and many of them have a certain idea of what DW drums sound like. They tend to think that Drum Workshop's shells have a very specific "modern" sound. This opinion is likely a holdover from when only one shell option existed: the Collector's Series all-Maple shell with 3-ply reinforcement hoops. I often explain to them that DW's sonic options have evolved greatly since those early days. Today, there are literally dozens of shell configurations to satisfy almost any tonal preference. The best part is that DW's Custom Shop makes very consistent, high-quality shells. I live in the area and visit the factory often, so I've seen it firsthand. It's also important to note that a well-made shell will only get better with age. It will mellow just like an acoustic guitar, getting warmer and more resonant as the moisture content lessens. In my humble opinion, the Jazz Series shell, with its soft Gumwood core, is the most versatile shell that DW makes, and I'll tell you why.

I used a backline Jazz Series kit earlier this year when Ozomatli was the house band for the televised ESPY Awards. I rarely try

new things in these circumstances, but I played them in DW's showroom a few times and thought they were impressive. Bottom line, I was stoked on the sound I got. The set was very easy to tune and the sound was boomy and full. I fell in love with the tone and received many compliments on the sound. From that day forward, I decided to get my hands on a Jazz Series kit and have them be my primary drums.

Soon after I received the set, I used it on a TV scoring session. The music was a mixture of moodier stuff and heavier Rock. On some tracks I needed a more retro, almost vintage, sound so I used a medium-to-high tuning and coated Emperors. For the heavier stuff, I needed to get a low and fat sound. I dropped the toms down as far as I could and, using the same head combination, they absolutely rumbled. The producer was more than thrilled with the drum sound and, let's face it, that's the feedback that matters the most.

Those that know me know I'm a vintage drum fanatic, and I tend to be a stickler when it comes to tone. I realize that

I have a discerning ear, but I must say that I'm truly impressed by how the Jazz Series captures the essence of these old Maple/Gum shells. Remember, these are not vintage drums, so the build quality is exceptional. The heads fit perfectly, the hardware has all of the innovative bells and whistles, and they are more than road-worthy. Although I got the Maple/Gum version, DW has added Mahogany/Gum and Cherry/Gum to the line this year. I would say that the Mahogany version is a bit warmer and the Cherry is a little more aggressive. It's a subjective choice and you really can't go wrong with any of them. It's also nice to know that DW is always considering us drummers. They're raising the bar on custom drum building and offering more sound options than ever before. Who knows, the Jazz Series might just be your sound, too. **dw**

BAND of BROTHERS

Eric Hernandez
by Scott Donnell



For this Hawaiian native, music has always been a family affair, so when his little brother became an international Pop sensation, life changed for the better. After touring the world many times over and playing to the largest audience ever to be broadcast on television, Eric Hernandez has a very grounded view of his success and is grateful that he gets to do what he loves most. In his first Edge feature interview, he discusses gear, Grammys, and the family business.

Scott Donnell: It seems like you were destined for a musical life from day one.

Eric Hernandez: I was definitely born into it. My father was a percussionist, and when we had babysitting issues, I would go with him to gigs and sit under one of his percussion stands. I literally had rhythm beaten into me! I also believe that rhythm is in the blood. I remember when I was four years old, my dad was super flashy while playing at these gigs and I would be fixated on the drummers playing the kits. He realized this and bought me my first drum kit. Ever since that early exposure, and with the help of my father and our musical blood, I've been passionately drawn to playing drums.

SD: Do you play hand percussion?

EH: I can fake it really well. I can get the sounds that I am looking for, but I could never play a full song or get the volume I needed. It takes a certain hand technique. Especially getting a good slap on a conga, forget about it! My dad and my brother can do it really well, but not me. I've always focused on playing traps, that's my thing.

SD: Did you ever get a chance to play with your father?

EH: I did. I finally got to play with my dad when I was ten years old. He put me in one of his productions when we were still living in Hawaii. He gave me my first taste

of playing on stage in front of an audience, and that really started my appreciation for the work that we were doing. We also did a show in Puerto Rico together. It was my brother's concert and it was our first time there so, as a tribute to my dad, we brought him out. My dad played congas, I played drums, and my other brother played timbales. We traded fours and created an on-the-fly Salsa tune. It went off really well. It was a special moment that was filmed, photographed and will always be remembered. Later, I recreated that set-up and we did a performance for the guests at my wedding.

SD: Looking back, that must be an

emotional thing.

EH: It is. To do a tribute to him, with him on stage, was totally awesome. And without him I don't know where I would be. He inspired me in music and helped lead me to what I always knew was in my blood.

SD: I'm guessing that even if you had a different career right now, you'd still be playing drums because it's what you love.

EH: Drums are definitely my love, and I would always find a way to keep playing. I did have to step away from music for a while for monetary reasons, just to survive. Then I realized that it hurt me. It hurt because there was something inside that I needed to express and couldn't do it. I was forcing myself to stop my musical expression. I realized that during that break from music, although I was able to put food in my stomach and a roof over my head, I should have found other outlets. Instead, I cut music out and it hurt.

SD: Describe the working relationship with your brother. Obviously, it's a business relationship, but there's also a sibling dynamic.

EH: It's kind of the best thing in the world. How many people can say that they've toured the world, played at some of the best venues, and did it all with their little brother? When I'm on stage playing the drums and I look at my brother commanding the audience, it's one of the most powerful feelings in the world. Sometimes I realize that I'm living a dream, because this is a dream, and I'm sharing it with my brother; a family member that I love dearly. It's total bliss. It's indescribable. On the flip-side of things, my younger brother, of almost ten years, is my boss, which can suck. Sometimes I need to take criticism from him that I don't agree with. In any other environment I might get more vocal, because he's my brother.

SD: Whenever you're in a heated argument with your brother, do you ever step back and realize that what you guys are accomplishing is pretty amazing?

EH: Oh yeah, because of this working situation with him, I'm able to put food on my table. I can take care of my family, and

I can now provide through my music. I can then look at it and say, "Life is good. What do you need me to do, boss?"

SD: Does that happen often?

EH: It really doesn't happen that often. I never really get that heated. You can probably tell that I am a very level-headed person. However, there are times when I'll let my emotions get the best of me. Part of it is probably due to the fact that I am his older brother. Also, I have ten years of experience on him.

SD: So, can you ever call your brother out in front of the band?

EH: Yes, but I know the proper time to call him out on things. If we're joking about something in front of the band, then I might throw a jab at him, but if it's something that needs to be discussed brother-to-brother, I'll wait for the right time and pull him aside. We don't let things fester between us. If there is something wrong between us, we air it out.

SD: How was your relationship growing up?

EH: It was a normal brotherly relationship. Ever since he was two, and I was twelve, we always had a stage set up in the house, and my dad always had instruments around. We also had a jukebox at the house and there were tons of video references we would watch. At my dad's gig, we had two risers. We had my kit on one, and Bruno would have either a guitar or a keyboard. We had drum machines at the time, so we always would make our own backing tracks. He would wait for me to come home from school and we would make a show for our dogs, or any family members that would come over. That was one of the great things that my dad did for us. Music was just there for us at all times. We had the tools and I looked forward to playing. So I would have to say that our relationship was pretty normal in the respect that we always wanted to play with each other and joke around. It wasn't normal in the sense that we only wanted to play music rather than sports, or anything else.

SD: It sounds like music was your saving grace. Are you going to provide that type

of environment for your kids?

EH: Absolutely. It's already there for my son. I'll do exactly what my dad did. I'll never force my kids to play or to sit down and practice, but I'll provide them with the tools if they want them. My son loves the drums, but now he's gravitating more towards baseball. I'd love for him to become a baseball player and make me rich. (Laughs).

SD: How do you figure out your drum parts?

EH: We usually figure them out together. When Bruno is in the writing process, we'll usually go into the studio. Sometimes, it happens before the studio. We'll do sound checks and jam as a band and find parts. Or, he may hear something he likes and have our engineer record it so we can remember what we did. Then, we'll go into the studio and work on it. He'll call me in after having mapped out some drum parts and ask me to clean them up, or work on them myself. He is a great drummer, so he knows what works. He doesn't really consider himself a drummer, but he can really play. His feel is incredible and real. So, a lot of the time we'll improvise. I may throw something extra into his kick pattern, or a snare, or backbeat. It usually starts that way and then it goes into the programming stage. But the ideas always start out organically at a sound check or in the studio. He also likes to collaborate with other producers. They'll think of something and then have me polish up the drum parts. That's another great thing about our relationship, I never have to pressure him to be like, "Hey, put me on a record." He knows what he wants; he has his team and his formula. I'm just happy to be part of the birthing process of what may become a radio smash. I've collaborated with his team on some big songs and I'm honored to be part of the line-up.

SD: Do you try to emulate the vibe of the programmed drum parts, or are you trying to make it sound more human and organic?

EH: We try to sound less quantized, but try to play the record to its original form. When Bruno writes a song, he thinks about how it will sound on stage versus

the studio. So by the time we are in a studio, we already have this amazing live song. He doesn't worry about the studio/radio version. He cares about how it's going to be interpreted live. It is easier for a musician to come into a song when it's already jamming. It's nice to be authentic in that way. Sure, there are times where I need to trigger sounds, but he likes to stay true-to-form and keep things simple. He's into the feeling and doesn't like unnecessary business.

SD: You mentioned triggers. Were you always into music technology, or is it something you got into by necessity?

EH: I'm more of a dinosaur. I grew up playing an acoustic kit and that's all I knew. Then, I realized the importance of integrating electronics. I am fortunate enough to play a hybrid kit, instead of going full-electronic. I've done that on some gigs and it isn't nearly as fun. I'm not really that good at the electronic stuff, but my techs are and I am always having them show me things. I'm thirty-eight years old and I struggle with opening my mind up to new things, but the reality is I need to stay current. I need to know the technology and how to use it. But, to answer your question about electronics, this isn't a very electronic gig. Bruno likes live sounds. There are a few things, but the majority of it is live. That's what he wants and that's why he has a nine-piece band.

SD: Tell us about last year's Super Bowl. I read somewhere that it was the most watched television half-time show ever.

EH: It was the biggest, most watched half-time music performance of all-time. It had 115 million viewers and it was the most talked about show ever. And now I've heard something about the NFL actually charging artists for that type of exposure.

SD: We'll see if that flies.

EH: Yeah, that will be some trick, trying to get the right talent there and then charging them.

SD: Did you feel the pressure of the 115 million viewers, or did you treat it like any other show?

EH: Both, really. Looking back on it now, the Super Bowl was one of the most amazing experiences of my life, as a musician. I remember going to my first Grammys in 2010 and thinking that they are like the Super Bowl for musicians and we get to do it. I've played the Grammys three times now and I feel like that is the biggest music show you can do on TV. But to actually play at the Super Bowl is pretty incredible. It's a memory I will never forget. There was so much excitement leading up to that performance, but then it died down and once I began rehearsing, it turned into any other gig. By the time the date arrived, it didn't really faze me very much. That day, when I got to the stadium, I was like, "Holy sh*t, I'm doing the Super Bowl!" That was when the butterflies set in. When the music kicked in and I was on the riser, I was nervous for the first two bars. After that, I calmed down and played like any other gig. I knew the material and I was ready to go.

SD: You recently performed at The Hollywood Bowl for two sold-out nights and included a medley of cover songs that you used to play at a bar down the street. How did that feel? I know L.A. is your adopted hometown.

EH: I hate to keep using this word, but it was incredible. To sum up my life and my career since 2010, it really has been amazing. I'm very thankful and honored for every experience. And you're right, I consider L.A. my home now. We usually don't play those cover songs, but L.A. is special. It's where Bruno and I started, playing in small pubs to six people. We felt like we had to do something to pay homage to that. To think that we started at Pickwick's Pub and White Harte Pub on Ventura Boulevard playing those exact covers is humbling. We dreamed of one day playing The Hollywood Bowl; so to be there for two nights, on one of the most legendary stages? It's indescribable.

SD: The medley went over really well with the audience. I don't know how you perceived it up on stage, but from where we were sitting, it was clear that you were paying homage to your beginnings. It

really got people emotionally invested in the show.

EH: That's awesome to hear because that was what it was like for us. We used to cover bands like Poison or Zeppelin, and now we are playing for an audience and telling them our story from the backside. And the cool thing is, the owner of Pickwick's Pub was in the audience that night and Bruno didn't know it. So, he got to hear Bruno tell the story. It was pretty awesome.

SD: Is there a venue that you haven't played yet that you really want to play?

EH: Because L.A. is such a home for me, I would have to say Dodger Stadium. Being a huge baseball fan, I would really love to play there.

SD: Do you have a backstage routine?

EH: I wait until about 45 minutes before taking the stage to warm-up. I'll call my wife and son and ask them to wish me luck, and then we'll do a pre-show toast and pray. It's like clockwork.

SD: Do you practice on a pillow or pads?

EH: I have the DW practice pads. I use a pillow at lower-end venues, or if there's a couch I'll play on it. Single-strokes, double-strokes, and paradiddles, just to get the blood flowing.

SD: Can you tell the readers what kit you're currently playing?

EH: I'm playing a DW Collector's Series "Gold Top" Lacquer Maple VLT kit with 10" and 12" rack toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, and a 22" kick. My snare size has always been a 7x14". I've got nothing but good reviews about them from other artists and colleagues.

SD: Kudos to your front-of-house engineer and to your drum tech, Jason. Everything sounds top-notch. He does a really nice job with tuning your drums. And while I am dishing out compliments, you get a really good sound out of those drums and cymbals. You don't play too hard, just enough so that everything sings and resonates like it should.

EH: Thanks, I agree with you 100%.

There's an approach to the kit and cymbals, as well as how to hit a snare drum. I can get a solid crack out of a snare, and I know that's not always easy for some players.

SD: Same with your foot technique.

EH: Exactly. Then again, it comes down to my drum tech and front-of-house man. They know my sound and spend a lot of time on my kit. But it's not all about the drums; it's about everyone in the band. They're all very detailed and articulate. However, I'm very lucky that the front-of-house man likes drums.

SD: It's a big band with a lot of instrumentation, but the mix never sounds muddy. I've seen you twice now and your sounds are very consistent, which isn't always easy because different venues have different acoustics.

EH: You know, The Hollywood Bowl had amazing sound.

SD: Do you do any of the tweaking on your drum kit, or does Jason take care of that side of things?

EH: I do, sometimes. I tune my drums by ear but Jason is a little more technical. If something doesn't sound right to me, he may come in. We'll disagree at times, but he'll explain what he's hearing. I may tweak it, or tune up or down, but that's rare because he usually has it down.

SD: Can you describe your ideal drum sound?

EH: I definitely want that big, 80's Rock, Phil Collins drum sound. My front-of-house guy and I have both grown with this gig. We've both been here since day one, and we're really close. We talk all of the time. He used to gate the crap out of my drums and I would tell him, "No, let's let these drums sing a little because they have notes." He's grown so much as an engineer. He can explain his reasoning behind everything he does and I get it. We've tried everything from opening up the gates to putting triggers on the drums, but he doesn't have to do that because his boss is Bruno, too. Ultimately, he wants the whole picture to look great. I would have to say that 80's/90's Rock drum

sound: solid and open, with a lot of tone. I want to hear the shells sing and the notes decay nicely. Same with the snare, I want it to crack, but I don't want it to be thin. I want it punchy and chunky.

SD: Talk about joining the DW family. In what ways have your companies supported you during the past few years?

EH: I am very fortunate to have all of my favorite companies supporting me. DW is special to me because I actually purchased my first DW kit in 1992, when I was in high school. At the time, I was working in my dad's show. When it was over, the venue turned into a night club. The drummer always had a really cool DW kit. I was in awe of it and I asked him if he would let me play it. That's when I fell in love with those drums and wanted to own a DW kit one day. Well, in 1992, the drummer wanted to get a new kit and asked if I wanted to buy it. He told me that, at the time, only two drummers owned that color: Tommy Lee and him. I got some money from a friend and bought it. I wasn't thinking about endorsements or being supported by DW. When I started thinking about doing music for my career, at about sixteen or seventeen, I thought about becoming a DW artist. I still own it today; it's in my drum room. Fast-forward to 2012 and I had the opportunity to join the DW roster. It started a little bit after my career got noticed, which I liked because it made it more real. I was at a lunch with Vic Firth and the Firth family, along with Dave Elitch. We started talking and he said that I should come over to DW. I told him that it was my dream and explained my backstory with the DW kit. He made a phone call and I had my first meeting. I like how my relationship with DW has evolved; it is very organic.

SD: DW is a very relationship-based company. At times, I think we can be artist-friendly to our detriment because sometimes we make pro-artist decisions over financial ones. We started as a school and we want to teach and support. It's a very unique situation. I think that by nurturing these relationships, it helps make our connections long-lived and

shows a mutual respect for the artist and instrument-maker.

EH: Yep, exactly. DW until I die!

SD: What are your favorite and least favorite parts about touring?

EH: My favorite part of touring is playing. I love feeling the response from the audience. I escape from reality. There is nothing I would rather be doing, except being a father. My least favorite part is being away from my son, my four-month-old daughter, and my wife, of course. That's easily the hardest part about touring. I miss them like crazy, and when I go places and see some of the things I have seen, I want to be able to share it with my family. I always make a mental note and think about taking them back there someday. The only time my mind isn't thinking about my family is when I am playing on stage. I get lost in it.

SD: What do you do when you're on the road and not playing?

EH: If I'm not playing, I'm exercising. I have a workout regimen now. When I am not doing that, I'm FaceTiming back home. Other than that, I have a normal routine. I wake up, eat breakfast, sound check, and other daily stuff.

SD: What do you do when you're home?

EH: I'm so consumed with being a dad. Today was picture day at school so I took my son. I love taking them to school. I load them up in the car and take them to baseball. I suck at baseball, but I want to be there and teach him to the best of my abilities!

SD: Who do you idolize?

EH: My dad and my little brother. All of our ideals came from what our dad instilled in us. The visuals and musical styles in the show are inspired by what he used to do. Not on this scale, but his influences are there. I see a lot of my dad in my little brother. And when Bruno produces a show or a new song, I see those influences coming through. Our father is witty, smart, and at the core of what we do. If I could be half the man my father is, it would be awesome. He's my hero. **DW**

BRENT Fitz

by Scott Donnell

Slash's drummer, Brent Fitz, has found a way to live the Rock dream in a time when music may be more fragmented than ever. He was not an overnight success, by any means, but to many fans it might seem like he's come out of nowhere to snag a prized gig with one of Rock's most legendary guitar heroes. We caught up with Brent in his hometown of Las Vegas to learn how this small-town Canadian rocker makes good.

Scott Donnell: So, how many tours have you done with Slash and this particular line-up?

Brent Fitz: I would have to say three, because we started on his solo record first. Then, we moved to *Apocalyptic Love*. This is a lead-in tour because we're opening for Aerosmith until our record comes out in a couple months, then we will be going out on our own. We're on tour for the upcoming record right now, but it's cool because we get to play a lot of our older music, mixed with some of our new songs. We don't push the new songs too hard because nobody's heard them, yet.

SD: What type of reaction are you getting? Sometimes, when an artist plays new material, there can be a mixed response.

BF: It's good! But, yeah, I know what you mean. Everyone will be singing along

with a song and then during the next one they kind of tilt their heads to the side, like a dog would. "Do we like this one? Yeah, okay."

SD: It must be cool to win them over with new music.

BF: Yeah. But then, after the show, they want to hear it again and are wondering where they can get the tangible CD. Well, they'll have to wait two months. But, it's all good.

SD: How did you get hooked up with Slash? How did that whole meeting come about?

BF: I think the story started once I moved to L.A. I never had a resume, or anything, and I grew up in Canada where nothing I did prior to the move even mattered. I was, basically, starting over. I had a bunch

of touring experience with a lot of great musicians, but once I moved to L.A., I had to figure out a way to show people what I had done. I needed to get introduced to people for cooler gigs. I mostly got shows based off of recommendations. Every gig I ever got was from somebody looking out for me and suggesting me. So, I never went through the auditions.

SD: That says a lot about you as a person and a musician.

BF: You have to be able to deliver, right? I would have to say my niche is that I can play piano and sing. I feel like that makes me stand out. Sometimes a Rock drummer doing a Jazz gig isn't always the best thing, so I think it was my piano playing that helped me on a musical level. I know that it helped me back when Vince Neil was looking for a drummer. There are

probably plenty of great drummers that can play Tommy Lee's parts, but you also have to play "Home Sweet Home" and that instantly knocks out a whole bunch of contenders. When I got that call they told me that they had been asking around, and I was the only guy who could fit the part and play piano. I was like, "Ok, fair enough." That gig led to others. Next, I was able to fill in with Alice Cooper. I think Slash connected with the fact that the Alice Cooper gig had a lot of music that had to be learned. Plus, he's friends with Alice, so he probably thought that if I was good enough for Alice, I would be good enough for him.

SD: Who was the actual person that recommended you to Slash?

BF: It was a tour manager that worked with Velvet Revolver. It's a crazy, convoluted story, but I swear it was my piano playing that got me introduced to Slash. There was a show here in Vegas called *Monster Circus*, which was a group of guys doing a Rock spectacle. It had Dee Snider singing, Fred Coury was on drums, Bruce Kulick on guitar, John Corabi, Rudy Sarzo, and Tony Montana...all these guys put this band together. There is another show in town that is very similar.

SD: The Raiding the Rock Vault show?

BF: Yeah! Jay Schellen is the drummer for that one. Fred Coury was also the drummer, so they had two DW artists. I was already in a band with Bruce Kulick and John Corabi and they told me that they were in Vegas to do that show. Ironically, I was playing bass in another gig out of town when Bruce called me to tell me about the Vegas show. I was like, "Damn, I'm going to miss it." He read off the set list and there were some Whitesnake tunes on it. I asked who was going to be playing the keyboards, and Bruce said, "No one." So, I showed up Monday morning with my keyboard rig, and I didn't even know anything about these guys. I just walked up and said, "I heard you don't have a keyboard player." Then, they added me to the show!

