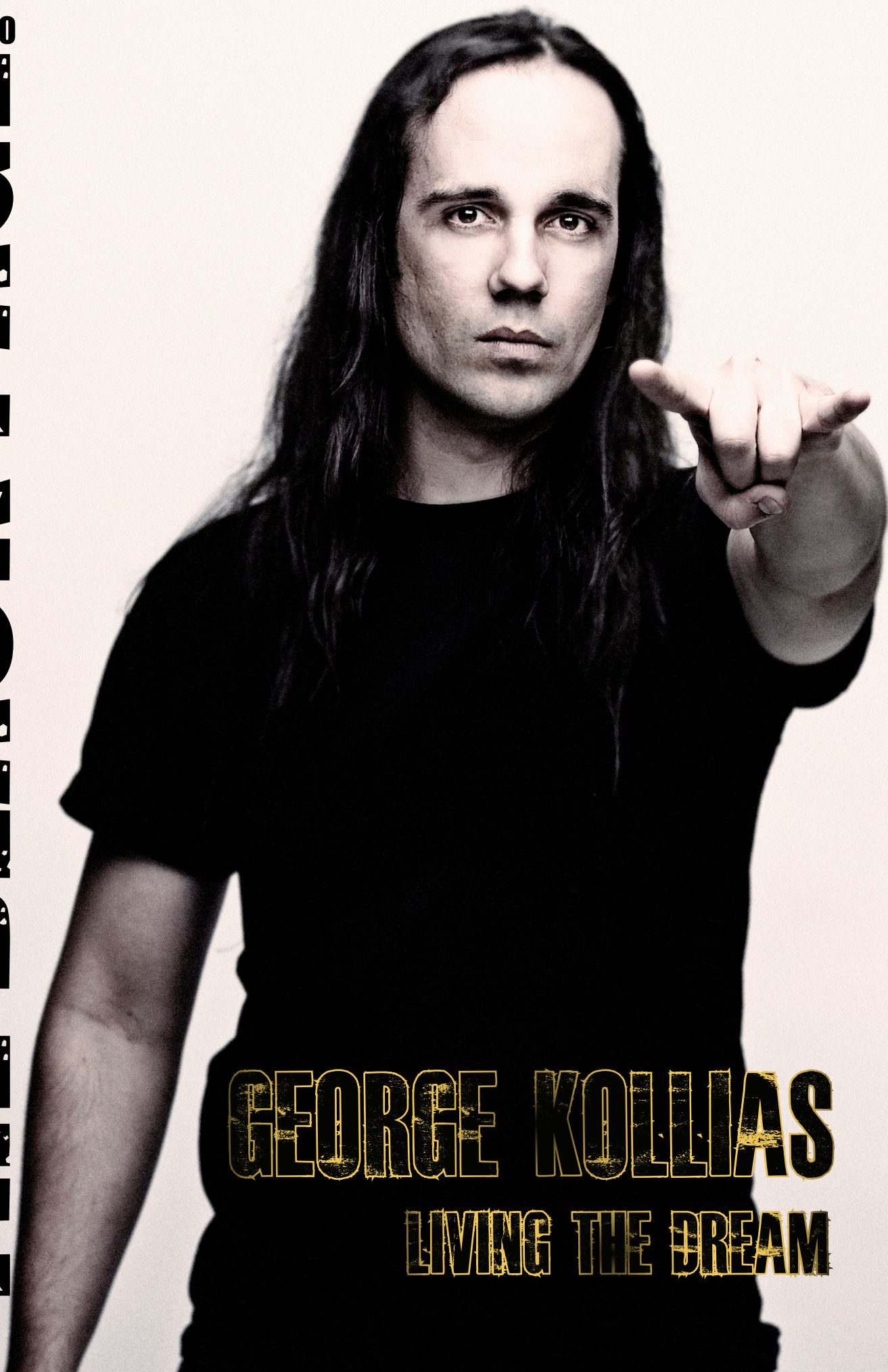


MARCH 2010

THE BLACK PAGE



GEORGE KOLLIAS

LIVING THE DREAM

THE BLACK PAGE

MARCH 2010

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Many things set George Kollias apart in the drumming world. Why should this month's *Black Page* interview be any different? George is the very first drummer from Greece to grace the cover of our fair pages. The Athens based drummer has been turning the extreme metal world upside down with his band Nile and their brand of hard-hitting, tempo-induced metal.

Aside from his exhausting tour schedule you can add to his list of musical feats, the honor of being a faculty member of the prestigious Modern Music School in Athens, Greece, as well as a highly successful career as a clinician.

Regardless of being halfway around the world on a grueling tour and having very little access to reliable internet, George soldiered on to deliver an excellent read.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor to introduce George Kollias.

George, one thing I really love about your style is how you utilize your feet. I see you have a set up that compliments your foot techniques. Tell me a bit about your kick drum set up and how many pedals you can utilize with your feet?

Thanks for the compliment. I had two kicks for as long as I remember. I started playing drums because of metal