SD: Is that why you moved to Vegas?

BF: No, I've been here for years. It just

kind of worked out because they already had a drummer and I sort of fit myself into the gig. And it just so happened that the manager for that show also worked with Velvet Revolver. He recommended me at the time Slash was looking to put a band together. He called me up and said, "Slash is putting a band together to finish this record, so I put your name in the hat." So, if it wasn't for the gig in Vegas, I may have never had this opportunity.

SD: How is the music scene in the States different than the music scene in Canada?

BF: As a player in Canada, you get a lot of stage time but not a lot of opportunity. There are a lot of musicians up there that get really good, but unless you are willing to take the plunge and move to a more dangerous, fertile city like New York or L.A., you may never break through. I was stupid enough to have the balls to come down here, because I was a big fish in a small pond. I played with so many great artists up there, but as soon as I moved down here, it was as if I knew nothing.

SD: There are some common threads here. We recently interviewed Craig Macintyre with the Goo Goo Dolls. Do you know Craig?

BF: Yeah, he is a great dude.

SD: Well, he's from a small town in Massachusetts, and he was talking about making that leap. He was also a big fish in Boston, but he packed up and moved to L.A. I think you need confidence in your ability, as well as a little blind faith, to make that move.

BF: I think I knew that I'd done enough time in the trenches in Canada. It's changed since I've been up there. I used to play at clubs when I was under-age. It was cool to play in front of people and be able to get all of the bad notes out by performing, and not just practicing. So, I got that down. Then, I really wanted to connect with other drummers, maybe some of my heroes. But my heroes were not in Canada, they were all in L.A. or New York, so I figured that if I moved, I may just get a shot at hooking up with them.

SD: At some point, you have to stretch out. You have to guess when the time is right.

BF: I figured it was time. I was twenty-six years old and I loved playing music from the late 70's and 80's. That scene in L.A. was riveting, from Guns N' Roses to Mötley Crüe. Those bands were the pinnacle for me, but when I got here, in 1996, it was just confusing. Everyone was asking, "What is going on right now?" and I was like, "I'm here, let's do this!" And they were pretty much telling me, "Sorry, you missed it." Then I had to figure out what the next wave of new music was going to be. Luckily, the next band that I got to work with had Bruce Kulick (former Kiss) and John Corabi (former Mötley Crüe) in it. They were from two bands that I really admired.

SD: What label were you on?

BF: We were on a New York label called Spitfire. Very independent stuff.

SD: Did they have wide distribution?

BF: Really, there wasn't enough hype because they weren't original members of their former bands and we were doing something completely new. We went 'indie' on it. I loved it because I was starting from zero and building a career. It was funny because everyone would say, "The band is: Bruce from Kiss, John from Mötley Crüe, James from David Lee Roth, and some guy from Canada." That was my title. Ironically, I recently talked with Bruce and John, and they were telling me that I was the guy that was able to use that experience. I somehow found a way to build off of it and turn it into a lasting thing.

SD: Now, you're playing with a guitar god, making records, and performing at major venues. What's it like going back to your hometown?

BF: There are always some naysayers. I have some musician friends back home that look in the mirror and wish they'd taken that plunge. It's not that I was the best drummer; I was just the most focused at making a career in music. You always have to deliver as a player. I didn't spend too much time practicing in my basement;

I made sure that I was playing with other people.

SD: It must be fun to go home these days.

BF: Yeah, whether it's my hometown or here in Vegas, it's still gratifying and humbling. I have so much respect for everyone in the band and, of course, Slash. I've lived in Vegas for ten years and I've seen a hundred shows at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, and now I'm playing there tonight! It is surreal.

SD: I recently saw a video of a clinic you did up in Canada. It was really cool because your program wasn't focused as much on paradiddles or even drumming, necessarily. It was more about getting your head in the right place. Learning how to play music, to play for the song, and make a career out of music. Is education something that you want to keep pursuing?

BF: Yeah, I went to a million clinics back in Canada. A lot of my heroes gave me really good information at clinics. So, if I have the opportunity to pass that information on, then I will. I can't remember if it was Chester Thompson or Harvey Mason, but at one of those clinics, they talked about piano playing. I remember hearing, "If all of you in here don't expand your understanding of music and learn the piano, or another instrument, you will all be screwed in the music industry." I was probably twelve years old at the time, and everyone in the room was mumbling, "What, are you kidding me?" I had been playing piano for years and I thought that I might actually have a shot at this. That quote stuck with me. It wasn't very drum-related, but it stuck. And I've been to so many clinics where the clinician would teach things that were way over my head. I just wanted to know how to get to where they were. So, at my clinics, I like to get people all fired-up.

SD: How did you make the transition from piano to drums?

BF: Well, all kids want to be inspired to pick up an instrument. I played piano because my parents said it would be good for me but, you know how it is, a kid sees

their hero and wants to do what they're doing. I looked at Slash and said, "I want to do that!" All of my friends played guitar, so I thought that if I ever wanted to be in a band with them, I should learn how to play drums.

SD: So, your educational background began with piano and grew into drums. Did you study drums?

BF: Oh yeah, I took lessons from a really good Jazz drummer and his son. And I learned a lot of Jazz and Rock. I love Jazz, but I wanted to specialize in one area. I didn't want to be the guy that dabbled in Jazz, dabbled in Rock, and was also a Country drummer. I have done a lot of those gigs, and that's where piano has helped me, but I'm not going to fool myself into thinking that my Jazz playing is as good as my Rock playing.

SD: What are your top five favorite Rock bands?

BF: The Beatles are beyond the realm of music. Then, I would have to put The Rolling Stones right up there. But Kiss was the band that inspired me to be a drummer. Van Halen was such a massive influence, too. Everyone says that John Bonham was a strong influence, as well, but I started playing in 1980, the year he died. I remember playing Zeppelin tunes in the basement with my friends, without even knowing that he died. Rush is good, too. Everyone in Canada is a Rush fan. I mean they're a great band, but I never looked at them as Canada's national Rock band.

SD: They might as well be Canada's national treasure.

BF: I do have to say, I used to come home from school every day and put on side one of *Moving Pictures* and want to nail those parts because of Neil Peart. The thing about studying those older Rush records is how he replicates what we all love about them. When you see him live, he doesn't disappoint.

SD: Everyone is air drumming in the audience.

BF: When I'm playing a Guns N' Roses

song with Slash, I don't have license to play how I want to play. To me, those songs are special and people are familiar with how the parts go, so I am going to be Steven Adler, in my own best interpretation. When you see Neil live, he nails everything. He still strives for that.

SD: Everything is very calculated. He isn't a 'jammy' type of drummer.

BF: But, he's taken the time prior to recording to figure out the songs. That's another thing I've adopted with the Slash gig. We do a lot of pre-production to nail down the parts, so when we're in the studio, I'm not trying to figure out what I'm feeling when the red light is on. I would choke if that were the case. After the pre-production, I feel more relaxed and I play better. I think it's part of that Neil Peart mentality.

SD: What would be your list of top five 'desert island' albums?

BF: Donald Fagan's *The Nightfly*, Jellyfish's *Spilt Milk*, Rush's *Moving Pictures*, Van Halen's *Diver Down*, and Cheap Trick's *Dream Police*.

SD: Top five drummers?

BF: Jeff Porcaro, Dave Grohl, Neil Peart, Buddy Rich, and Tommy Lee, from back in the day.

SD: Back when he was more raw.

BF: We were watching the music video for "Too Young to Fall in Love" on the bus last night and we were like, "Man, Tommy Lee is inspiring!"

SD: He was the quintessential Sunset Strip/arena rock star.

BF: He was the guy, so I have to include him on the list.

SD: Before that, he was still kicking ass at The Roxy and the Santa Monica Civic Center. Have you ever seen the US Festival footage?

BF: Yeah, his kit wasn't even complete yet! The toms didn't match the other drums. I still watch his videos.

SD: How about the 'way-too-deep'

marching snare drum? Speaking of snares, which one are you playing these days?

BF: I have the 6.5" deep Steel snare, which is consistently my favorite to play live. I also have a Bronze one that I like to record with, and I've played the Edge snares a bunch.

SD: What are you using on this tour?

BF: The Steel snare. I was going to go with the Stainless Steel this time, but that's a better studio drum for me. I do have some old Steel DW snares with triple-flanged hoops, but I love the new True Hoop rims on this shell.

SD: What type of shells is your kit made with?

BF: It's the Jazz Series in 13", 16", and 18" standard sizes.

SD: Which of the Jazz shell configurations are they?

BF: Maple/Gum. The kick is Maple to accommodate the size. I usually like to record with a smaller bass drum, but the 28" is all for looks. I really feel good with a big kick drum when I play live.

SD: You're also a big Maple/Mahogany fan, right?

BF: Yeah. I was really scared doing that video for you guys. You threw me in there with some legends!

SD: That's the beauty of doing something like that; there were drumming representatives of all musical genres together: You, Dave Elitch, Trevor Lawrence Jr., Alex Gonzales, and Aaron Spears. Having that much diverse talent in one room helped demonstrate and reinforce the versatility of those shells. You flew the Rock flag, so to speak.

BF: Those drums are cool because I didn't have to break them in. I was trying to see how they spoke to me, and they felt old and very familiar. They were comfortable, unlike most new kits. So, if that's what that wood combo does, then it works! It felt like I had already recorded thirty albums on that kit. It was exactly how I wanted it to feel. But then again, that's DW. **dw**



Jamal Moore, Craig Macintyre & D'Mar Hamilton

DW'S SummerTour

by Scott Donnell



It doesn't happen often, but when every drummer on a triple bill is playing a DW kit, we take notice. It's a fun feeling knowing that your fellow touring drummers share the same enthusiasm for their drum brand of choice. Inevitably, shop talk ensues. We caught up with De'Mar Hamilton of Plain White T's, Daughtry's Jamal Moore, and Craig Macintyre of the Goo Goo Dolls in Las Vegas to share in the camaraderie.

Scott Donnell: How's the tour going, so far?

Jamal Moore: It has been really amazing! It's been a lot of fun and I've met a lot of new people on the road.

SD: Tell the Edge readers a little about this tour set-up, if you would be so kind.

JM: It's a little weird because I am playing the most drums out of anyone on this tour. Everyone else is using a four-piece kit and I'm using a six-piece. I have 10", 12", 16", 18" toms, a 22" kick, and a 14" snare drum. It's a White Satin Design Series kit and it looks amazing under all the lights!

SD: So, what kind of a drum sound are you going for on this tour?

JM: I'm going for a very big sound. I was contemplating playing 12", 13", 16", and 18" toms but I decided to use the 10" and 12" because Daughtry has some Pop tunes and I wanted to have a 10" rack tom for them. If I could have got away with a 24" kick, I would have. My crashes are 20" and 21". They're huge.

SD: How big are the hi-hats?

JM: All of my hi-hats are 15". I wanted to play 16" hats, but I kept cutting my hand, so I was like, "Maybe I should move on down."

SD: Does an inch make a difference?

JM: Yes, it does.

SD: How did you end up on a Rock tour like this, anyway?

JM: I get asked this question a lot. When I was 19 years old, I filled in for Aaron (Spears) on the Backstreet Boys tour when he left to do something else. The MD for the Backstreet Boys was a guy named Arnie Guild. We worked together over the years. Our last collaboration was with CeeLo Green about a year ago. Anyway, Daughtry was going through some stuff and they needed a new drummer and Arnie was in charge at the time. It came down to two drummers and, in the end, they chose me, which was pretty cool.

SD: Was there an audition process?

JM: Nope.

SD: So, it was all about who you knew.

JM: Basically, I sent a couple of videos of my performances to Chris (Daughtry) and the rest of the band. They thought I was cool, and my manager was like, "They want to hire you." They sent me the music on a Wednesday and our first rehearsal was on Friday. I just crammed it all in, had fun, and got through it. That Friday was our first rehearsal with the program and the following Friday was the first gig in Canada! I've been working with them ever since.

SD: Is there a difference between working a Rock gig like this, versus a Pop or Hip-Hop show?

JM: Yes. For me, Hip-Hop, R&B, and Pop are all about hitting the right patterns on the records. It's hard to explain, but you feel like you only have about two seconds to express yourself. They're more structured. Rock is more open to different things. Of course, you have to play the patterns that are on the records, but you can also express yourself.

SD: And is Daughtry cool with that?

JM: They are super cool with it, but I was worried about it at first. I was worried whether they were going to allow me to express myself or not, but they've been very open to it. We even have this song where we set up solos and get everyone involved. They like all of that stuff, which is cool because I was on my way to playing some Jazz or Fusion because I was so over playing structured material.

SD: Now you get to stretch out.

JM: Yeah, it's pretty amazing and super fun.

SD: Did you have to tailor your playing style to suit the gig?

JM: Yeah, I changed my style up because I wanted it to sound more authentic. I didn't want to be playing a bunch of R&B or Gospel fills. I wanted to do Rock music, so I began rehearsing and I studied the guys that I thought were amazing.

SD: Like who?

JM: Before I even got the gig, I was studying guys like John Bonham and Chad Smith. I was trying to soak in their styles and approaches. One thing I try to do at every show is play from my heart, and I believe that those two guys were always playing from their heart. I mean, they were playing Rock music, but it was heartfelt. I kind of wanted to have that vibe and that approach. I studied them for maybe a month before I did this thing, and as time went on, the band gave me even more suggestions. I was always going up to them and saying, "Man, what do you listen to?" They know because they were playing Rock music in our dressing room all the time! I was like, "Cool, let's get it in."

SD: I'm guessing that experiencing other genres like this is going to help your core. When you get back into other gigs, Jazz or whatever that may be, you'll have an expanded vocabulary.

JM: Heck yeah, and I'm super excited about that! And I am very excited to be playing Rock music, man. I was talking with my girl the other day and I was saying, "You know, I've played Pop, Hip-Hop, R&B, even some Country stuff, and now I am playing Rock!" I feel pretty good right now. For being a 26-year-old that started to tour at 19, I'm not doing too shabby. I'm growing.

SD: What preparation for this gig have you had, other than studying those Rock influences? Were you woodshedding? Were you studying new fills?

JM: I was studying everything. I would put music on in the car and just ride around while soaking it in.

SD: Ear training.

JM: Yeah. You know, after you listen to something for so long, you kind of know how to play it. So, I would just go downstairs, practice along with the records, and just go from there.



SD: Do you play along with your iPod?

JM: Of course! You're never too old to do that! That was my process, nothing too hard. I never charted anything out; I just listened and then tried to play it.

SD: You mentioned that you listened to a lot of Rock for this gig. What other types of music do you listen to?

JM: I'm the guy that listens to everything. I will sit there and listen to Take 6 and I'll play along with them!

SD: What tips would you give to aspiring drummers? What advice do you have, as far as what not to do?

JM: Wow, I would have to say that they shouldn't get cocky or full of themselves. I feel like there are different strokes for different folks, and everyone has different opportunities. The way I got in isn't the same way someone else may get in. I just feel like no matter what situation you are in, you should stay humble. A lot of people say that all the time, but it's important. You're on the road with your bandmates for a while and nobody wants to be the guy that everyone thinks is full of himself, the guy no one wants to hang out with. Even if

you're the sh*t, you need to stay humble or people are going to talk behind your back. Then, when you hit rock bottom, you will really hit rock bottom.

SD: Can you recall any mistakes that you've made as a professional player?

JM: You know, I've had a lot of people in my life tell me about the mistakes they've made and that has helped me to stay on the right track. One thing I realize now is that sometimes I didn't take situations as seriously as I should have.

SD: You mean with your playing?

JM: Yeah, with my playing on records. You never know who will be listening to those records. I think about how I should have played a little better or how I should have been more prepared.

SD: So, you mean keeping your head in the game?

JM: Yeah, I shouldn't have been lazy, or expected to play hard without working hard, or gone out drinking instead of practicing, or choosing to mess around with social media instead of preparing. I really should have been listening to the music and practicing more. It didn't happen a lot, maybe on two or three records, but you never know who will be watching.

SD: How do you plan to take your drumming career to the next level?

JM: There are a couple things. I am in the process of building my brand. When I say 'building my brand' I mean more than just Jamal, the drummer. I am also Jamal, the father. I have two kids. I love God and I know I have been blessed with a gift. I love clothes, I love shoes, and I love artist development. I have a couple of artists that I work with back home. They aren't just friends, they're legitimate artists and they consider me to be their producer. Like when I went home this past weekend, I spent a few days with my family, but two of those days were dedicated to me finishing up records for some of these artists. I'm trying to span farther than just Jamal, the drummer. I'm a drummer, but I am so much more. I want drumming to be a part of the Jamal brand tree. Of course, I'm still practicing and listening to the younger drummers work. I want to better myself as a player, but also better my brand. In order for me to continue the

way I want to continue, I have to focus on expanding because I don't always want to be on tour. I want to be my own thing.

SD: Jamal, Inc.

JM: I like that: Jamal, Inc. I might give you a cut in that business!

Scott Donnell: This seems like a really fun tour for you. How's it going, so far?

Craig Macintyre: We are six weeks in and it's amazing! We're about halfway through it and everyone is super great. The drummers are kicking each others' butts every night.



SD: Tell us about the kit that you're playing now.

CM: I got this kit last year, but this is the first time that I've played it on tour. It's a Collector's Cherry kit wrapped in Ruby Red Glass Finish Ply. When I first signed on with DW, every wrap I got was Broken Glass but now, I've finally got the one I've always wanted. This is the perfect gig for this Cherry kit. I play really hard on these drums because they're built strong. I'm using two-ply heads, but they feel very buttery, respond nicely, and don't sound dead at all. I'm using a 22" kick with 13" and 16" toms; it's a really basic set-up. The only other drum I have on the kit is a Collector's Mahogany 14x24" kick, which I have suspended off to the side as a kind of orchestral/bombastic drum. Sometimes, I'll use a trigger on it for big, over-the-top endings. You know, the last 'bom-bom' of the song. It sounds like a bomb just went off! I like small kits (not necessarily small drums, just smaller set-ups) but when I'm on tour, that particular drum beefs things up a bit.

SD: That's because of your playing style? You're not really tailoring your set-up for this gig, right?

CM: Yeah, that's due to my playing. I've been on tours where I've had two rack toms, two floor toms, and a kick because the gig called for it. In a perfect world, I'm happy with a four-piece kit. That was learned by necessity. Growing up, that's all you could play. It was all you could fit in a car. And even when I was lucky enough to get bigger gigs where there were techs or trucks to carry my kits, I have always been more comfortable with a four-piece. My style uses a circular movement, a Freddie Gruber kind of thing, where everything I need is there in a four-piece. I'm very 'wristy' when I play, and not very 'reaching' or all-over-the-place because I have a very relaxed feel going on.

SD: Did you try to achieve a certain sound for this tour?

CM: I asked Garrison (DW's Artist Relations Manager) to go over the sonic spectrum with me and explain all of the sounds DW has to offer these days. When I filmed for Drum Channel with Don Lombardi a while back, the kit I flipped-out over was the Classics Series, because I love vintage gear. Then, I got a Jazz Series kit. Since then, I have been moving towards Exotics or the newer boutique lines. I thought that if I played a standard DW Maple Collector's kit at every show, it would become part of my sound. So, when I talked with Garrison I asked, "What's the closest you have to that, but with something a little more unique?" He recommended the Cherry kit because it is less resonant, but still has a bigger sound and a unique musicality.

SD: So, you've been gravitating toward a more modern sound these days?

CM: Yeah, a more modern sound and something that would work better with two-ply heads because single-ply heads weren't lasting for me. I would go through them every night. I knew that the Collector's Maple, Cherry, or Birch shells would take to the clear Emperors and would give me that thick sound.

SD: With that said, what's your relationship with your drum tech like? Did you figure this out all on your own because you had a handle on the sound you were achieving? Does he just maintain the equipment, or

do you work things out together?

CM: I figured this out when I was on the tour. They already had a guy that was a drum tech and would run Pro Tools, too. So, I didn't want to get too involved and bring in one of my guys. If he would've screwed up on the computer, they would be like, "Oh look, that's Craig's guy." So, I was willing to put up with the imperfections in sound. Their previous drummer had been in the band for eighteen years, so it was a huge shift. The tech wasn't very drum savvy, but he was good with the computer. So, I took it into my own hands and bounced ideas off of my other drummer friends. I paid attention to what gear the other drummer used and, luckily, we did use the same types of heads and cymbals. So, as far as the band was concerned, I was able to become sonically familiar. At the same time, when you are a new drummer on a new gig the band is always going to say, "Do your thing." You start adding a little personality, but the group is used to the way the songs have been played for fifteen years. You really have to walk that line. And if a drummer has been in a band for that long, you know he has come up with good drum parts, so you have to honor those little fills. You have to find that happy medium.

SD: How did you get this gig?

CM: I've known the guitarist for twelve years. We hadn't played together too much in the past, but we've made records together. One day, he called me up and said their original drummer was taking some time off and they wanted to know if I would sub for a few gigs. I had to learn thirty-five songs, and I was already working with another artist at the time. I told him that I would love to play with the Goo Goo Dolls, but the gig is never going to be mine and that was a lot of work for something that was only temporary. It could've potentially jeopardized what I was doing, and that was going to be much more long-term. So, it was a great call to get, but it was something that I couldn't do. Then, a month later, I got another call. They asked if I was still interested in playing with the band. The first thing that went through my head was, "Is their drummer going to be taking more time off?" I thought I would be able to work part time, and that it would be worth it. They explained that they had parted ways with their drummer and had a

tour coming up. They were totally trusting in me. I didn't know anyone in the band, except for the guitar player.

SD: So, were there auditions?

CM: No, there was just some texting and emailing back-and-forth for about a month. I had never been in the same room with these guys. It was strange, but I was really flattered that it was all based on a recommendation. I didn't say anything to any of my friends until after I met with the band and played with them. I had to wait it out, and I was trying to juggle my other gig, as well. It was just an awkward time. It's a problem that I think many musicians run into, but I just took it one day at a time. I called the guitarist and he said, "We're good, we're doing it!" I asked if they were sure, and he said that they were checking me out on YouTube and that they were stoked to play with me. I was wondering what they were watching on YouTube because it had everything from me playing bar gigs to ten-year-old interviews! The stars were lining up and the more I relaxed, the easier everything became.

SD: What's the chemistry like now that you guys are playing together?

CM: Wonderful! It's great. It's kind of a funny story, actually. The band is from Buffalo, New York, and they're very proud of it. They're very blue collar, 'came-from-nothing' kind of guys. And I'm from a similar city in Massachusetts with a similar background. I had a good family and a good life, but if I had never played music, odds are I would be working in a factory. So, this was the first band that wanted me to tell people that I was from Worcester, Massachusetts. They wanted someone that had sweated it out their whole life to get where they are; someone who had played crappy bars and free gigs, just like they did. That has definitely fed into the chemistry a bit. We also come from very Punk backgrounds. I mean, when I was a teenager, it was all I played.

SD: You said you had to learn thirty-five songs for this gig. Did you learn them in an organic, garage band, Punk kind of way, or did you meticulously chart them out?

CM: Luckily, in that month-long period where I didn't know if the gig was happening, or not, their music stayed in the CD player in my car. I asked my friend

in the band if there were any essential songs they wanted me to know and had him send me a set list. So, I just made a playlist of the set and listened to it over and over. Then, I went back and made notes.

SD: So, you used bullet points and notes more than music charts?

CM: Yeah, but my goal was to not be reading anything at all. There were one or two songs that I had to chart out because they had very distinct bass drum patterns, but I never had to set up a music stand. That was nice because I've worked with artists that require a lot of reading. I've played with orchestras, but I really wanted to show them that I was a Punk-type of player.

SD: Do you like going on tour or do you prefer studio gigs?

CM: That is an age-old question. I would have to say it's 50/50. I know a lot of artists that do prefer the studio over touring, though.

SD: I've noticed that artists are moving more toward studio work and I think it's because that side of the business is evaporating a bit. It's a matter of wanting what you can't have.

CM: I also think it has a lot to do with lifestyle. Many of my friends have been lucky enough to land really great studio gigs. On the other hand, I've had friends call me to complain about studio sessions. They'll talk about how they've been out of the live scene for so long, and ask if I know of any available gigs. I've never had the luxury to choose. I just took everything that was offered and now I don't really have a preference. In the studio, you're really under the microscope. Some things that I thought I did really well on stage were not as strong in the studio. Playing live is where you can take chances and test your stamina. In the studio, you play one song and then it's time for lunch.

SD: What do you look for in a drum company?

CM: Support is important. Also, the feeling of being around a local company that I can visit goes a long way. I toured the DW factory for the first time and learned about the history of the company; I was just fascinated!

SD: I think it's important for the

drumming community to know that all three drummers on this tour paid for their kits. A lot of people, especially social media users, are under the impression that we pay artists to play our drums. They think we are like Nike paying Kobe Bryant to use their brand.

CM: (Laughs). That's just not the way it works.

SD: Also, we don't support tours, we support the drummer. So, no matter what career path you take or what you decide to do, we'll always be there to support you.

CM: Yeah, it is a misconception. I know so many artists that say, "Once I get that big gig, I'll get all the free stuff." And I'm like, "No, it's not that way." If you think of yourself as a professional and you don't want to make that initial investment, whether you have an endorsement or not, you've got it wrong. I notice that once I get an endorsement, I end up spending more money. It's not really about free stuff.

SD: It's about getting access to the instruments you need, playing all sorts of different stuff, and getting good deals on drums and hardware. It's like being a kid on Christmas.

CM: Right! I will say that, as I get older, it's more about playing what I want to play. I know people who are playing the free stuff, but it isn't the good stuff. Play what you want, whether it is through an endorsement, or not.

SD: You've been in the game for a while now. Are there any artists that have mentored you?

CM: I do have my mentors in Boston. I never really did much schooling, but I took some private lessons. I think it was because I was so into Rock back then. I just kind of stayed in bands and that's where I got my education. I learned guitar and piano because of those bands, and that ultimately led me to become a better drummer. So, I did have a couple of drumming heroes but, as I got better, we became more like peers and we would trade gigs. I would completely copy them and work with them. But out here in L.A., everybody is a mentor. The drumming community out here is enormous! I never really had a million drummer friends because that didn't get me work. I would always joke about that when I would

teach master classes at MI. The first thing I would say is, "Stop hanging out with drummers." Once I wasn't on the road so much, my drumming community really grew. You know, guitar and bass players can't do what we do. They have to listen to the same type of music and play a similar genre, but all of my drummer friends are vastly different. My guitar friends joke with me and say, "You would never be able to get ten guitarists at a table together to drink coffee and talk about guitars!" I think it's an ego thing.

SD: There has always been a sense of community among drummers. I mean, if you visit Pro Drum Shop in Hollywood, you'll understand. That place is a hub for drum enthusiasts and geeks. There is such a rich history. There aren't many guitar places like that.

CM: The drumming thing is unique, and it has happened for me in a very organic way. With my drummer friends, nothing is competitive. I didn't want to depend on them. I mean, we have landed gigs through each other, but those are few-and-far-between. And we have to be friends a long time before that happens.

SD: What would you tell an aspiring drummer not to do?

CM: Don't talk about someone behind their back. The community is so tight, it will come back around and bite you. Drumming and personality are equally important.

SD: When I bring you up in conversation, people always say, "Oh, Craig Macintyre is such a great guy!" I hear that a lot.

CM: So many people can play. I see a lot of drummers on YouTube who are amazing players. I wasn't even close to the being best player in Boston, so when I decided to make the move to L.A. I became a minnow in the ocean. It was a leap of faith. I remember Jim Keltner in an interview saying, "If you want to be part of a scene, no matter what type of music it is, you have to go there. It's not going to come and knock on your door." So, I don't sit on the couch waiting for the phone to ring. I go out and support fellow musicians, and I've found that there's a karma that comes back to you. But you can't do it in a 'sniffing around for work' kind of way. You have to go the extra mile and grab a beer with other artists. You have to be very genuine

and want to hear their music.

SD: It sounds like a very casual way of networking.

CM: It is, and then you can go and Facebook bomb everyone. But there is nothing like going out and supporting a fellow artist and hanging out with them. After they see you a few times, they're like, "Man, this guy likes to get off his couch and do stuff. I'm going to call him the next time I need a drummer because I know he'll come out and play." And I miss that when I'm on the road. Even when I'm home for a few days, I try to go out. Yesterday, I was home for one day and I went and met Dave Elitch and a guitarist on the other side of town. I shouldn't have done that on the day I was trying to pack and get stuff done, but I don't want to be isolated. I don't want to be one of those guys that goes on tour and then doesn't keep in contact with his friends back home. I have twelve hours a day to hang out, so I am on the phone and emailing all over the place because when I get off of these tours, I want the phone to ring. It's all about the vibes you put out. Kenny Aronoff is a good example. He might not always be the right guy for the gig, but he is so reliable. He'll chart the parts out perfectly and have everything down; that's why everyone uses him. He's the guy that will chart out forty songs and nail them. He's tireless. He recently sat in on two corporate Goo Goo Dolls shows. The shows were in Buffalo and I was in New York at the time. He is a hero of mine, and a huge part of drumming history. He's pretty much in my DNA!

Scott Donnell: How is the tour treating you, so far?

De'Mar Hamilton: The tour is going amazing. We haven't been on a summer tour like this in a long time. To be out working with the Goo Goo Dolls and Daughtry, while hanging out with Jamal and Craig has been really fun.

SD: And you guys are all playing the same brands?

DH: Yeah. Aside from DW, we all play Zildjian, Vic Firth, and Remo.

SD: Tell us a little about the kit that you're playing tonight.

DH: It's my latest kit and it's from the Mahogany Collector's Series. The finish is gloss black with a twisted copper inlaid

stripe, so it looks a little weathered. I've been getting a lot of compliments on it. I'm also the only one playing a four-piece kit. There's another floor tom that goes with it but, for this tour, I am just playing a kick, rack, floor tom, and snare.

SD: What about your cymbal set-up? Two crashes and a ride?

DH: One crash, one Ride, and hats.

SD: Is that by design?

DH: We were supposed to play acoustic on this tour, but I was like, "What am I supposed to do, play a cajon for three months?" So I asked, "What can I get away with?" I wanted to bring a kit and everyone with production was ok with it, so I just stripped it down.

SD: Are you using brushes or Hot Rods to compliment the acoustic setting?

DH: No, I am just using sticks. I thought I was going to do the rute brushes thing, but no.

SD: The acoustic guitars are loud enough?

DH: Yeah, but they are playing electric guitars, too. We amped it back up a bit. I think the term "acoustic" was very loose.

SD: What was the idea behind the whole acoustic thing? Were you guys planning on doing an Unplugged-style show?

DH: We got offered the tour and that was just kind of the deal. So, we were like, "How can we make this work for us?"

SD: Oh, so they wanted to keep the production to a minimum.

DH: Yeah, that's what they were going for. We were just trying to keep it slim and get it done. It's pretty cool though, because this is probably the first tour in eight years that we aren't using tracks. We aren't doing any of that stuff. No click, we're just playing together. At first, it was a little challenging and a little rocky, but we slipped right into it pretty quickly.

SD: How would you describe your ideal drum sound?

DH: I can only explain how I like it when I hear it. For instance, I'll tell the monitor guy that I like my snare to crack, but I want it to have bottom end. The kick drum needs to be punchy and I need the whole kit to have definition.

SD: Do you have a signature sound that you try to achieve?

DH: This is the first tour in a while where I'm teching for myself, and I've always had different drum techs that would tune differently. I was always fine with it, as long as it sounded good, but now I'm trying to get back into hands-on tuning. I'm kind of out of practice. Recently, I've been watching the John Good tuning videos online. No joke!

SD: Do you have a daily routine when you are on tour?

DH: Oh Man, this tour has made it hard to keep a routine, maybe because I'm busy setting up and prepping my kit. Yeah, I wake up, eat lunch, sit around a little bit, then it's time to set up, sound check, then play, and the night is over. (Laughs).

SD: There are three drummers on this tour. Do you guys ever geek-out about gear?

DH: Yeah, I would say so. We talk about drums and how amazing mine sound. (Laughs). Like I said, I've been getting a lot of compliments. That's the thing about DW, though, they're so easy to tune and they sound amazing. They take very little effort.

SD: Earlier, you and Jamal were talking about how you share a similar upbringing: you learned to play in church. Tell us about that.

DH: Yeah, we're church kids. Since I can remember, I've been playing drums. I tell people I started playing at around seven-years-old, but my mom tells me it was more like three-years-old. For us, church was all we wanted to do. My dad was a musician and my mother was a singer. So being in that environment created an attraction to the drums. I think that every little boy wants to play them. We would always sit next to the drummers at church, hoping to hop-on and play. After doing the church thing for a while, I joined a Punk band during my sophomore year of high school. That's when everything started to have a direction.

SD: That's interesting because most church players seem to transition into the R&B or Hip-Hop worlds.

DH: I didn't know what Punk was at the time. Someone told me, "You know that fast, sharp music in church? That's what

Punk is." And for the most part, that was true. I just fell into that. I guess joining a band and having the DIY Punk attitude spoke to me, in a way. I never thought I would want to be in a band or playing out, but every band led to another, you know?

SD: So, how did you get the Plain White T's gig?

DH: I was in a little band that got some notoriety around Chicago. We toured a little bit and we got signed with the same label. We were both from Chicago, so I knew them and we were all friends. When my band ended, I was asked if I wanted to join the Plain White T's. They became a five-piece instead of a four-piece.



SD: Did it feel like a natural move?

DH: Yeah, very organic. I thought, "Man, I am joining the Plain White's!" I got in the band and we just worked and kept touring.

SD: What have been some of your most memorable experiences with the band, so far?

DH: The Grammys were cool. My dad was at the Grammys a few years earlier because his choir was nominated. I got to go with him, and then a few years later I was nominated. That was an awesome experience. We also played on the main stage at this festival in Germany, called Rock am Ring. There were hundreds of thousands of people there. That was really crazy! And, coincidentally, that's the show where I met my wife.

SD: Is playing in front of a couple thousand versus a hundred thousand people a huge difference, in terms of the amount of pressure you put on yourself?

DH: Not necessarily. It all depends on the energy of the crowd. Sometimes you

can play on stage in an amphitheater with a crowd that just stares at you. That's kind of awkward. We've had some weird ones recently where we were playing at these banquet-type picnics and the crowd's backs were turned to us. It's like a wine mixer, or something. (Laughs). When we play club shows where the crowd is there for us, and there's only a 500 person cap, you can really feel the energy.

SD: How do you guys decide on set lists?

DH: We work it all out at the last moment, just as we are going on stage. That set turns into a groove, and usually it stays the same for a while. When we started this tour, we played the same set for about a week, and then we realized it wasn't working, so we made changes. It's a constant work in progress, you know?

SD: Are you one of those bands that write while you're on the road?

DH: For sure, when we can. Every now and then you pick up a guitar and write in the bus or in the hotel room but, you know, it's summer. (Laughs). I'm just trying to be honest.

SD: What's on the horizon for you, after this tour?

DH: We go on tour in Europe this September on a USO military run, and after that we have some one-off shows until the end of the year.

SD: Do you have plans beyond that?

DH: We're kind of in limbo with our label. Well, not really in limbo; we're just trying to get our masters back and figure out what to do with this record. It's holding us up a bit.

SD: Are you actively involved in the business decisions? Is it a democracy?

DH: Yeah, as much as it can be. You, obviously, have a lead member and they can outweigh some votes at times, but that's okay. We communicate a lot through email, but Tim (Lopez) is definitely the most assertive person. We let him take care of the dirty work. For the most part, we're a democracy. That's how we decide on things.

SD: Sometimes, you just want to play drums.

DH: That's the truth! **dw**

David “DAE-Dae” Haddon

by Atom Willard



Have you heard of Dae-Dae? Yeah, Dae-Dae Haddon. He was news to me, but, as you will soon learn, he has subtly established himself in a big way. Let's drop some names that he has backed: Rihanna, Faith Evans, Nelly, Jesse McCartney, Jessica Simpson, Brandy Norwood, Anita Baker, and the list goes on. Best of all, he's one of those guys that just seems to get it. He has all of his priorities lined up and knows what counts and what matters with his drumming...and beyond. After traveling the world with a notable list of chart-toppers and playing on tons of Pop, Soul, and Worship records, he has no trouble keeping it all in perspective.

Atom Willard: How long have you been playing drums?

David "Dae-Dae" Haddon: Drums have always been a part of my life. My dad and mom said I began playing at around two years old, but I can't even remember when I started. I've just always been passionate about them.

AW: Was there ever a point where you thought, "Okay, I can do this for real. For life."?

DDH: I never had that kind of moment. I was motivated when I saw Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* tour with Ricky Lawson on drums. That was when I knew I wanted to play. I wanted to be a solid player. I was into chops when I was younger, but my brothers wouldn't let me be on their records because I played too many notes.

AW: You were too busy on the drums?

DDH: Yeah, way too busy. I wouldn't keep a groove, so they started taking drums away from me.

AW: What? Like, they'd say, "No more rack tom."?

DDH: No more rack tom, no more floor tom. (Laughs). They just let me have this kick-snare-hat and said, "That's all you need!"

AW: Well, that's one way to do it.

DDH: My brothers were really into Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* tour, as well, and they said, "Watch this guy!" They were talking about Ricky Lawson and I got really into his style. It was just so solid. It wasn't that he was blazing on the drums, but he was just feeling the beats, sounds, all of the claps, and he was hitting all kinds of stuff. If you pay close attention to that DVD, it's really interesting.

Dae-Dae played football and loved sports, but an early surgery ended his playing days. According to his father, that was how it was meant to be.

DDH: My dad said, "You have to concentrate on your drumming." He was really pushing us all. We grew up kind

of like the Jacksons. My dad was really into music and he pushed us because he thought we were good enough. He just spoke it into existence, starting from an early age. I remember riding in the car when I was twelve years old and telling my dad how much I liked football, and other sports, and he said I needed to focus on the drums. He said I was going to be travelling the world playing with the best if I kept at it. Now, every last one of my family members does something in the music business. If it's not singing or producing, we have another aspect covered. And my family is big! I have nine siblings.

AW: How many drummers are in there?

DDH: Well, we all play the drums a little bit, but I'm the main one.

After years of playing in church and refining his drumming style, Dae-Dae came to L.A. with one of his older brothers and was able to get a gig touring with the Nisan Stewart-produced artist, Tweet. At the age of twenty, he cut his teeth during that first nine-week tour, being out on the road with guys like Dante Nolen, Charlie Burrell, and his long-time friend and confidant, Nisan Stewart's brother, Rapture.

AW: So, how is it that you and Nisan are so close?

DDH: Nisan Stewart is really like another brother to me. People don't know this, but I kind of knew Nisan even before I knew Nisan. Our families were really close growing up. Our fathers were both pastors and great friends. So, in a way, we were born into each others' families. He's always been there to look out for me. He's a big help in my life. It's beyond the drums and music, he's my brother!

AW: I want to be in your family! It must have helped with getting shows. You've got some pretty big names on your rap sheet. How did some of these gigs come about?

DDH: (Laughs). It's a blessing, for sure. Yeah, there was another cool situation, too. Chris Johnson was playing with Rihanna for about a month and he had to leave, so he recommended me for the

gig. It was still early in her career when I came in. Over time, I grew with that experience, and the situation kept on growing. I'll always remember when the manager brought everyone into this room and told us all, "We're about to be gone. We're about to be serious." At the time, I was only twenty-three and had no idea about real money. I was just happy we were getting paid. It was great, but he was talking about buying houses! I had never thought about buying a house, or anything. It was pretty surreal. It was all happening just as my dad said it would. It was wild!

AW: Once you did a few tours like that, your name started getting out there and you just started getting calls, right?

DDH: Absolutely, but favor ain't fair. I tell my friends that all the time. Stay on your knees and pray for favor.

AW: You have to earn it, right? No one makes it that doesn't deserve it, but we both know that there are a LOT of really good players out there that never get the chances we've had, or the opportunities to do half of the things we've been lucky enough to do.

DDH: I just try to stay up on my craft and play my way. I just try to keep it solid. When we're backing someone else, it's not about us until they say, "Go Atom, go Dae-Dae." Then, we've got to stick it and we've got to hold it down. That's how we provide for our families; that's what we need to do.

AW: I love it. It's not just with drumming, that's how I view everyday life. You've got to be as solid, and reliable, as you can be in all aspects of your life. If you want me to go nuts, I will.

DDH: I definitely have it in my back pocket. Not a lot, but I've got enough.

AW: I feel like the way you drive is kind of like the way you play drums. Is there any truth to that?

DDH: (Laughs). I hold it down. I just stay around the speed limit and hold it down.

AW: Okay, let's try doing some word

association.

DDH: Say what?

AW: Okay, here we go: drum riser.

DDH: Tall!

AW: Solo.

DDH: Bass!

AW: Groove.

DDH: Foundation.

AW: Pocket.

DDH: Me!

AW: Confidence.

DDH: You've got to have it.

AW: Arrogance.

DDH: Trash.

AW: Success.

DDH: Aiming for it every day.

AW: Nice. So, now that you've played in pretty much every imaginable situation, what's your favorite?

DDH: I still love to play at church. That's how I praise, so that will always be first. After that, what's the most fun? Well, that has to be my Monday night jam in Hollywood. We (JJ & The Spectacular) get together and we can really stretch out because there's so much freedom. That's the best scenario for learning and for having fun. We can just play and groove and that's a lot of fun for me.

AW: Is there anything you want to say to anyone out there?

DDH: If you are anybody that has ever helped me out, thank you! I love you. I cannot express how much it means to me and I can't wait to pay it back.

AW: Do you have any advice to give to our readers?

DDH: Find out who you are and give it 110%. That includes anything in life, not just drumming. Jay-Z once said something that I feel is the most real advice in the world. He said, "Every single person has some kind of genius in them. You just have to find it and do it." **dw**

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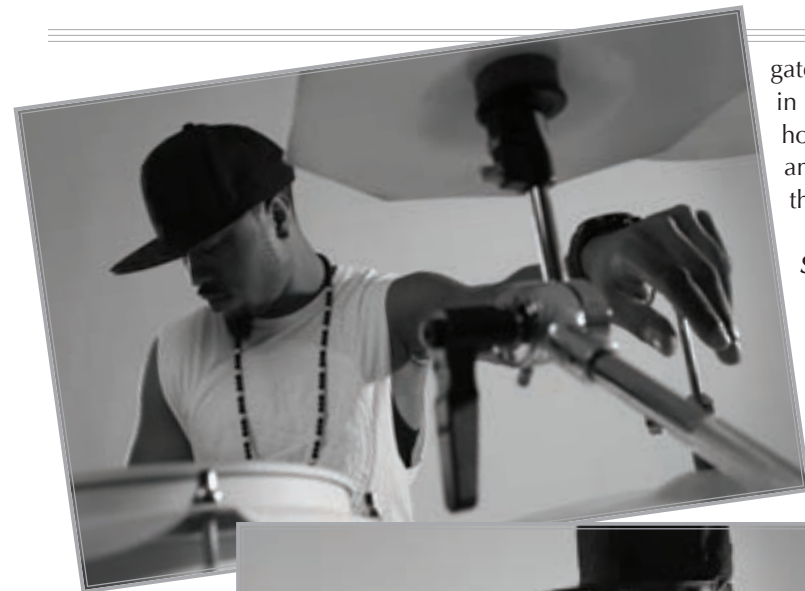
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TONY *Royster, Jr.* NATURAL BORN DRUMMER

BY SCOTT DONNELL

Tony Royster, Jr. is a percussive freak of nature. One listen and you'll recognize his unique creativity and feel. He has a signature style that has helped define the GospelChops drumming movement and has solidified him as a bona fide power player. His tenure with Jay-Z has enabled him to go mainstream while his drum industry persona continues to mature and grow. With his first-ever solo record on the way, and his stock rising in the touring world, his next chapter promises to be his most impressive. We met up with Tony in the celebrity epicenter of Beverly Hills, California to soak up some sun and talk about drums, DJs, and endorsement deals.





Scott Donnell: It is an undeniable fact that you have a natural ability to play the instrument. How do you harness that talent and turn it into a career?

Tony Royster, Jr.: I look at it this way: everyone has a specific talent, no matter what it is. Take the NBA, for example. All of those players have amazing skills. Some are really good at dribbling, some can shoot the lights out, and others are great at passing. They all know their strong points. The thing I find with a lot of musicians is that they'll try to play like someone else. They can't figure out their natural talent so they try to emulate somebody else. Looking back, my father put a bunch of different styles of music in front of me and embedded them into my soul. That's how I learned how different types of music were played. Then, I would sit down on the drums and just play what came naturally to me. It was easiest to play what I heard, and what I felt. Soon, my speed developed. Next, I developed my own technique and the speed just came naturally. If you're a groove player and you don't have the chops out of the

gate, they'll come in time. Learn how to develop an amazing feel and the rest will follow.

SD: You have a very distinct playing style. How did you create your own drumming voice?

TR: Growing up, I knew a lot of musicians but I never really sat down and studied anyone. I never watched their videos for hours while trying to mimic their style. I would listen to them because I liked how they played, but I just did what I wanted to do. I think that's the best way to develop your own voice in music. That's how you create your own style. Tuning is also really important. When I hear Chris Dave, I automatically know who it is, just based on the sound. Instead of hitting a crash, he'll hit a secondary snare, and that's something that's uniquely his. These are just some examples of creating your own sound.

SD: Are you worried about being typecast? You've pretty much been at the pinnacle of the Hip-Hop world for years now. Are you concerned that you won't get gigs in other genres?

TR: That doesn't bother me at all. People can go online and see me playing other styles of music. Obviously, Hip-Hop is very simple. The only hard parts are playing the breaks and the drops. I'm feeling it and trying to make it sound

like the album but, you know, I started backwards. I didn't start out playing with an artist; I started out as a clinician. For a long time, I was doing clinics and master classes, so, obviously, I can play other kinds of music.

SD: Did you audition for the Jay-Z gig?

TR: I wouldn't consider it an audition. I was in Poland when Nisan Stewart was putting the band together. He said he wanted some young cats that could play, but they were starting rehearsals that day. I told him I couldn't start that soon, so I didn't think I would get it. Then I flew to Georgia, for my connecting flight to California, and Nisan called me and asked where I was. I said I was in Georgia and he told me to go down to Delta and get the ticket he bought for me to fly to New York. I didn't even put my bags on the belt; I just got right on the plane. I had to learn twenty songs in a couple of hours. Jay came in and heard a little bit, thought it was good, then left. I've been with him ever since.

SD: You've recently been on tour with Jay-Z and Beyoncé. Tell us about that.

TR: It was very epic to play a show with both artists! It was cool to integrate Hip-Hop with Pop. It was a fun time, but you couldn't see us because we weren't on the stage due to Beyoncé's dance routines. So, we didn't get the connection with the audience that an artist usually gets. It was a great learning experience because we got to concentrate more on the music and less on putting on a show.

SD: Where were you positioned?

TR: Behind the stage and about six feet under it. We were behind the video wall.

SD: Sounds like a new experience, for sure.

TR: Yeah, I wasn't expecting it at all. It was a huge band, too. There were nine girls and two guys. There was also a total of eleven dancers. It was a really big production and they just couldn't fit us all on the stage.

SD: Did you get to hang out with fellow DW artist, Venzella Joy (Beyoncé)?

TR: Yeah, we hung out a few times. Starting off, I could tell she was a little nervous about playing with me, and I just wanted

to make sure she was as comfortable as possible. But she is a great drummer and can hold her own. She's also the nicest person I've ever met! We talked about drums a little bit, but we mostly talked about other stuff and got to know one another. They were good times, indeed.

SD: How do you stay in shape when you're on the road? Do you have a routine of warming up or going to the gym?

TR: It really depends. There are some nights where we'll end really late and hitting the gym in the morning is just not an option. We play sports sometimes, like basketball or football, but the drumming is always a workout. I also try to eat right.

SD: When you're on the road, do you get many calls from other artists about gigs, or do they know that you're booked?

TR: No calls like that are coming in because they know I am on tour with Jay. A call may come in when there is a break in the tour, when people see me around town, or when I reach out to other artists to let them know I'm done. People might think that I'm too expensive because I play for Jay-Z, but it really depends. I like to develop relationships with other artists, but if they never call or reach out, we may never get the opportunity.

SD: Let's talk about the Tony Royster, Jr. brand and how it's perceived.

TR: The biggest thing that I try to do is reach out to my fans and all of the people who support my drumming career. I use all forms of social media, especially Instagram. That allows people to see and hear me, which they really appreciate.

SD: How do you decide which brands you want to promote?

TR: Well, if it's a clothing company, I want it to be something I am comfortable wearing. For other brands, they have to be things that make sense. I mean, if it is a money situation, it has to be a solid business move and I have to be supportive of the products.

SD: On that topic, tell us a little about the GoPro project.

TR: GoPro is, obviously, very well-known for their cameras and now they're trying to integrate what they do with the music world. I recently made a video with them.



There were literally thirty GoPro cameras mounted to my drum set. I was wearing chest cams, mouth cams, and foot cams! They thought that I might be a good face for their music brand. Right now, I think it's a great business move.

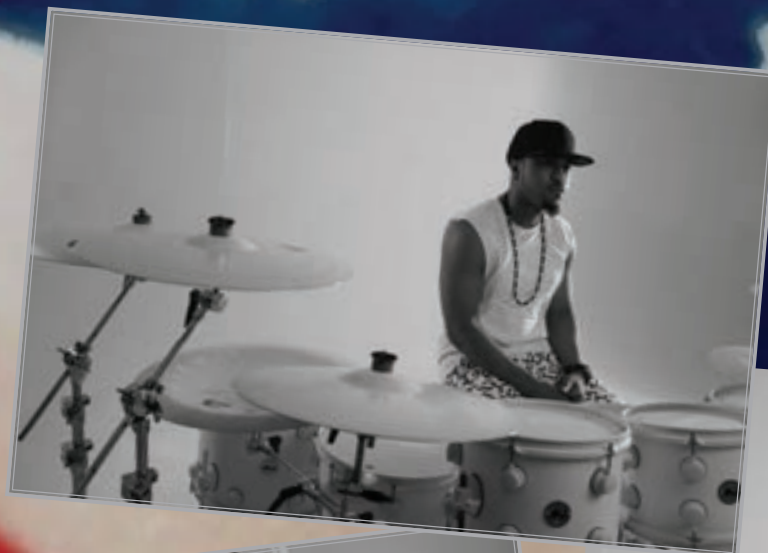
SD: It seems like you've been making a lot of business decisions about your music career lately. Do you think you've become more business savvy?

TR: Definitely. I've learned a lot over the years. Slowly, but surely, I have become an entrepreneur. I am getting older and

now I can hold my own. My dad used to be my manager, but now I understand the business, why certain choices are being made, and which decisions to make. I'm trying to get my hands into everything.

SD: Talk about your drummer/DJ venture.

TR: Well, the club market is very lucrative and I want to start learning how to become a DJ. I want to start creating my own formula like other artists have done. In the past, you've seen drummers like Tommy Lee and Travis Barker do it. A big name helps you bypass a lot of steps in



THE Commandments OF THE Half-Time Shuffle

by Zoro



this industry, but having a good formula is also very important. I want to be a DJ that understands drumming, music, and how to mix. I've done it before and it's nothing short of amazing.

SD: How do you decide your next career moves?

TR: You do what you have to do in order to pay the bills. Having a residency doesn't mean I will be working three-to-five days a week. It could be one day every two weeks. It's how you make the deal. If a day is open, I am going to do it. It's about the music and the drumming but it has to make sense. I'm always meeting new and different people and making great relationships. That's how you grow, by building relationships.

SD: Tell us a bit about your relationship with Drum Workshop.

TR: Oh, man! I've only been with three drum companies over the years. I was with Remo, then I went to Pearl, and in 1998 I came to DW. At first, I think I fell in love with Drum Workshop because of the finishes. Then, I grew an appreciation for how the drums were made. In the end, the sound is what I'm after. I learned about the other artists that are associated with the company and I wanted to be with the DW family. I've been with Drum Workshop ever since. The drums are incredible and they speak for themselves. Don Lombardi, John Good, Scott Donnell, and all of the people that have been there since the beginning have made it a great experience for me. Also, DW is all over the world so it's easy to

get equipment anywhere I might need it.

SD: What sound are you going for these days?

TR: Maple/Mahogany. I have several snares. I love the Edge snare and the Super Solid is amazing, too! Even the PDP kits sound really good. The new set I just got for the Jay-Z tour is extremely warm and has a nice attack. My kick drums always have plenty of bottom end and attack, and that's very important to me. Hopefully, John Good will let me go to the factory and build my own drum one day! **DW**

The Commandments of The Half-Time Shuffle article is based on my new book by the same title. The half-time shuffle is among my all time favorite grooves and remains one of the most mystifying and misunderstood Pop grooves of all time. Because of the triplet intricacy involved in mastering this feel, playing the half-time shuffle with fluidity to me will always be the benchmark of a truly great drummer. Mind you, this is no easy task.

In an effort to gain mastery of it myself, I have developed a plethora of extremely useful independence exercises over the years that have enabled me to have greater rhythmic freedom and dynamic control with regards to the triplet language of the shuffle itself.

The half-time shuffle came to life in the late 60's during the peak of the Soul music era. Like all forms of Rhythm and Blues, Soul music derived partly from Jazz and therefore the swung triplet is the common denominator in this music.

I have been a disciple of the half-time shuffle from the moment I first heard Stormin' Norman Roberts playing it back in 1968 on "Please Return Your Love To Me" from The Temptations album, Live At The Copa. Ever since then I've maintained a passion for the half-time shuffle and remained a student of this magnificent groove. There are a great many half-time shuffle grooves that began to show up in popular music after The Temptations release in 1968. With the strongest concentration of them being doled out between the years of 1972 to 1983. After that period the half-time shuffle feel morphed its way into Hip-Hop and became the cornerstone of that sound.

Although my book has a plethora of pertinent history about this groove and a multitude of really great exercises and transcriptions contained within it, I'd like to share one of my favorite exercises and seven transcriptions of some of the coolest half-time shuffles ever played.

Classic Ghost Note Snare Pattern Exercise
Zoro

Classic Ghost Note Pattern With 9 Essential Bass Drum Patterns

Begin this exercise by playing a shuffle pattern on the hi-hat and then add the appropriate backbeat and begin to trickle in the ghost note snare pattern as written out. Now slowly work out each of the nine essential bass drum patterns against that hand pattern. This independence will allow you to develop the necessary independence that will enable you to play a variety of triplet based melodies with your bass drum without losing the hi-hat and snare pattern.

By extending the phrase beyond merely one bar patterns you will have an infinite amount of rhythmic possibilities that I am confident will help to expand your shuffle vocabulary.

7 Classic Half-Time Shuffle Transcriptions to Rock Your World

Here are seven great half-time shuffle transcriptions that will be sure to inspire you to pursue this groove with an unquenchable passion in your soul.

(In Chronological Order)



Loose Booty
Funkadelic
From: America Eats Its Young (1972)
Tyrone Lampkin: Drums
BPM: 83

1. Loose Booty by Funkadelic featuring drummer Ramon "Tiki" Fulwood (From the album, America Eats Its Young, 1972)



Sweet Sticky Thing
The Ohio Players
From: Honey (1975)
Jimmy "Diamond" Williams: Drums
BPM: 89

2. Sweet Sticky Thing by The Ohio Players featuring drummer James "Diamond" Williams (From the album, Honey, 1975)



Home at Last
Steely Dan
From: Aja (1977)
Bernard Purdie: Drums
BPM: 64

3. Home At Last by Steely Dan featuring drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie (From the album, Aja, 1977)



Fool in the Rain
Led Zeppelin
From: In Through The Out Door (1979)
John Bonham: Drums
BPM: 65
4. Fool In The Rain by Led Zeppelin featuring drummer John Bonham (From the album, In Through The Out Door, 1979)



Babylon Sisters
Steely Dan
From: Gaucho (1980)
Bernard Purdie: Drums
BPM: 60
5. Babylon Sisters by Steely Dan featuring drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie (From the album, Gaucho, 1980)

Main Groove

Intro

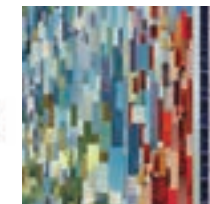


Rosanna
Toto
From: Toto IV (1982)
Jeff Porcaro: Drums
BPM: 85
6. Rosanna by Toto featuring drummer Jeff Porcaro (From the album, Toto IV, 1982)

Main Groove

Chorus

Outro



Grapevine Fires
Death Cab For Cutie
From: Narrow Stairs (2008)
Jason McGerr: Drums
BPM: 62
7. Grapevine Fires by Death Cab For Cutie featuring drummer Jason McGerr (From the album, Narrow Stairs, 2008)



The good news is that the half-time shuffle is still very much alive today with a variety of current artists exposing it to a whole new generation. This infectious groove will never cease to inspire all who hear it. I hope you take the time to explore it and delve into my book which took me eight years to complete. It will be challenging for sure. But if you rise up to it, it will be a challenge that will bear much fruit in your groove life and who couldn't use a little more of that?

Peace, Love and Groove,
Zoro

Zoro Bio

Zoro is an award-winning drummer, author, educator and motivational speaker. He has toured and recorded with Lenny Kravitz, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, Bobby Brown, The New Edition and many others. He is the author of The Big Gig: Big-Picture Thinking For Success, and The Commandments of R&B Drumming series by Alfred Publishing. He teaches at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee.

For more information on Zoro, contact him at: www.facebook.com/zorothedrummer and www.Zorothedrummer.com.

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20 QUESTIONS:
STEVE MISAMORE**EDGE: If you're not drumming, what are you doing?**

Steve Misamore: I have a fairly domesticated schedule at home when I'm off the road, which starts with plenty of yard work. Some find it funny that I don't hire folks to do it, but I really enjoy it. I also have a co-pub writing deal at Zavitson Music Group, so I'm writing as much as I can. Occasionally, you might see me backing somebody on acoustic guitar for a writer's showcase. I also have a love for aviation and am currently working on my instrument rating in a Cessna 172. I just got my high-performance endorsement in a Cirrus SR22 TT. I picked up photography a few years back and have shot a few things for friends' Facebook pages. I also have a pretty kick-ass 1968 Ford F-100 pickup truck that I like to tinker with when I have the time.

EDGE: If you're drumming, what are you doing?

SM: When I am drumming it's usually in front of thousands of Dierks Bentley's fans in some amphitheater or arena, which is always a great thing. If I'm not doing that, I'm tracking demos at the house, practicing, or experimenting with

sounds. We also get to back other artists when we're playing a *Dierks and Friends* show at the Troubadour or the Knitting Factory in LA, for example, or at the annual *Miles and Music* benefit that Dierks holds in Nashville, Chicago, or Phoenix. We've backed everyone from Sheryl Crow, to Hayley Williams of Paramore, Blake Shelton, Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys, Chris Young, Wynonna Judd, and others. It's always loads of fun!

EDGE: If you could build the ultimate drummer from three famous players, who would you use as the components?

SM: That's a tough question because I've liked so many of them over the years for so many reasons. I think I would like to answer with who I'm currently into, instead of the usual suspects. This can change in an instant, but I would have to say Matt Chamberlain for his outstanding musicianship, Taylor Hawkins for his fire, Jay Bellerose for his incredible style, and Jeff Hamilton for his taste. That was four. You can finish the punch line.

EDGE: Los Angeles or New York?

SM: The weather in L.A. is amazing, but it's

going to be New York. My wife, Carry Ann, and I celebrated our honeymoon there and the band gets up that way to do TV or gigs twice a year. There is no other big-time city that has the same kind of people, energy, and vibe. We've played some amazing venues like The Highline Ballroom, Irving Plaza, Nokia Theater, The Bowery, and Madison Square Garden. New York is definitely its own thing.

EDGE: Nashville or Memphis?

SM: : It's tough to beat the ribs at Rendezvous in Memphis, but it has to be Nashville. I absolutely love Nashville and have seen it grow and change in so many positive and diverse ways, both musically and culturally in the past twenty years. I'm very proud to call it my home!

EDGE: What's your favorite meal on the road?

SM: Usually the one in front of me! It's a challenge to make good choices on the road. Sometimes catering offers good, balanced choices and sometimes the dessert table is screaming, "Look at me!" I like so many different kinds of food; I just try to make sure it covers a wide color palette.

EDGE: Do you warm up?

SM: Yes. I warm up about thirty minutes before the show on a Vater pad with Vater 5B wood tip sticks, the same ones I will use for the show. The routine pretty much includes basic stretching with singles, doubles, five, six, and seven stroke rolls backward and forward. I do that with a click or without, maybe some flam taps along with a simple exercise made up of four paradiddles and two double paradiddles back-to-back. It makes a cool little musical phrase and covers the bases pretty well.

EDGE: Greatest Country artist of all time? Why?

SM: We recently did a fair date in Oklahoma with Merle Haggard. He is simply amazing to me. His delivery and his voice are incredible and he's still having fun. His songs represent a different time in American life, and in Country music, but it still resonates with people today. I spent many-a-happy hour in downtown Nashville playing Haggard tunes for tips and those were some of my best memories. I believe he's still the only Country artist to make the cover of *Downbeat* magazine back in the 70's. I get chills when I hear him sing.

EDGE: Greatest Jazz drummer of all time? Why?

SM: I'd have to say Jeff Hamilton because he encompasses so many of the great Jazz players of the past. His live album, *Hamilton House*, is up there with some of my all-time favorite live records.

EDGE: Bonham, Keith Moon, or Ringo?

SM: Man, these are hard questions!! Are you kidding me?? Well, I would have to say Bonham. He was a player who was far ahead of his time. His sound and his placement of the two and four made his feel happen for me and it still stands today. I'm not talking about 'being perfect-with-a-metronome' type of playing, but he had that intangible execution that nobody can imitate. It's what makes him so great.

EDGE: Vinnie, Weckl, or Gadd?

SM: Okay, these questions aren't getting easier. Gadd, Vinnie, and Weckl are absolutely incredible. I remember stumbling through Weckl's "Master Plan" complete with charts and being blown away by the way he played. I also endlessly listened to Sting's "Ten Summoner's Tales" with Vinnie. Gadd has his classic type of playing and then there is the other side of his style, which I love on James Taylor's "October Road".

EDGE: Do you have a "go-to" fill?

SM: Yup! "Pat Boone/Debby Boone." Ha! Kidding...sort of. I try to incorporate as much of myself into the songs as I can without getting away from the feel of the song. Most of my

favorite "Tom Sawyer" licks don't fit as well as some of the classic, simple fills. There are a few favorites that just work every time.

EDGE: Do you play any other instruments?

SM: As I mentioned before, I play guitar and I also play bass, some banjo, as well as some keyboard. I am able to build tracks at my house for some of my demos so it helps me to be somewhat proficient on other instruments. I think it's important for a drummer to be able to not only play another instrument, but learn to record and mix, as well. Getting another perspective, particularly in the pocket department, helps you gain insight to what other musicians need from you and helps you earn a greater sense of musicality. I also played some sax in college, but I politely decline nowadays. I like to keep my friends.

EDGE: What's the Nashville scene like these days?

SM: The Nashville scene is freakin' exploding with new talent! I see it in the writing room with young writers and on the road. Broadway is always happening with a bunch of great bar bands from Country, to Rock, to Bluegrass, and even Rockabilly. Lots of different genres outside of Country and Bluegrass have grown, especially on the heels of successful bands like Paramore, Kings of Leon, The Black Keys, and Jack White relocating to Nashville. East Nashville, in particular, is really making its mark as being one of the hippest indie music scenes in the country with events like the East Side Hootenanny and the East Nashville Underground. There's also the weekly Nashville Dancin' on Riverfront. It's great to see a lot of the new young players out there making it happen. I can't tell you how many times I've seen a small Kia or Camry with a kick drum in the passenger seat and more drums jammed in the back. That makes me smile.

EDGE: What's your favorite drumming website?

SM: Drummerworld is a great site to check out all drummers, past and present, who's playing what, and what latest record they've played on. But for serious gear nerding and drooling over the latest, greatest finishes, dwdrums.com does it for me!

EDGE: Who do you jam with?

SM: Sometimes we jam on the bus, but it's usually an acoustic guitar, playing classic Country or Bluegrass, with Dierks leading the charge. We let the other guys in the band provide the face-melting solos. A few years back, on Kenny Chesney's tour, we would set up in one of the dressing rooms and jam with his band and some players from some of the other bands. Dierks' *Up on the Ridge* tour was one big jam. It was Dierks, me on the drums, our steel guitar player, Tim, and the Grammy award-winning Travelin' McCourys. We played classic Bluegrass, as well

as songs off the album, and some of Dierks' hits. It was Bluegrass-style playing and we did small clubs and smaller theatres. Every song was a jam in the sense that the solos were open and beginnings and endings evolved. We also had guests sit in occasionally, like Sam Bush or Chris Thile.

EDGE: Do you tweak your pedals a certain way?

SM: I don't do any unusual pedal tweaking. I've learned the importance of balance on the drum kit, so my DW 5000 kick and DW 5000 hi-hat pedals are equal distances from each other and have a natural, not-too-tight-or-loose action. I pretty much play the settings right out of the box.

EDGE: Is your set-up constantly changing or is it pretty consistent?

SM: My set-up does tend to change from year-to-year. I believe in staying fresh and one of the aspects of that is my set-up. This year, it's more stripped down, with two Zildjian A Custom crashes and my favorite prototype Sound Lab ride. I love rocking my favorite Maple/Mahogany DW's in the Coarse Silver Lacquer. I play a 5.5x14" Short Stack rack tom and a 16x16" floor tom. I'm keeping everything a little tighter and lower these days. Even though I've played some of these songs over a thousand times, I still find small nuances to incorporate and adjust the dynamics. Changing my set-up helps me explore those possibilities.

EDGE: Metal or wood snares?

SM: My go-to snare is a 5.5x14" DW Black Nickel over Brass that I absolutely love!! It records amazingly well and is really freakin' loud on the deck, if you need it to be. It's definitely my favorite snare. I have a killer-sounding 5x14" DW maple snare that I primarily use for recording at the house.

EDGE: Write your own 20th question and answer it.

SM: What would my advice be for younger players? Get out and play as much as you can, whether it pays or not. The more you play the better you get. Record yourself as often as you can, even on an iPhone, it doesn't have to be a sophisticated set-up. We record our shows every night! Listen to others, musically and otherwise. Have your opinions, but be open and enthusiastic to others, as well. Do a lot of listening to drummers and music outside of your genre and listen to the legends too, they started all of this! Endorsements will come in time. I'm privileged to be part of the DW, Zildjian, Remo, and Vater families, but it didn't come without dedication and hard work. I used to sneak into clubs as a teen to watch fellow DW drummer, Herman Matthews play in Houston. Way back then, he told me, "It's better to be felt than heard." **DW**



Family Ties Richie & Roland Garcia

by Scott Donnell

Photo: © Jeffery Felt

It appears that in some families, the Latin percussion roots run deep. The levels of success achieved by such renowned players as the Escovedo and Reyes families are legendary. Now, we can add the Garcias to that list. Their patriarch, Richie, has played with some of the most notable names in music, including Diana Ross, Phil Collins, and Stevie Wonder, as well as working on a host of major motion picture soundtracks. His son, Roland, is now the go-to percussionist on network television hits such as *American Idol* and *Dancing with the Stars*. So, how did this California-based percussive attack become so in-demand? In this case, family matters.

Scott Donnell: Richie, did the family's interest in music start with you?

Richie Garcia: No, it started with my father. Actually, he's my step-father but I consider him to be my father. He used to play congas in the 40's in San Francisco. He was in a band called Havana Madrid in the days of Ricky Ricardo. If you look at my first educational book on congas you'll see a picture of him playing. The story was, Armando Peraza had just come from Cuba and my dad helped him get in this band. He even shared half of his salary so he could do the gig. He put him up with my grandmother, they worked together, and the rest is history.

SD: When did you make your way down south?

Richie: Well, I was born in New York and

lived there with my grandparents until I was about seven years old. My family left New York and moved back to Puerto Rico. It was a traveling family. My mom was a stewardess back in those days and met my father on the plane, so when they got married, I went and lived with them. He was trying to get to know me and the first thing he asked was is if I liked music. I told him that I did. I've always loved music. My grandparents and uncles used to sing Doo-wop stuff in New York, and I lived in Spanish Harlem. The first record he played for me was by Tito Puente and Woody Herman. He was really into Big Band back in those days. He just wanted to find something we had in common so we could communicate, and music made the communication happen. Then, he started showing me some instruments.

The Spanish culture loves music and instruments. The first instrument I was introduced to was the congas. Then I wanted to play timbales.

SD: Is that the same way Roland got into music? By just being around it?

Richie: Yeah. When he was born, I was already playing.

SD: Once you saw that he was interested in music, did you consciously develop this talent?

Richie: The instruments were always set up at the house, just like they are today. Actually, my older son, Tristan, played the drums too, but later he became a trombone player and a bassist. Roland always knew what he wanted to do, ever since he was a kid. I have pictures of him

hanging out with friends in our studio and playing. He would tape himself rapping, or whatever they did. He always had a passion for it and I would teach him different percussion instruments. As he got older, he would ask, "Can we get together with so-and-so?"

Roland Garcia: Yeah, one time he did an event at the NAMM show and Giovanni Hidalgo came to the house for rehearsal.

Richie: That was with Giovanni and Anthony Carrillo. We were doing a big thing for LP at the time. There were a ton of artists that would come over and jam. We would play all the time.

Roland: I was ten years old and watching this! And the cool thing was that I was never pressured to play. I just gradually gravitated towards it.

Richie: All of my kids gravitated towards music. My daughter plays the piano. She plays every single day and I never ask her to practice. And my oldest one also plays music professionally.

SD: That's the way it should be. They say if you are pushing kids into something, you are actually driving them away.

Richie: It all depends on their upbringing. I always encouraged them to play, but I never forced them. And when we would do clinics together, we would rehearse. We would work everything out together.

SD: How did you balance your family life with touring? You've travelled with some really big acts and I assume there were lengthy chunks of time away from your loved ones.

Roland: I can answer that. My mother worked for United Airlines for about twenty-four years. Because we had all of these benefits, we would fly and follow him everywhere. By the time I was ten years old, I'd been to about twenty different countries. We toured with John Denver, Art Garfunkel, Diana Ross, and Tony Orlando.

SD: Because you were around all of these major acts growing up, working on TV with big stars must be somewhat

natural for you now.

Roland: It's really all I know; the lifestyle and the traveling. Some people ask how I do all of this traveling, but I was raised like this. I'm used to it.

SD: So, in a way, you were indirectly groomed for this life.

Richie: That's a good way to put it because he was always around it. It wasn't intentional; it was a way to keep our family together. My wife did a smart thing working for United Airlines, because before that she didn't work and I would have tours that would last a few months. One day, she said, "The kids need their dad and I need my husband." She did some research and discovered that if she worked with the airlines, we could all be together, even if it was just for a few days. One time, I was on a five-week tour in France. She picked the kids up from school on Friday, drove to the airport, flew to me, flew back on Sunday, and by Monday, the kids were back in school. Sometimes, it would be every weekend. The blessing was that the kids got to see the world. My two older kids are traveling a lot now and it doesn't bother them as much as it would other people. I just took my seventeen-year-old to the KoSA Camp in Vermont and we did a father/son thing for a week with all the top drummers there.

Roland: One thing that he did push was education. While I was in high school, I would go to the Berklee School of Music every summer. After that, I went to Cal State Northridge, which has a great music department. They pushed education along with the music, so I got my bachelor's degree.

SD: Is your bachelor's degree in music?

Roland: Jazz Performance.

Richie: The one thing that bothered me was when he did marching band in high school. He would come home and practice those tenor drums in the house and, of course, they're the loudest drums. I would say, "Go play in the park and get those drums out of my house or I am going to strangle you!" (Laughs).

Roland: Luckily, we lived right next to a park. I would practice there every day.

Richie: I have a studio below my master bedroom and he would play there too, but those drums can cut through any soundproofing!

SD: Do you have any specific memories that you want to share?

Roland: There are so many. I remember a time when my dad was playing for *The Lion King* on Broadway. There are two percussionists that play on balconies on either side of the stage. I had to ask permission from the show, but they allowed me to sit behind my dad and watch him play. It was the first time I got to see a show that follows a conductor. That was the coolest thing to me. Now that I'm working on TV shows like *American Idol* and *Dancing with the Stars*, that's all I'm doing. I follow a conductor, read music, and improvise.

SD: You seem like a very well-rounded musician. Were you first drawn to hand percussion?

Roland: The first thing I was really drawn to was the drum set. It's hard to play hand percussion when you're really small because your hands are tiny, but with a drum set, you have sticks and you can get a full sound. One thing my dad taught me was to learn as many styles and instruments as I could. When I got to high school, the first show I ever played was at The Hollywood Bowl. It was with a group of high school kids called, The Latin Sounds Initiative.

Richie: When I played at church, I would tell my kids to pick up any instrument and join in. I told them that drums are fantastic, but to be successful in music, you should learn percussion, too. I told them that every band has a drummer, so what is the next best thing? Percussion. There will be a time that the drummer is sick or can't play, and who would the band turn to? You, if you're skilled in different instruments. This has happened to me many times. One time, I was playing with Frankie Valli in Las Vegas and the drummer's dad passed away, so he had to leave. They asked me to play.



Another time, I was playing with Tony Orlando and something happened and they let the drummer go. They also asked me to step in.

SD: What people usually don't understand is how vastly different the drum set and hand percussion are, in terms of feel and technique.

Richie: I had to adapt to using my feet. (Laughs). But it was a great thing because I ended up playing for eight years on the Jerry Lewis Telethon and a few similar gigs. One thing I did was put the percussion right next to the drum kit, so if I blew it on the kit, I could at least go straight into percussion. And if something ever happened I would grab the conga and play. Tony (Orlando) loved how I was able to do this. Eventually, I began playing drums with one hand and I'd use the other hand to play congas. That's where my hybrid style began to develop. It was all out of necessity.

SD: There are only a handful of people out there that can play that way. Roland, have you had the opportunity to do the same thing?

Roland: There was this time when American Idol wanted two drummers at once, and they put me in with Rex Hardy Jr.

Richie: That is the benefit of being skilled with various instruments.

SD: Do you guys ever jam together?

Roland: Yeah, all the time and with different bands. We played together at Radio City Music Hall with Diana Ross. We also play with a well-known Persian singer; I play percussion and my father plays the drums.

SD: So, you both know Persian music, as well?

Roland: A lot of it is learning the rhythms and incorporating it on Latin instruments. We play the rhythms they want, but on our instruments; mostly because the traditional Persian instruments are not loud enough.

SD: But, do you ever jam at home?

Richie: Just to get together and jam? Not so much, but we do meet up when there are things that we need to work on. Lately, I've been calling him to go over some basic conga styles.

SD: Do you ever give Roland advice about the music business?

Richie: Not these days, because he's become his own man, but early on I would talk to him about being responsible, showing up on time, and using the right gear. You know, being a true professional.

SD: What about explaining how to find the gigs and keep them?

Richie: For sure. He'll tell you himself; the reason he's been able to get so much work is because people trust him. All of the various musicians I have played for trust me because they know I'm not there to steal their gigs.

SD: Have you ever discussed the endorsement games?

Roland: I've been going to the NAMM show since it started.

Richie: I would take him there in a stroller.

Roland: I got to see what was out there at a very young age. He also has all of these instruments that he has invented. There is a business side to it, which is important if you want to last.

SD: Do you both play the same brands?

Richie: The companies that I endorse saw my son when he was up-and-coming and

they approached me and said that if he wants an endorsement, he's got it. Roland said, "I want to be with the companies you are a part of, that way if anything comes up, we can do things together."

SD: Do you keep tabs on the latest gear?

Richie: I like to see what's out there and what's new from year-to-year. I ask LP to send me the latest stuff, so I can form an opinion about it when people ask me about it. Roland is always coming up to me and telling me what's changed.

SD: Are there things you've learned from Roland over the years?

Richie: I would have to say integrity. He has a lot of integrity and he is very serious about what he does and about preparing for a job. I don't know if you could say that it is something that I have learned, but it is definitely something I've noticed.

SD: Talk a little about the pride of having your son follow in your footsteps.

Richie: As a father, you always want your kids to be better than you. I am thrilled with him. Everywhere I go, I brag about him and show people what he's currently doing. It's an honor and a complement to me that my kids have fallen in love with something that I have been doing my whole life. My older son has been playing bass with Carlos Santana's son and they just opened for Santana. It's awesome! I get to travel and laugh on the road with my sons. I couldn't be more proud!

SD: Roland, whenever I would see your dad, even when you were much younger, he would always brag about you and your accomplishments. He brought you up in, literally, every conversation. Tell us what you're up to now.

Roland: I've been doing American Idol for the past three years and Dancing with the Stars since last year. Tomorrow, I start my second season with them. I played at The Hollywood Bowl two weeks ago. That was an amazing concert. It was with John Legend and The Dap-Kings. The percussionist, Fernando, called me for that. We played Marvin Gaye's music all night; the whole *What's Going On?* album. It was a sold-out concert.

SD: I saw you both at The Hollywood Bowl recently. You were there to see a show. It must be an interesting perspective to play that legendary venue and also be there as an audience member.

Richie: I remember playing there several times with Hiroshima.

Roland: I've also been up there with Diana Ross.

SD: Those must be some amazing memories.

Richie: It's been an amazing career. I've had the opportunity to play with some of the best artists in music.

Roland: I played with Stevie Wonder for President Obama's inauguration. That was really cool.

SD: That seems like a highlight.

Richie: I remember being on a beach in Rio de Janeiro with a million people on Christmas Day, playing with Stevie Wonder. I've recorded with Stevie Wonder and my son got to play with him,

as well. He also got to play with Diana Ross a lot, too. If I couldn't make a show because something would come up, I always wanted my son to sub for me. Here is a funny story:

My first gig was with Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, which I got right after graduating college in 1974. One day, he called me up and said he had a gig for me in Mar-A-Lago, Florida for Donald Trump. At the time, Roland was seventeen. I said, "Frankie, I can't. But my son is a really good player." And that's why my son's first gig was with Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. So, we both started out with the same gig, but at different times!

SD: Wow!

Richie: Then, when I was playing with Patti, I would have Roland sit behind me and watch what I did. I told him, "One day, you will be doing this, too." So, he would practice and learn all of the parts. Then one day, Ms. Patti called me up and I said, "Sorry, I can't make the show, but my son is playing really well." And the

people in the band already knew him because I would introduce him. That's how Roland got his first tour. Same thing with Diana Ross. She said, "Just make sure he learns the show really well." He did and then he played with her for three years!

Roland: More recently, we played Brazilian percussion for a World Cup commercial.

SD: Richie, you have a few different nicknames, like Gajate.

Richie: Gajate isn't a nickname. It is my real father's last name. Garcia is my step-father's last name. He was the one that introduced me to music so, out of respect, I take both names.

SD: Roland, do you have any nicknames?

Roland: Well, my dad is El Pulpo, which means octopus. So, they always call me Calamari. (Laughs).

Richie: And they call my third son, Shrimp! (Laughs). **dw**

CONCEPT

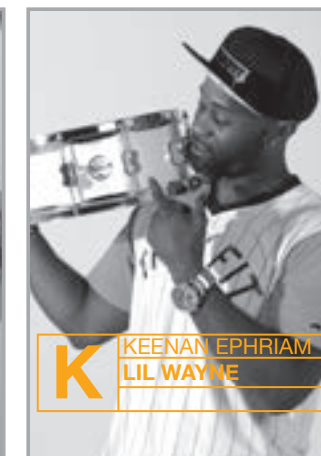
CONCEPT SERIES™

ALL-MAPLE KITS

BY DW

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No joke, from Metal to Hip-Hop, today's cutting-edge drummers are choosing Concept Series drums for major tours around the globe. Killer-sounding drums don't need to have a boutique price tag. Check out: www.youtube.com/dwdrums to hear what Luke, Jordan, and Keenan have to say.





The clamor that emanates from this post-apocalyptic-looking trio is dreamed up by drummers that wanted to take their percussive ideas in new and unique directions. Whether you call it Industrial, Experimental, or simply noise, it has had a lasting resonance with drummers and non-drummers alike. We met up with Street Drum Corps founding member, Frank Zummo, to see what all of the racket is about.

Scott Donnell: What was the genesis of SDC?

Frank Zummo: It was a fun and accidental experiment that just went wild. I moved to L.A. from New York about ten years ago. Then, I met Bobby and Adam (Alt), who are brothers from Jersey. We hit it off immediately, because of the east coast bond, and they told me about how they had their own percussion show at the Remo Center. They said I should come by and check it out. I believe it was called, Bobby and Adam Alt's Experiment. It was like a children's charity event, and in the middle of their show they had a segment where they used pots, pans, and found objects. I told them that I had been using found objects back east, and that we should get together. Bobby said, "There's a junkyard across from my rehearsal space in downtown L.A. Let's go there with a couple of cameras and just go wild. Maybe we'll film it, just for fun." So we

did. We counted: 1, 2, 3, 4...and then just started hitting everything possible! We edited it down to a short film. Bobby comes from the Warped Tour/Punk Rock world and I come from a background in theme parks. So, we sent this video out to people we knew, to see what they might think. That video allowed us to get contracted out for a whole summer at Six Flags Magic Mountain in Valencia.

SD: Was it always called Street Drum Corps?

FZ: No, in the beginning it was called, Bang. Our Lawyer was like, "Good luck trying to trademark and patent this thing!" We wanted to turn this into a big community and a company with different productions, kind of like Cirque du Soleil, so we decided on Street Drum Corps. Under the SDC umbrella, we can have other productions, such as a kids' show

or performances in Vegas. At Magic Mountain, Kevin Lyman (Warped Tour Founder) heard what we were doing and said he wanted us to join Warped. So, he invited us out to do the whole west coast portion of the tour and, coincidentally and simultaneously, he started his own record label and wanted to sign us. It all took off from there. Bands used to take us on tour to amp up the crowd before they would go on stage. So, we played with The Used, Deftones, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Matisyahu, and others. That really kick-started our fan base. We were getting all these tours and theme park work, but we couldn't be at all of these places at once. Eventually, the theme parks said that they would either replace us, or we could find subs to train. It was genius. We started casting drummers to perform and that's how we got to where we are today.

Street DRUM Corps

by Scott Donnell

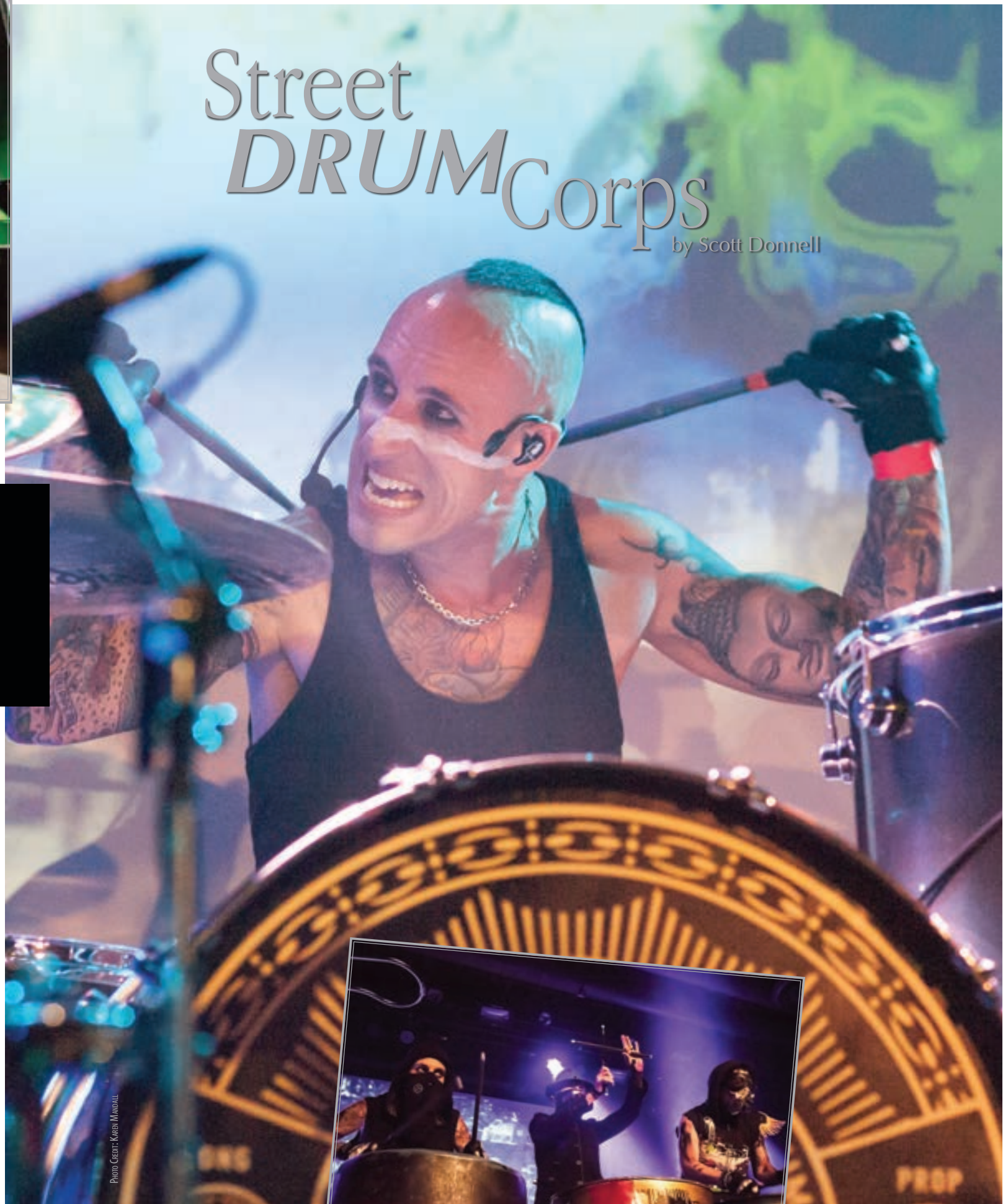


Photo Credit: Karen Mawall



SD: What types of found objects or instruments did you use in the beginning? How have the instruments evolved over time?

FZ: In the beginning, they were straight trash cans, barrels, or buckets. We used a lot of used motorcycle parts because Bobby and Adam's brother built bikes. We always used random stuff and had gong toms for the low-end and octobans for the high-end sounds. Over the years, we started to use drum kits, but even then, we only used a snare, floor tom, and a crash. It was very minimal. As the records have grown, we've added more marching instruments, but not the traditional gear. We had drums burned, distressed, or with holes in them, so they weren't so normal sounding. Our stage is just filled with trash.

SD: Do you use any oil drums?

FZ: We use a 55 gallon oil drum and some 55 gallon plastic barrels. Those are the trash kick and snares that work. We use a lot of china cymbals, a drum kit, and a bunch of 'mad scientist' stuff that Adam brings in, like washing machines, angle grinders, palm sanders, air compressors,

and a Mac truck stack that he grinds on. It sounds amazing! Depending on the production, we'll use a lot of samples and electronics, as well. When you are on tour, you can't wheel around dumpsters and the larger things we use in the studio, so we record those sounds and play them on pads.

SD: What's your creative process? How do you guys collaborate on this material?

FZ: It's still very experimental. There's no set formula. Someone will come in with an idea or concept,

or the three of us will get in a room and just go at it for 10-15 minutes and see if there is something there. We'll build from that. Adam is always the guy that pushes the envelope and suggests things like playing pneumatic tools or grinders, and then we try to figure out how to make them sound different. Most of these things aren't that exciting by themselves. For example, a grinder might get distorted by pushing it through a Marshall stack to help give it an edgier sound. No matter how wacky an idea may be, we'll still try it! If it fails, it fails. If it works, it works. For our ten-year anniversary record we wanted to have a new song but we've been so busy with our performances, we didn't have time to go into the studio. So, we decided to record with Roy Mayorga (Stone Sour). He has an amazing home studio and he played with us during our Vegas residency. He's one of us. He has the same style and musical tastes...the whole overall vibe. Over the course of the last couple of years, we have played at huge drum studios. We did our Big Noise record at Dave Grohl's place and Tommy Lee's home studio. We wanted to record with amazing drummers

that had their own studios that were well-equipped for drum sounds. When we were there, we took advantage of the time and sampled everything. Now, we have a sound library of all our drums. I called Roy and said, "We have samples of all our music, let's go back to your studio with some pads and play around with them." Roy got on his kit and only used toms and some cymbals that Terry Bozzio had lent him, and we made this really cool Tribal/Industrial song called "Images of Justice".

SD: There's also a musical, melodic element to SDC. How do you guys write songs? Is there a structure?

FZ: Definitely. I mean, we have straight percussion songs, but there are also arrangements that are accompanied by stringed instruments, such as guitar, as well as some chanted vocals. We all play those instruments. Obviously, piano and keyboards are pretty simple because they are percussive. I know a little theory, so we'll add that stuff in. We've also worked with producers that have helped us. We did do a full band record where we had Bobby singing. We had all the drums at the forefront, so it was very tribal. The melody was minimal but the vocals were big gang vocals. That was just a path that we decided to go down. When we did the Hard Rock residency in Vegas we knew that an hour-long drum show is a little much, so we decided to do half of the set with a band. We had the musicians at the back of the stage and the drums up front. It was kind of flipped from the usual set-up. Now we're back in percussion mode, where we started. We just got back from a show at a Texas military base where we performed for 10,000 troops and their families. We did it old school: me, Bobby, and Adam, with no bells and whistles. It went over huge! It was cool to realize that if we stripped everything away and returned to our minimal percussive thing, it still has this kind of effect. It inspired us again.

SD: Why do you think people respond to that sound?

FZ: Because they are not being preached to with the lyrics. It's simple, pounding, primal, and high-energy. Everyone, from two-year-olds to grandparents, was enjoying it. We really related with these people.

SD: Let's get back to the residency you

did at the Hard Rock. Tell us about the honor you received, as well as the other artists that you worked with for those shows.

FZ: The Hard Rock shows were something we worked really, really hard on, and they were a great accomplishment for all of us. We always wanted to work in Vegas, but standard showrooms really weren't a good fit. One day, we'll have a big spectacle for those rooms, but the time wasn't right for that. Hard Rock had just opened a brand-new showroom called Vinyl. It's a mini version of The Joint (their big room). They heard about our residency at The Roxy in Hollywood and thought that we would be great for their venue, so they invited us in for a one-off in January to see how it might go. This was our shot in Vegas. Our production team was the same one that worked with Mötley Crüe and Kiss, so they had done some pretty epic shows at the Hard Rock. We turned it into the biggest production that we could. We had stilt walkers, girls in aerial cages, backing musicians, extra drummers, and special guests. For that one-off show, we had Tommy Lee, Stephen Perkins, and Adrian Young come out. These guys were fans of what we did and had been a huge inspiration for the past ten years. All the stars aligned and we had a sold-out show. It ended up getting us press in Rolling Stone and other outlets we had never been exposed to before. They gave us a six-month residency where we would play a show once-a-month. It was the hardest work we've ever done because we had to do all of the marketing and promotional stuff ourselves. We always went out a week early and did the morning talk shows, charity events, and whatever else we could do. We lived out there, so we got into that culture. Hard Rock really helped out, too. They had our faces on blackjack tables and elevator doors! It was such a trip, and an honor, to see yourself right next to the Mötley Crüe and Guns N' Roses residency posters. We called all of our buddies to come out and be a part of it again. We had Jose (Pasillas) from Incubus join us for the opening night. Tommy Lee popped in and played, along with Perkins, Roy Mayorga, and Shannon Larkin from Godsmack. We had a lot of non-drummers too, like Deryck from Sum 41, Hunter from AFI, and Greg Hetson from Bad Religion. The Hard Rock has a memorabilia specialist who came around and said, "We love what you guys are doing. Can we have some of it to

display in our new drum area?" We said, "Absolutely, what do you want?" They wanted my kick drum with the Shepard Fairey front head. They took a washing machine, all of the drumsticks from the drummers that played with us, buckets, stage outfits, trash cans...and they made a giant display. They pretty much tried to recreate our stage. We went out in January for the big unveiling and it was amazing! They had us between Aerosmith's kit from the 70's and The Doors' kit from the 60's. It's still there to this day.

SD: Talk a little bit about your relationship with Drum Workshop.

FZ: We've been with DW for about five years now. We started using the hardware at first, but then we began traveling the world and everywhere we went, we were using DW gear. I've really been using DW equipment my whole life. When I was a kid, I saved up enough money to buy my first custom Collector's kit, because that was something I dreamed of and geeked-out about. You guys introduced the Performance line, and it really fit our vibe. You've made us a ton of floor toms, rack toms, and a full drum set, which we've used through the whole Vegas residency. They have held up amazingly well! We're using 9000 series hardware and now I'm playing the Concept line, which really fits with all the artists I play with on the road and in the studio! I recently got a Collector's Black Nickel over Brass snare, which is a monster. That's the main snare drum that I am using right now.

SD: What's the best way for an aspiring drummer to get involved with SDC?

FZ: We cast all of the time, because we have about fifty drummers across America and Canada that will go out and play for us. The easiest way to get in touch is to send an email to: SDCcastings@gmail.com that includes your best video link, along with your personality traits and skills. That is step one. From there, we can see if you have the right vibe. If things look good, we'll send you one of our tracks and say, "Be creative and send us a video of you playing along with some found objects." It is way different from being on a drum kit. We've had some drummers that have sold millions of records but when they get behind a bucket, they don't know what to do. It's a different beast.

SD: Due to the sheer number of your performers and various shows you put on,

it must get overwhelming. Who helps you organize everything?

FZ: We have a production team that builds all of the sets. We pitch them an idea and they go wild with it. We have a wardrobe design team that makes all of the costumes. We have a business team that does all the payroll, taxes, and administrative work. But, we manage ourselves, so I do a lot of the day-to-day duties. I plan the travel, budgets, etc. We have another partner who takes care of all our theme park stuff. Compared to most Punk Rock production teams, it's still pretty small, but that's how we like it. We get to oversee every detail from start-to-finish and we still get to create all of the concepts and shows. We're there for every rehearsal and opening. During the summer and fall seasons, I'm flying all over America and Canada.

SD: How do you do so much touring with other artists and still keep your finger on the pulse of what's happening with SDC?

FZ: I can run the company as long as I have internet and my phone or a laptop. We've built it up over the past ten years, and it's very solid. Since we have so many other touring groups, I've had more free time because I haven't been performing as much. We did Vegas and that ended in December. I'm still in the Rock world and working with amazing artists, but I haven't been touring full-on. I mean, I'll play for an artist, and then jump on a plane to go to a Street Drum Corps production rehearsal. This year, I toured the world with Gary Numan, but I would spend two weeks here and a week there, so I really didn't get away for too long. However, I did get to go to places that I've never been. I went to Israel and toured Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. That was an awesome gig, and Gary is such a great guy. The band was killer and the music was fun. I've also been out with Scott Weiland and continue to work with Dhani Harrison and his band, Thenewno2. Lately, I've been back in the studio recording stuff with Sum 41. My friends and family are in New York and I came out here to live my dream, but you have to hustle and work your ass off to make it out here. I'm grateful and honored to be doing what I want to do. If I can have my family, my company, and get to play with other artists, I'm down. This is how I was raised. I'm a New Yorker, and we get sh*t done. If you don't, some kid will take that job from you. **dw**

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ARNOLD RIEDHAMMER MUNICH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA_F
MORTEN HELLBORN ELECTRIC GUITARS_F
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F = FULL LINE
PH = PEDALS & HARDWARE

NEW ARTISTS  ENOUGH SAID.

Ben Thompson

Two Door Cinema Club

by Scott Donnell

Touring with Two Door Cinema Club has allowed Ben Thompson to see the world while doing what he loves best. As the Irish Alt Rockers continue to churn out their hits, the baby-faced hired gun is plotting his rise to drumming greatness. While Ben was visiting the DW Custom Shop for the very first time, we discussed aspects of touring, career goals, and the pitfalls of long-distance relationships.

Scott Donnell: *You hadn't had a chance to visit DW prior to today. Tell us a little bit about your first experience here and your reaction to seeing the factory.*

Ben Thompson: I don't think I stopped smiling the entire time I was walking around! It's given me some wrinkles. Back in the UK, we don't have the space for facilities like this. Being able to come over and actually see it (not on a YouTube video) is quite amazing. Walking through the different zones and smelling the different stages from the glue to the lacquer, and even the boxing area, is an

(continued)

astounding experience. There is so much real attention to detail throughout the entire process. There isn't any step of it that you guys don't put 110% into.

SD: Did you think John Good only existed on YouTube?

BT: To actually walk into the factory and see that he has his own raised office in the middle of the factory where he puts together perfect drum sets is incredible!

SD: And you saw Terry Bozzio's set.

BT: That was absolutely mind-blowing! Being a drummer that plays a three-or-four-piece kit and seeing something on that scale, I didn't quite know where to look, or stand, or touch. It's something that I obviously respect; someone being able to control that huge of an instrument is pretty mind-blowing.

SD: Tell us about the current kit that you're playing.

BT: I'm playing a Collector's kit with super thin shells. I've got a 16x20" kick because I like a small, punchy bass drum. It's good for everything I do. It's perfect for Pop stuff but you can use it for a wide variety of genres. I have a 12" rack and a 14" floor tom. The kit is so nice and simple. It's all-maple and it sounds absolutely amazing. I've got it wrapped in Black Galaxy Finish Ply.

SD: After today, what will you be dreaming about on your way home?

BT: I didn't realize how many options there were to making your drum kit exactly how you want it. Now that I've been here, I see how much detail you can put into making it your own.

SD: How do you think the DW sound, or the way you can tailor your kit, meshes with you as a player, in general?

BT: I like really punchy, deep-sounding drums and when we were going through the tour, you were explaining the actual way that the plies are built. It was a bit hands-on, being able to feel the resistance of the way that the plies are laid when they are vertical versus horizontal. It was amazing to see and it definitely goes with the sound that I want. When I was younger, the first time I heard a DW kick drum, it sounded like it was being played through a PA with massive subs without even being plugged in! That was when I

decided I had to play these drums.

SD: Talk about how you are developing your style of play and your sound.

BT: In terms of my playing and my sound, I'm very old school. I don't think I'll ever expand the size of my drum kit. It's always going to be nice and simple for me. So, I don't really try to change a sound that I know is good and works for me. At the moment, the thin shells work great for everything that I do. I like playing grooves; I'm not a flashy drummer. I don't have a huge list of chops. I'm about the feel and playing for the music. I find that with the shells I use and the sizes I choose, I can tune them to play virtually anything. Whether I want to play super high-end Pop stuff or if I want to tune them low for Rock songs, there's a broad spectrum of sounds that I can get out of one shell.

SD: You are a really high-energy performer when you play with Two Door Cinema Club. You put everything you have into your live show. Is that how you play all the time or is it only when you're in front of a live audience?

BT: It depends on the gig. With Two Door, what I'm playing isn't technically difficult so I'm trying to make it look visually interesting. I'm a drummer. I'm stuck in the back. I have to do something to make the people look at me!

SD: Do you spend a lot of time practicing?

BT: The most time I get to practice is during soundchecks. I jam with the singer for about an hour before we start the proper soundcheck. My sort of practice doesn't involve sitting down with a drum book and going over rudiments. Since day one, I've always wanted to play along with music and with musicians.

SD: Do you practice time? Do you practice to a click?

BT: Yes. I always try to play along with recorded music like Michael Jackson and Jeff Porcaro which were recorded to click tracks. So, naturally, because I was rehearsing to tracks, I picked up time-keeping quite quickly. I see the click as a friend more than an enemy. Many drummers look at it as a scary thing and don't want to work with it. I treat it as a percussive block and jam along with it.

SD: What draws you to the old school drummers?

BT: When I see players like Jeff Porcaro and Bernard Purdie, they smile when they're playing. They're having such a good time. I like to be able to hear a drummer's personality, feel, and dynamics through their playing rather than their crazy chops. If you had ten drummers playing the same groove, each of them would play it slightly different, adding their own feel.

SD: Do you concentrate on 'feel' with your playing? If you're a pocket or a groove player are you concerned with where you're placing the 2 and 4 and ghost notes?

BT: Definitely. Feel and dynamics are massive parts of my style and my personality.

SD: Is the cliché true? Is it hard to play less?

BT: I don't find it too hard to hold back. I could quite happily play along to Billie Jean for an hour-and-a-half on repeat. I'd love it! I get excited listening to the musicians around me lock in together.

SD: That sounds like a good practice routine: loop Billie Jean for thirty minutes and just play fills over it.

BT: I haven't had many drum lessons. One lesson I did take, I booked for an hour. The instructor made me play the Billie Jean groove for an hour and went, "Thank you very much." I felt ripped off at the time, but when I look back I realize that was the best lesson I ever had!

SD: Did he comment on your playing or give you any tips?

BT: The lesson lasted an hour, but he made me play Billie Jean for 45 minutes and he said, "Don't do anything. If you can play that beat, you're going to be fine." And I did. I was thirteen or fourteen at the time and sitting in front of a big kit. I just wanted to go crazy on all those drums! I think having a good teacher for a couple of lessons saying, "That's what you need to do if you want to make it" really made an impression on me. They were very wise words.

SD: What are some of your favorite gigs that you've played?

BT: What's brilliant is that every audience in different countries reacts in different ways. Playing in Asia is fascinating, especially in Japan. While you're playing, they go absolutely crazy, jumping up and down, throwing things in the air, but as soon as you stop, you can hear a pin drop. It's bizarre. It's their way of showing respect while you're speaking. I can't crank up the snare drum between songs because they'd hear it. It's really nice to see. It's interesting to play countries like that where the audiences are so varied.

SD: What's the opposite of that?

BT: There are several UK festivals where you might get a beer can hitting you on the side of the head, or something.

SD: How would you describe the music of Two Door Cinema Club?

BT: I would describe it as 'Happy Pop Rock Music.' We have two albums. I think the first one and the second one are very different. The first one is kind of sitting in the sun, dancing along. The second one is a little more serious and a little bit deeper. It has a good variety. I think it can appeal to everyone. We're one of those bands that make it difficult to say, "I hate them." It's quite friendly. You put on a band like Metallica and you either love them or you hate them. We sit nicely in the middle. You can bring your mum, your dad, and your nan to our shows.

SD: What do you have planned in the coming year?

BT: I'm taking a break right now. The guys are busy writing a new album. We're going to record it later in the year, then we're headlining a couple of festivals.

SD: We were just talking about how you've used many of your frequent flyer miles on girlfriends. As a 22-year-old single drummer, how do you balance your love life and relationships with being on tour?

BT: I'll tell you what, the best way to understand it is to watch the Katy Perry documentary. It actually describes what happens really well. It's difficult because there are plenty of bands that tour a lot. For four years in a row, we've been in the top five of the hardest working bands. Being away from your friends and family 300 days a year is hard work. People think it's a party on the road, but hopping

from town-to-town with extreme time zone differences is exhausting. The fans are paying good money to see us so we're conscious of making sure we're giving all we've got every night. Staying fit and healthy through that is a lot harder than people think. When I finally do come home, I don't know where I am. I feel like I'm in space.

SD: Is it impossible to have a normal love life?

BT: It's not impossible. I've been in a relationship for 75% of my touring time. You've got to make sure there's a lot of trust involved and you have to fly out to each other as often as you can. I don't have a choice. I have to be where I have to be to play for the fans all over the world. So, you've got to fly your loved one to you.

SD: So, do you use Skype a lot?

BT: Yeah, Skype is life-changing. I don't know how people toured when they just had to send letters. It must have been so difficult. I think we have it a lot easier than they used to.

SD: Tell me the story about the band, Phoenix.

BT: The first time that I came over to the U.S., I was seventeen and we were supporting Phoenix. During the first show, their drummer, Thomas, got a phone call and found out that his wife had gone into labor early and that he'd have to fly home that day. There were two-to-three weeks of this arena-sized tour left. They were sitting in the dressing room going, "What the hell are we going to do?" They came next door and said, "Ben, do you think you can do it?" I was seventeen years old, it was my first time ever performing in America, and we were playing massive venues. Back in the UK, we were used to playing to 500-1000 people in a room, but here we were playing to 10,000 people. Then they turned around and said, "Do you want to jump on the drums?" If you've seen Thomas play, you know he leaves very, very big boots to fill, visually. I thought, "This is a stupid opportunity, I can't turn it down." So, I agreed. I had twenty-four hours. The next day, conveniently, was a day off. I had that day to learn the 100 minute set. I ended up doing an hour-long slot of support with Two Door, then

a 20 minute change-over, and then an hour-and-fifty minute set with Phoenix for nearly three weeks. The Phoenix parts are a lot more technical than the parts for Two Door. I think having to make that step up made me the player that I am today. I had to improve my stage presence and my performance.

SD: It was a career-defining moment for you.

BT: They're all such nice guys. They were so appreciative of it and I got as much out of it as they did. It was incredible!

SD: When you say, "Stepping up my game visually" what does that entail?

BT: The way that he moved. It wasn't in a stupid, flashy, stick-spinning way. It was the way he moved his body to the music. It was so amazing. I'd never seen anything like it. I didn't want to copy him. I wanted to make my own style, which is where my high-energy performance style developed. I also lost a couple of stones. I went from a chubby 17-year-old to a fit one.

SD: Would you feel prepared if that ever happens again?

BT: Yeah. It was an amazing experience to have to learn something so quickly. I don't think I made any mistakes. They never said anything. I was quite proud.

SD: What's on your iPod?

BT: I listen to a lot of old music. I love Motown. If I'm listening to modern stuff, I'm into Justin Timberlake and Bruno Mars, which are heavily influenced by Motown. I'm open-minded when it comes to music, I can listen to anything. When we're on the tour bus, cruising around, I like to listen to movie soundtracks. Anything by John Williams.

SD: What advice do you have for young players?

BT: Get out and play. So many drummers sit at home and practice the technical side of drumming, like rudiments, but for me, it's much more about actually going out and playing with musicians. The big stars don't want someone to be flashy on the drums. They want you to lay the groove down and do your job so people can dance. If you're playing something on the drums that people can't dance to, then you're not doing your job. **dw**



Atom Willard

I am Punk

by Brook Dalton

It was an atypically sweltering and downright overbearing afternoon in the San Fernando Valley but I didn't let it bother me one bit. I was too distracted and excited about being able to hang out with one of my all-time favorite musicians. Atom Willard arrived with a smile on his face and the world's cutest French Bulldog, Michi, buzzing around his feet. After sharing a few exhausting rounds of terrible jokes (he really likes bad jokes), we sat down to discuss topics spanning the seminal San Diego Punk scene of the 90's, touring the country in a box truck, and his current exultation in being Against Me!'s time-keeper.

Brook Dalton: I remember the first time that I saw you perform; it was either 1992 or 1993 at The Palace in Hollywood. I was a huge fan of Superchunk and Rocket from the Crypt played with them, but I had never heard you guys until that night. You opened the show and I was floored. I was sort of numb during the band's set that I actually went to see. One of the things that really stood out to me during that show was how young you guys were at the time. Really, you were a kid.

Atom Willard: Dude, I graduated high school in 1992, so I might have still been a senior when we played that show!

BD: The San Diego Punk/Indie scene was so important in the 90's and most people I know consider Rocket to be sort

of the figurehead for that movement. You were an integral piece to an influential community, even in your youth. Can you talk a bit about those formative early days?

AW: Well, thanks for saying so. You know, when stuff like that is happening around you, it's hard to have perspective. You have no idea that you'll record an album that people will actually like, or that fans will go out and get tattoos of your band. We didn't have an idea of what we were doing at the time; we were just playing music that we liked. We were so excited to do a tour with Superchunk. It was like, "Dang! They're a national band and people like them in other places." We had toured the US previously, but I was seventeen and it was more of an adventure. We'd play to

ten people every night. So, when we got to do those shows with Superchunk in front of hundreds of fans, we kept saying, "Man, we better be good." We weren't really thinking beyond that.

BD: Was that the tour that you did in the box truck?

AW: Yeah, that was the one! It was totally my fault, too. They sent me, a kid that wasn't even eighteen, to rent the van for the tour. The rental place offered me this crazy van that had a big steel divider running down the middle of it, so I told them it wouldn't work and I needed something with more space. The only available vehicle they had was this beat-up box truck. I was so sad. I kept thinking, "I'm going to get so much sh*t for this."



BD: You must have started playing drums at an early age if you were touring when you were seventeen.

AW: I got my first drum set when I was four years old. I know, I should be a better player than I am. (Laughs). Drumming was it for me, ever since I was a little kid. I mean, I got into skateboarding, BMX bikes, girls, and soccer, but the one constant was always the drums.

BD: Did you take formal lessons?

AW: My parents always tried to get me to take lessons. My dad is into education, so he was like, "You might want to try and do this the right way." They liked the idea of me studying, but I was never behind

the thought of practicing rudiments. The lessons would have me playing only on the snare drum and that wasn't what I was about. I just wanted to play along with Kiss records. My mom still has this photo of me, as a little kid, sitting behind a snare and I look so angry! I was such a pissed-off five-year-old.

BD: After Rocket from the Crypt, you ended up being the drum tech for Weezer. Did it feel odd to be on tour and not be the one playing the shows, or did it seem like an organic progression to you?

AW: Well, Patrick (Wilson) and I were actually forming a band at the time. We were writing and practicing with the

intent of making a record and then he had to leave for a tour. I told him, "Just hire me as your drum tech, that way we can still practice every day, I can get paid to play with you, and then we'll record when we get back." So, I did that for a while and ended up playing percussion on some songs on *The Green Album* and did SNL with them. It was cool because I got to watch Patrick perform every night, and he's one of my favorite drummers of all time, but it definitely wasn't the same as playing the drums. To be honest, I had a really hard time on the tour because it was very difficult to *not* be playing. I realized that I'm not cut out for it. I enjoy being around drums, making them sound good, and learning about them, but that's not where my passion lies. It wasn't enough of a reason to be away from home.

BD: Many years ago, before the internet existed, my friend hand-wrote you a fan letter. He wasn't expecting a correspondence at all; he was just thanking you and letting you know that you were a big influence on him. Well, you wrote him back and it sent him over the moon. I remember that you drew pictures on the envelope and made it very personal. You didn't have to do that, but it always left an impression with me that you took the time to reach out. It must be nice to inspire people like that.

AW: Oh yeah, there's nothing else like it. People ask, "What do you get out of being in a band?" Sure, it's a lot of fun and we have a good time, but at the end of the day, if someone says, "Hey, you made me want to play the drums" then I've actually *done* something; I've affected someone in a positive way. To me, there's no greater pay-off. Being able to do something that's bigger than myself, by playing an instrument that I love, is the hugest reward. We always tried to make it a priority to respond to letters and communicate like that, especially if it was addressed to an individual member of the band. I mean, I still try to do that. It's so much easier now with social media. Even if I just favorite someone's tweet, they know that I saw it and appreciated it.

BD: It seemed to me like you joined Against Me! in kind of a whirlwind. They had a situation and needed a drummer for the Australian tour and the next thing I knew, you were playing those shows.

AW: Yeah, all of the cards just fell together. It worked out in such a cool way and it was obvious that this was supposed to be happening.

BD: And you were already a fan, right?

AW: I was a *total* fan, which is why I was so ready and willing for this gig.

BD: So, the back catalog was familiar to you when you went into it, but you still had to learn the set very quickly.

AW: Yeah, I had to learn a bit of music but, at the same time, I had a built-in knowledge of the band. When you're a fan, you know what they're doing won't be a huge departure and I didn't have to figure out how they think, or anything like that.

BD: Obviously, drummers need to be locked-in with the other band members, especially the bassist. But when I listen to Transgender Dysphoria Blues it seems like you're particularly in-tune with Laura Jane Grace. Not just her guitar playing, but her vocal melodies, as well. Am I wrong about that?

AW: I love that you picked up on that because that is absolutely my goal. I want to support and accentuate the vocal lines, melodies, and rhythmic connection between her guitar and what I'm doing. The way she sings is very intuitive for me. The parts that I wrote were all based on what she sang and how she delivers the vocals. I developed that type of writing pretty early. Even with Rocket, I always tried to have parts for songs instead of just playing beats. So, the fact that you hear that on the album is great!

BD: Did you guys write the songs out before you recorded them, or did you develop them in the studio?

AW: Well, we played five or six of the new songs on that Australian tour before we recorded them. I flew to Florida and practiced with them for a couple of days, then we did the tour, so I got some live experience with these songs, but they evolved a bit later. Then we came back to L.A. and Laura and I went over the new songs together. I had to learn them pretty quickly but, ultimately, it all came together very easily.

BD: Most times, when someone joins a pre-existing band, they don't have a ton

of creative freedom with their library of songs because the fans are familiar with them the way they were recorded. I didn't get that feeling when I saw you play the older Against Me! songs. How much leeway do you have with their catalog?

AW: They've been really awesome about everything and very open about me trying new stuff. I've been in other situations where the band was like, "Um, don't try that. Just play what's on the record and stick to the script." But Against Me! has been really into me playing with my own feel. I think part of that reasoning is because they've had a bunch of drummers in the past. It hasn't allowed for them to get used to the songs being played in any particular way. We've also re-worked some of the songs to give them a new life.

BD: Ok, I'm going to dork out here. It's pretty common in drum interviews to 'spitball' some famous names and talk about their influence or rank. They're usually top-tier, game-changing musicians, but I'd like to drop some names of drummers that may be a bit more localized: Dale Crover, Brendan Canty, or Mark Trombino?

AW: Brendan Canty! I'm so stoked that you brought him up because I have a cool story. Two weeks ago, we played in D.C. My friend's band was playing down the street so I went to see him when we were done with our show. This guy walks up and my friend says, "Hey Atom, this is Brendan." I realized it was Canty and he recognized me. He told me that my playing on the new album was awesome and I just lost it! We had played shows with Fugazi in the 90's but I was geeking out too hard to talk to him. Now I know that he's the nicest, most approachable guy in the world. I told him that I'd wanted to get a Fugazi tattoo for a long time but didn't know what image to use because they didn't really have a logo, or anything. So, I asked him to write out the word 'Fugazi' in his handwriting, because he was my favorite part of that band. He wrote it out and I went and got it tattooed a couple of days ago!

BD: No way, that's crazy!

AW: You definitely asked the right question! But, I love those other two guys, as well. Dale Crover had a huge impact on me because his style was just

'drum-nerdy' enough, with his weird parts and huge drums. Because of him, I started playing big drums, which taught me to play hard. And in San Diego, Mark Trombino was such a powerhouse. Actually, after watching him for years, he called and asked me to play on some records that he was producing. The guy is a legend.

BD: Which drummers are you impressed with these days?

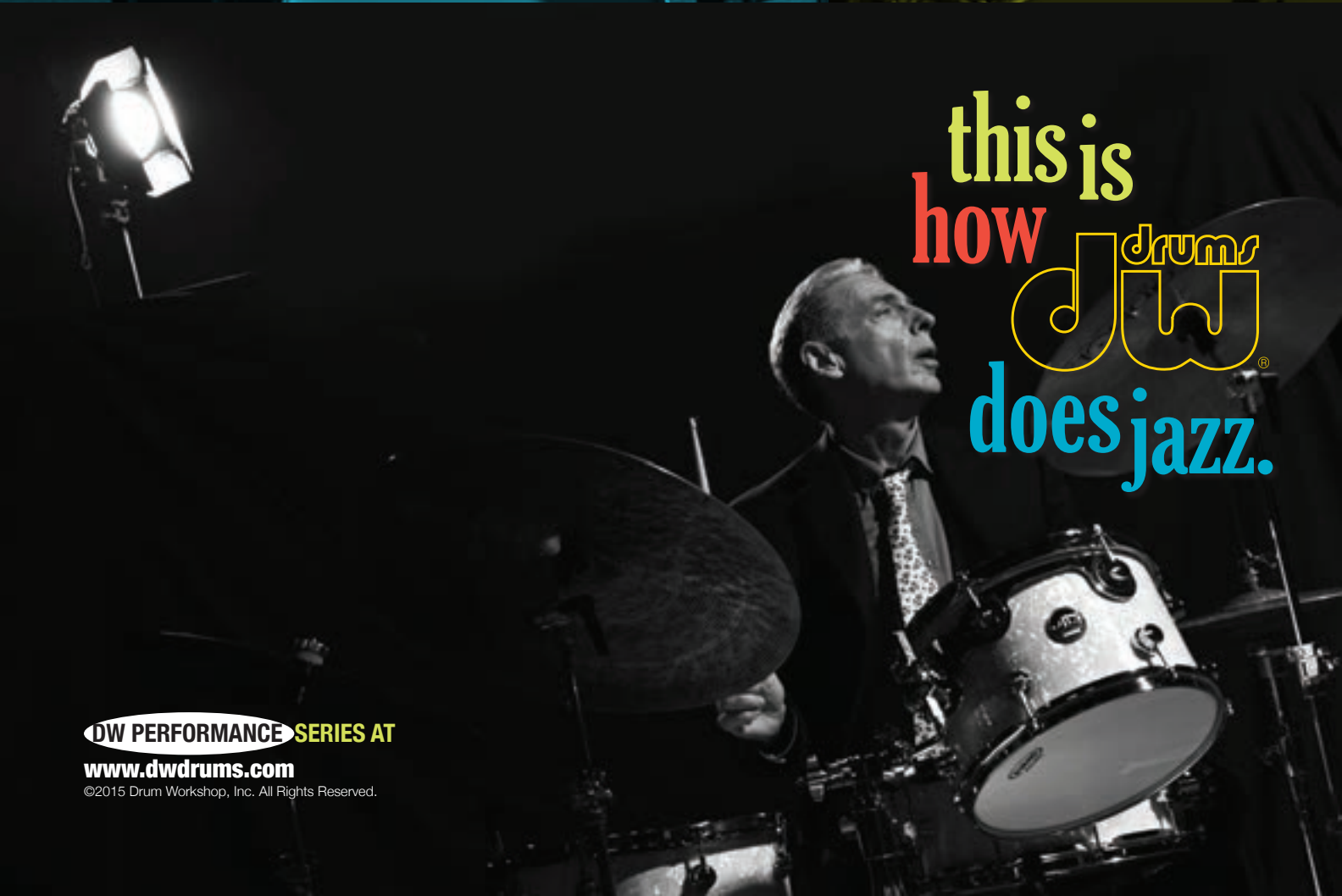
AW: It's weird, but the deeper I get into my musical life, I find myself really loving the stuff that I've always loved. Does that make sense? It's harder to get into new things. I mean, there are amazing drummers out there doing things that I can't even understand, but I'm also more opinionated as I get older. I try to learn from every drummer I watch, whether it's something cool or what *not* to do. You know, we just played with Jimmy Eat World and I love the way that Zach (Lind) plays. He's so solid. Like I said earlier, I love Pat Wilson's playing. To this day, he has such a unique feel; there's really nothing like it. He plays a little behind on everything, but it's tasteful and he makes it his own.

BD: I recently saw you play at FYF in L.A. and it made me realize that Against Me! is in a cool place, as far as shows go. You're able to fit in during a giant festival like that, but then you can turn around and play a mid-sized theater and feel right at home. Do you have a preference when it comes to the size of the audience?

AW: I do, actually. I've been lucky enough to play huge shows in the past. With The Offspring, we played a festival in France with more than 100,000 people in the crowd. It was absolutely mind-boggling. We saw weird things like fires popping up in the distance! (Laughs). So, I've played some shows that were incredible benchmarks, but if I had a choice, I'd play to an audience of 2,000 people where anyone can get on the stage, have fun, and interact. Those gigs are big enough that everything sounds good, it's not stifling hot, and there's a certain energy in the air. You're so close with the crowd and everybody's on the same page. It's contagious and it's unstoppable! **dw**

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DEEN Castronovo

Journeyman

by Scott Donnell

We're more than familiar with the great singing Rock drummers of all time. Most of us can name them off the top of our head: Phil Collins, Don Henley, Levon Helm, even Kelly Keagy. This short list is probably missing a few entries, but there's one name that drummers and music fans almost never utter. We humbly submit: Mr. Deen Castronovo. Singing a Journey ballad is a full-time job for most well-trained vocalists. Try it sometime. Of course, your drum kit might not fit in your shower. We met up with Deen backstage while the band was preparing to perform yet another sold out show. Among other things, we chatted about the finer points of singing and drumming. If you think that you may have an untapped or hidden talent, read on.

Scott Donnell: *How long have you been one of the 'newer guys' with Journey?*

Deen Castronovo: It will be sixteen years, coming up on February 17th.

SD: *Do they give you a watch for that?*

DC: They give me nothing but a hard time!

SD: *Obviously, you've played in several bands with Neal Schon. Was it your relationship with him that led to the Journey gig?*

DC: Yeah, Pretty much. When Steve Perry left the band and Steve Smith decided to leave along with him, I was the one they called. They asked me because they knew I was familiar with all of the Journey material. I was like, "Hell yeah! I'll do it!"

SD: *Somebody recently sent me a YouTube video of you singing while playing the drums. It reminded me of the skill set you possess and made me realize that there aren't many articles out there about this sort of thing. How did you discover that you can drum and sing?*

DC: When I was eleven years old, I was in a power trio called The Enemy. I remember the guitarist bringing me the Journey album, *Infinity* and I was like, "What is this?" He told me to learn "La Do Da" and asked if I could sing it. Since I hadn't hit puberty yet, I was able to pull it off! That's where I learned how to sing and play drums. I learned it while playing Journey songs.

SD: *Naturally, you are a big Journey fan, but how did you become the ballad singer of the band?*

DC: Well, when Steve Augeri (the singer that replaced Steve Perry) came in, he had some vocal issues in 2006 and was having a really hard time. I remember one show in Bristol, Virginia; they had my drum tech, Jim Hanley, play drums and they had me up front to sing. I performed "Faithfully", "Open Arms", and "Who's Crying Now?" and I was so afraid. It's easy to sing when you've got a bunch of drums, cymbals, and microphones in front of you because nobody can see you. When you're up in front, it's another story. I remember lifting my hands during "Open Arms" and they

were shaking. I knew then that I really wasn't a front man but I was able to sing those songs pretty decently, I guess. Eventually, Jeff Scott Soto joined the band and I ended up still singing those songs during the 2006 tour. Now we have Arnel and I'm still singing.

SD: Well, I know it's hard to take compliments, but your vocals are much better than, let's say, a background singer's. You have a lead vocalist's sound and range. You're also very aware of the subtleties and inflections of the original parts. Did the band know about this prior to that opportunity in 2006, or were you hiding it?

DC: I was like the secret weapon. Whenever Steve had issues with high parts, I would put my head down and have to sing them. I would lift my head up and play, then duck back down to sing the next high part. Nobody knew I was singing those parts! I remember Herbie Herbert (Journey's manager) coming out in an interview saying, "None of you people really know what's going on here." So, Herbie spilled the beans. He told them how I was doing the high stuff, and everyone was like, "Okay, well let's see him sing more songs."

SD: You're like the Michael Anthony of Journey. (Laughs).

DC: I guess, only not nearly as cool.

SD: Do you rehearse singing at all? You have a show in about an hour. Do you do vocal warm-ups of any kind?

DC: For me, the warm-ups are the backgrounds before I sing "Mother, Father". That gives me five songs. So, I sing all of the high stuff throughout the set, up until "Stone in Love".

SD: So, you just go straight into the high parts? You get on stage and start singing that stuff without any preparation whatsoever?

DC: Yeah, when you hear my voice now it sounds gravelly and rough, but once I get on stage and start singing, it opens right up. I have no idea why it does that.

SD: Unbelievable. Have you done any other singing aside from Journey?

DC: I am doing work right now with Jack Blades and Doug Aldrich. I'm actually finishing up recording vocals with them soon.

SD: You're the lead vocalist?

DC: Yep! I am the lead vocalist on that whole record. The band is called Revolution Saints. Serafino (Perugino), the president of Frontiers Records, asked me if I would sing on a project and I said, "Okay, sure." He always wanted me to do a solo record and I told him that I don't do that. I wouldn't know what to do. So, he hired this gentleman by the name of Alessandro Rosequi who wrote everything, played the drums, guitar, keyboards, bass, and sang on the demos. He had a killer voice, so I said, "Why would you want me to do this? You do this and I'll play the drums." But he said that Serafino wanted me to do it. So I was like, "Alright."

SD: Will you be touring with this project?

DC: I don't know if we will have enough time to tour, that's the thing.

SD: If they do go on tour, would you play drums and sing?

DC: Yeah, but I don't know if I will be able to do all of that stuff. I've never really had the opportunity to sing an entire Journey set while playing drums. I usually just play a few songs. I have done it in rehearsal a few times, and that's worked pretty well so far, but I've never been able to do it live.

SD: Who are some of your favorite singing drummers?

DC: Of course, you have Don Henley and Phil Collins; those were the guys I listened to. There was also Gil Moore (Triumph). The first guy that stood out to me was Peter Criss on "Black Diamond". I heard that and thought it was killer. But yeah, I didn't really listen to Don Henley that much as a drummer/singer. For me, he was always a singer and he could play drums, too. We knew Phil played drums

because of his work with Genesis, but I knew him as a drummer before that in Brand X.

SD: I think this interview might shed some light on you as a singer because people already recognize you as an amazing drummer. You sing in the show, but I don't know if people really know the deal.

DC: People don't. You can see the crowd looking around and wondering who is singing. A lot of people think it's a backing track until the camera comes on and they see me.

SD: Do you have a home studio?

DC: No, when they want to do something, they'll have me come out. My son has a wicked studio at his house.

SD: What type of music does he play?

DC: Oh, his stuff is ultra-heavy. He sounds like a cross between Linkin Park and Slipknot. He's singing now, too. He's not playing drums as much anymore, so he records drums now and he plays guitar. I asked him where he learned how to play guitar and he was like, "I don't know."

SD: Do you play guitar?

DC: Not really, and I couldn't write a song to save my life.

SD: But you're a singer with a sense of melody.

DC: Yeah, but for me to sit down with this band, where we have three of the best songwriters on the planet, how would I do that? I would be like, "Hey, look guys, I wrote this song." And they would say, "Good job, buddy. That's great, now have a good day and move on." (Laughs).

SD: You've been a professional drummer for a long time. How has your career evolved over the years?

DC: I think I've evolved as a drummer. I do more with the songs now. Before, I was in Thrash bands with shredder guitarists and it was all about the licks I could do. Now, I play more for the song. You don't mess with iconic songs; that



would be sinful.

SD: You have all that facility and you can harness it if you have to.

DC: Maybe here and there. I do as much as I can without getting the stink eye. We all know about the stink eye.

SD: Do you proactively work on your drumming, or do you feel like being on tour is enough to keep you fresh?

DC: It does and it doesn't. You have to remember that I grew up with a Metal background, so there was no finesse there. I had the finesse of a jack-hammer. Now, I have a nice smooth rhythm and I'm still learning how to be a pocket player. Steve Smith once said, "Do a lot with less movement." You see these guys and they barely move, but they are killing it! They

come over and have him teach me how to play "Don't Stop Believing". I never knew how he did that. So he showed me how to play it, as well as a few other parts. Then he ruined me for the next two hours.

SD: Do you play traditional grip at all?

DC: No, not at all.

SD: Do you have other drummers that are in your community?

DC: There are a few. I keep in touch with Ray Luzier, who is a monster, as well as Mike Portnoy, once in a while. We've become friends on Facebook and we talk here and there about stuff. Those are the guys I really keep in contact with, but mostly Smith. He's like a brother. He's a huge inspiration to me. He knows he's my biggest influence.

SD: He's a consummate musician.

DC: Yeah. Then you have Todd Sucherman. We don't talk very much, but we cross paths. He's ridiculous.

SD: Didn't you guys tour together?

DC: We did in 2003, and it destroyed me. Talk about a lesson in humility. He would turn to me and be like, "Check this out." Then he would just go off and ask if I liked it. I always said, "Yes, I liked that. No, I can't do that. That bums me out." He was so humble. He would show me stuff, but I couldn't quite grasp it.

SD: You talked about how you wanted to be more of a groove player, but have chops, too. Can those two worlds get along?

DC: I think they did in Journey, with Steve Smith in the band, but he knew when to do it.

SD: Yeah, but he was really playing for the song. Do you think you're doing the same thing?

DC: That's the goal. You know, when you hear Todd Sucherman with Styx, you know that's his baby. That's what he wants to do and he's capable of making it happen. When those elements come together, it's magic. **DW**

MDD

MACHINED DIRECT DRIVE PEDAL

MANUFACTURING AN IDEA

The MDD pedal is more than just a new flagship product; it represents the culmination of more than four decades of passion and know-how. It also introduces the birth of DW Manufacturing, a new arm of the company that will specialize in precisely-machined pedals and hardware constructed from the finest materials and componentry. You might say the in-house DW MFG machine shop is the counterpart to our well-known Custom Shop. Both are equally dedicated to creating premium products that take drumming to new and exciting places. So why the MDD and why now?

To tell the story of the first-ever DW direct drive pedal, we need to go back in time quite a few years, before the introduction of the popular 9000 pedal. To mark the unveiling of our Floating Rotor Technology, a limited number of machined aluminum pedals with ultra-thin titanium footboards were produced. These pedals are highly-coveted and artists such as Steve Smith and Gregg Bissonette play theirs to this very day. Technically, the first incarnation of the 9000 was the first DW machined pedal and since that time, we've heard from so many top-level players requesting that we revisit that design aesthetic.

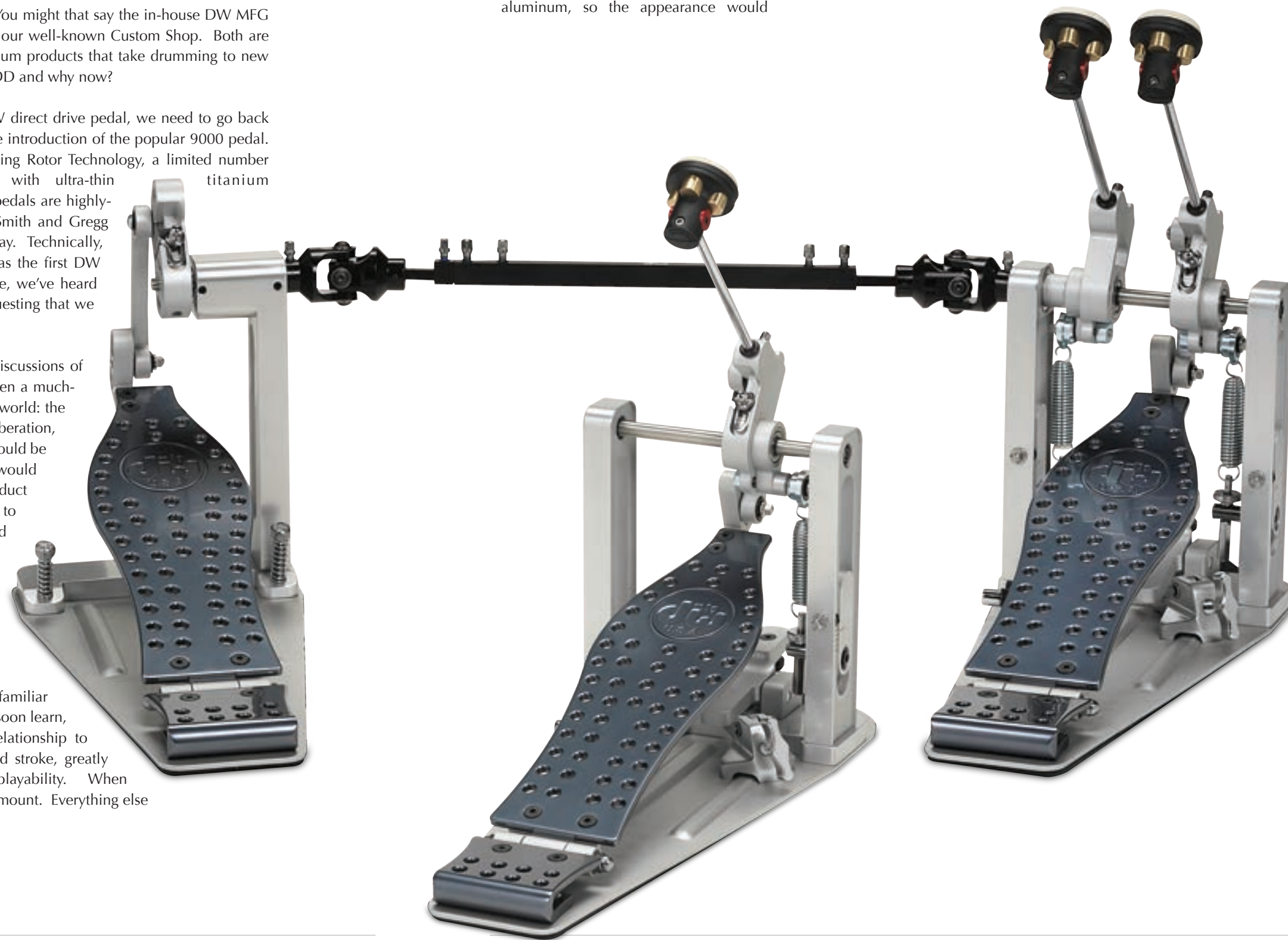
Fast-forward nearly eight years to discussions of another pedal idea that had also been a much-talked-about topic in the DW R&D world: the direct drive pedal. After careful deliberation, it was decided that both concepts would be combined to create a new pedal that would challenge DW convention. Product Designer, Rich Sikra, was enlisted to take on the assignment that would nearly consume his career for the better part of two years. This pedal needed to satisfy die-hard direct drive aficionados, yet appeal to chain drive connoisseurs; a nearly impossible task.

A direct drive pedal was relatively unfamiliar territory at the time. As Rich would soon learn, the geometry of the linkage, in relationship to the movement of the footboard and stroke, greatly influences the feel and overall playability. When designing pedals at DW, feel is paramount. Everything else

(features, build materials, look, etc.) is secondary. Ultimately, the pedal needs to feel like an extension of the drummer, while never inhibiting their creative flow. That said, visual appeal is also important. A perforated, racing-inspired footboard was incorporated, along with a matching contoured heel-plate. Most of the pedal would be machined from billet aluminum, so the appearance would

be a by-product of the manufacturing process. Some pretty nifty, never-before-seen features were also included: VERT (vertical spring adjustment), a swivel version of the Tri-Pivot toe clamp, and even a versatile new Control Beater system that allows the drummer to swap out the striking surfaces and adjust the weight distribution in seconds.

MDD pedals epitomize the company's dedication to innovation and the advancement of quality manufacturing. For a complete list of features and specifications, visit us online at: www.dwdrums.com. Better yet, check one out at your favorite pro drum shop and let us know what you think via social media. We made this pedal for you. **dw**



Game OF THRONES

Selecting the Right Seat for the Job

by Mario Calire



We sometimes don't give as much thought to our choice of thrones as we do to other parts of our set-up. It's easy to get enthralled by a new kit or a beautiful snare drum...but a throne? If we've got one that works, we're usually content with it. And that's a shame, really. The throne we choose is the foundation of our kit. The right seat choice helps us to feel centered and balanced while the wrong throne can ruin your gig or session, as well as your back!

As drummers, we are truly spoiled these days, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the throne department. It is now commonplace to have a sturdy and comfortable stool. Just a few decades ago, drummers suffered with hard-as-a-rock and wobbly seats that seemed so much as an afterthought by the drum companies of the day. Every now and then when I buy a

vintage kit that comes with old hardware, I am astounded at how rickety and painful the old thrones were. No thanks!

Over forty years ago, when Drum Workshop was a humble teaching studio, Don Lombardi envisioned and created a solution to this conundrum. There, in the modest beginnings of DW, the

height-adjustable trap seat was born. The runaway success of this throne led to DW's ability to venture into making other stands. When we talk about thrones and DW, we need to realize that they are in the very DNA of Drum Workshop. What began as a quest to build a comfortable seat for drummers defined a mission: to solve the problems that drummers face

in the most elegant and effective way possible.

So, let's talk about thrones, shall we?

I remember my first kit; I was eight years old and so thrilled with my junkyard drums I got for Christmas. I also remember my first throne. It was really squishy on top and after a few months I could feel the bolts under the padding digging into my backside. It sucked. An upgrade was due. Luckily for me, the next Christmas I received a pneumatic throne. I'll never forget being excited to pull the lever and have it go up, and then being unable to get it to go back down because I didn't weigh enough!

These days I swear by my DW 9100 round-top thrones. I've owned one of them for over a decade and it shows no signs of stopping. I hadn't really investigated what else DW had to offer because I've been so content with what I've been using. In the studio or on tour, the 9100 does the job for me. As it turns out, there are some great throne options for any drummer in any situation (and any budget) that I wasn't aware even existed.

For this overview of the DW and PDP thrones, I want to ask you a favor. While we are going to start with the most affordable options and work our way up the line, please don't equate price with quality. For many of us, a light-weight throne is the right decision, and DW knows this. The smaller and lighter thrones are simply options and are all built with the highest level of quality across the board. Think of them as choices. I will try to help delineate which of the various thrones might best suit your needs.

Let's begin with the PDP DT800-04. This throne has a round top that I found to be firm and supportive. To set your desired height you use the memory lock. Aiming to keep the weight down on your gigging kit? This would be a great pick.

In the PDP family I also auditioned the DT820-X, which has a medium-size

tractor-style top. Again, I found it to be firm and solid-feeling. The added feature on this model was the threaded post to make for easier adjusting. If you like tractor-style thrones, this is a great option to get into the game.

The DW 3100 throne really spoke to me. It felt as though I was getting the same support and feeling as I expect out of the 9100 but with a much simpler and lighter package. While it also utilizes a memory lock on a straight post to lock in your position, I realize that some sacrifices are necessary to keep the overall weight down. The 3100 deserves attention and is something I plan to add to my arsenal to throw in my truck for quick gigs and sessions.

In trying the 5000 series, I found two great examples of DW's expertise. The 5100 sports a slightly smaller rounded top connected to a heavy-duty double-braced base. The threaded corkscrew height adjustment is as smooth as butter. Firm, stable, and very comfortable, the 5100 has nothing to apologize for whatsoever. If you like a round throne and don't require the largest version out there, this throne will do the job with style.

The 5120 also has the same solid double-braced base and corkscrew height adjustment, but offers a larger tractor seat top. The tractor seat is well-built and felt great as I shifted my weight around. It's solid as a rock and very comfortable. For those of you who like this style of seat, you can't go wrong with the 5120.

As I stated earlier, I swear by my 9100 thrones. The heavy-duty bases and large round tops always have me feeling evenly supported. I am sure this throne is an industry-standard since every backline company provides them on rental kits around the world. They stand up to heavy use and keep on ticking. What can I say that you don't already know?!

The 9100 is firm (without feeling hard), easily adjustable with its corkscrew post, and locks down tight with the integrated

memory lock. It's a winner. For the tractor seat fans out there, go with the 9120 model. It has all of the same features as the 9100 coupled with a solid and generously-sized tractor top.

Finally, we have DW's Airlift thrones. Using a pneumatic adjustment, changing height on the fly is as easy as it can get. Sharing a kit or changing set-ups all the time? The Airlift might be the ticket for you. Each of the Airlift models features a broader, four-legged, double-braced base which gives them a wide stance for maximum support. The 9100AL has a large round top while the 9120AL showcases the largest tractor style top DW offers, as well as an optional backrest. If you require a bigger piece of real estate to park your caboose on, the 9120AL is for you! Some pneumatic thrones I've tried tend to be super bouncy or even start sagging while you play. Not so with the Airlifts. I found them to be stable and incredibly supportive while also being the easiest to adjust.

So, there you have it! Somewhere within the PDP and DW lines there is the perfect throne for your needs. Whichever one you settle on, you really cannot go wrong. Every throne I tried was stable and supportive and light-years beyond what we used to deal with back in the day. We can largely thank Don Lombardi and the good folks at DW for that! **dw**



9100
"I swear by my 9100 thrones."

Danny Walker

On Metal's Cutting Edge

by Brook Dalton



Nearly every cultural community, or region, has a handful of stand-out musicians at its heart. I'm talking about the few that are as impressive as they are entertaining; performers that are universally admired while transcending the bias of both naysayers and jealous types. Having been 'raised' in the same musical scenes as Danny Walker, I can tell you that he is one of these stellar talents. When his bands would play in the areas around Ventura, CA, there were always factions of fellow drummers and note-takers present to share in the genuine energy of some of the county's heaviest music while attempting to decipher just how in the hell he was playing with such speed and technical precision. Danny's name frequently comes up in local conversations, so it is a pleasure to share a dialogue that we recently had while he visited the DW factory, smack-dab in the center of his old stomping grounds.

Brook Dalton: *I've always been very proud of the musical creativity in the Ventura County area. We're lucky to have been surrounded by good musicians, songwriters, bands, and a strong sense of community. You've been a key fixture at the center of a lot of the important, heavy (Punk, Grind, Metal) scenes from this region. Can you talk a bit about when you began playing and what it was like to be part of those earlier bands?*

Danny Walker: Well, I started playing drums at a really early age. I was listening to records and picking up ideas, then jamming with neighborhood friends in the garage. When I was in my early teens, I started going to a bunch of local shows in Oxnard and Ventura before I ever played in a band. I'd see groups like The Missing 23rd and Peter Pan's Army. They were a huge influence on me and I wanted to do what these people were doing. Word got out that I was a drummer in the area, so I started teaming up with different musicians and played in a few local bands, like Destroy Babylon. Uphill Battle was the first band I was in that got signed to a label and toured a bunch, and that was really cool. We were on a label (Relapse) that I respected and had other bands that I liked on their roster. We played a lot in Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Oxnard in the early days and things kind of took off from there.

BD: *It seemed like every time Uphill Battle would play a show, there was the general crowd in front of the band, but then there was always this core group of drummers that would migrate to the side of the stage just so we could see what you were doing. We would watch your feet and try to figure out if you were a robot, or not.*

DW: Ha! Well, I'm not.

BD: *I remember when one of my bands opened for Intronaut, which had to be one of your first shows, and you were really excited to play. Before you went on, you told me, "Dude, there are no blast beats in these songs!" It was great because you were able to readjust from an all-out technical assault to this Prog-laden sound with heavy textures, but you maintained the energy. What was that shift like for you?*

DW: It wasn't very difficult to pull back. Even though I was playing nothing but Death Metal, Grindcore, and fast Punk, I

listened to a lot of slower-paced music. I love Massive Attack, Björk, and Neurosis... stuff that's more groove-oriented. I have a fascination with that kind of music and I wanted to do something like it because I'd never drummed that way before. I was sure that I could play it, but I never had the opportunity. Before we started Intronaut, Sacha (Dunable) was in a band called Anubis Rising and they would play shows with Uphill Battle. We always talked about starting a band together, so we had the chance and it started from there.

BD: *It seemed like you guys quickly made the jump from playing local shows and L.A. clubs to going on tour with Tool. Suddenly, you were playing arenas and doing drum solos with Danny Carey. How does your mindset change when you make an advancement like that?*

DW: It is kind of a trip, but before Intronaut started I had been touring Europe with bands and doing things, musically, that I had considered to be successful. So, even though one of the guitarists and I had already done bigger things, we had no problem starting from the ground up. We didn't have an attitude about it; we never thought, "Well, we've done this in the past, so this band should start out at a certain level." We went on small DIY tours, we slept in our van on the side of the road, and we did exactly what we'd done before in our other bands. I definitely feel like we've earned what we have. We went out as much as we could, we never denied a tour, we were always willing to play, and we hoped that our music spoke for itself. Specifically, with Tool, they only take out bands that they personally like; politics or management isn't involved with those decisions.

BD: *Right. They took Tweak Bird on tour simply because they're a great band. They weren't looking for a household name in the supporting slot.*

DW: Yeah, they've toured with ISIS, Mastodon, and The Melvins because they're all bands that they respect. Management wasn't asking, "Well, how will Intronaut contribute to sales on this tour?" Tool doesn't care; they'll bring out a Slam poet if they want! Looking back, it's definitely weird and still kind of hard to swallow.

BD: Are the drum solos that Danny Carey performs alongside the drummer from the opening band rehearsed ahead of time, or are they completely improvised?

DW: We had one rehearsal to kind of hash things out, but beyond that it was all improvised. Actually, I had never seen Tool before we played with them, but I knew that they would pick a song and incorporate a sort of drum battle in the middle of it. On this particular tour, the song was "Lateralus". They'd break it down at a certain point, Justin Chancellor would play this repetitive bass line, and Danny and I would just groove together and trade eights. We'd swap solos and I'd watch him for the cues. Then, we'd both come in and finish the song off together. So, I actually had to study that song while wearing headphones in the van between shows!

BD: How involved are you with drum education these days? I know that you used to give lessons quite a bit. You also have a YouTube channel with some exercises on it. Is that your main source

for teaching or do you still do personal instruction?

DW: I'll give lessons once in a while, but it's hard to find the time. There was a time, when I worked at a music store, when I could focus on that. Now I'm doing so many things, musically, and I'm touring so much that I actually give most lessons while I'm on the road. Sometimes a fan will contact me ahead of time and say, "Hey, you're going to be in my town, can I meet you for a lesson?" So, I'll show up early and go over some pad exercises and talk about techniques. I try to do some 'one-off' meetings like that. I never really considered myself to be an educator because sometimes it's hard for me to explain what I do.

BD: How did you develop your Prime Grid exercise? Is it something that you personally use to help warm-up?

DW: You know, it wasn't something that I really thought about; I just started doing it to warm-up. I always did paradiddles and double-stroke rolls to get my hands warm, but I started to throw in these

patterns in odd meters. It worked for me because I could, essentially, work on two things at once: I was warming up and testing my ability to hold different meters. It ended up being really fun, so I posted it for people to check out.

BD: Intronaut has a big, commemorative tour coming up next month. I know that you'll be representing every record, so how do you guys decide on the set-list for something like this?

DW: Yeah, it's for our ten-year anniversary and we'll be playing one or two songs from every release. There's also a thirteen-minute instrumental song from one of our records that we've only played once in L.A. and in India, but we've never played it on a tour. It's pretty long and complex and it opens with our guitarist playing tabla. He actually took lessons from Danny Carey's teacher. We're also doing some old stuff that we haven't touched in a while, so that will be a lot of fun. We've been touring for the last record for a year and we've really saturated the newer songs. It'll be nice to take a break from



them and play the old material.

BD: *But you'll play a couple of the newer songs, right?*

DW: Yeah, we'll play some of them, for sure.

BD: *You drummed on the new Job for a Cowboy album. How did that come about? I know they're from Arizona, so how did you meet them?*

DW: Their line-up is actually from all over the place. A couple guys are from Boston, one of them lives in Denver, and the singer lives in Arizona. But, their home-base is Arizona. Jon Rice, the drummer that they had for years, decided to step away and pursue something else. He's amazing, by the way. I knew the bass player and the guitarist, so they hit me up and said, "Hey, we've got a whole record written. Would you be interested in playing on it?" They had the entire album planned, but they had programmed a drum machine for all of the parts. It was basically just filler; it was a skeleton. They told me, "These are just the basic drum ideas, you do what you want. We're hiring for your style, so do what you feel is right." I had a couple months to study it, but I was in Europe for a month with Intronaut. So, everyday, I'd listen to it and chart out the parts as best as I could. I wrote down what I thought I'd want to do, but I never actually played it on the drums! I practiced for a week at home, then flew out to Florida to track the whole thing. There were a lot of last-minute decisions made in the studio, but we all shared opinions and the end-result is awesome. I'm really stoked on it.

BD: *Do you see yourself touring with them, since you played on the album?*

DW: The door is open. No matter what, Intronaut is the top priority for me, but if there's an open window and I have an opportunity, I'd be into doing it. So, it could happen.

BD: *I still think it's crazy that you got to tour with Jesu. I know that you have been a big fan of Justin Broadrick for a long time.*

DW: Yeah, absolutely! I love his work. And, again, it really has nothing to do with good drumming. I mean, I listen to a lot of music that's simplistic in nature. I

like it for the emotion and the feel.

BD: *I've never asked you how that gig came about. Did you know him before you played together?*

DW: No, I happened to be in the right place at the right time. I was at a Neurosis show in 2007 at The El Rey Theatre. Matt Jacobson from Relapse Records was there and I knew him from being in a couple of bands on the label. He brought me backstage and one of the reps from Jesu's label approached me and asked, "Hey, you're Danny, right? Do you want to play drums for Jesu?" I said, "Uh, yeah, I'd love to." He was a little hammered so I wasn't sure if it was going to actually happen! (Laughs). But, the next morning he emailed me the set list and put me in contact with Justin Broadrick and Ted Parsons. Ted was the original drummer, but he couldn't do the tour due to health issues. Jesu actually had trouble getting their work visas, so Intronaut suddenly filled in for them on the first half of that tour. It was an interesting shift for me, but it was a lot of fun.

BD: *That's pretty incredible.*

DW: Totally, but it was challenging in a different way. The music is so simplistic and sparse; I was basically emulating a drum machine. That was the first time that I've ever had to play with a click track live. I had to be so subdued and eased back.

BD: *Did you play with electronics on your kit?*

DW: No, but I played with backtracking that he had pre-recorded. It had electronics, extra guitars, drum samples, and layered elements. It was all new to me. Anyone that thinks that music is easy to play doesn't know what they're talking about.

BD: *I've always thought that recording long, slow, and repetitive drum parts is much more difficult than frenetic, shorter songs with more changes in them.*

DW: Sure. There's something in your brain that makes it easy to overthink those patterns when you're in the studio.

BD: *Which drummers, or bands, have*

you been influenced by recently?

DW: Man, I feel like I've been living in a hole lately. I've been a big fan of Meshuggah ever since I was a kid. So, getting to tour and hang out with them last year was amazing. I got to watch Tomas Haake drum every night! It was inspiring and I was constantly reminded why he is one of my favorites. Every time we were playing our set, I'd look over and he was at the side of the stage watching me and I just couldn't believe it. He's super nice and humble, too. Matt Garstka from Animals as Leaders is phenomenal, too. That guy's taking over the Metal world right now.

BD: *How has your set-up changed over the years? Obviously, you're with DW now, but have your dimensions stayed the same? Do you add or take away drums when you play with different bands?*

DW: I'll change things up, depending on what I'm doing. Although, I've had the same amount of cymbals for about fourteen years and I still off-set my rack toms. But, for instance, when I went out with Cloudkicker I used a stack. It's one of the sounds that he (Ben Sharp) programs, but I would never use that in Intronaut. Also, on this upcoming tour, I'm bringing back the Ice Bell. I don't use it anymore, but I did on those old songs so it's back on the kit. Sometimes I'll play with two splash cymbals, sometimes I'll use one. I think it's important to get used to playing on different set-ups because you're not always in the position to play with what you need or want, especially if you're playing festivals or using backline gear.

BD: *You're playing a Design Series kit now. How is that working out for you?*

DW: It's awesome! I can't believe how much that sucker cuts through. I still have my Collector's kit, but it's nice to play something new. I like that it doesn't have the reinforcement hoops. It sounds very bright and stands out. I'll be bringing it out on the ten-year anniversary tour. People are already starting to comment on how good it looks, too.

BD: *And it's already got your initials printed on the kick drum head!*

DW: Yeah, man! It was meant to be. **dw**

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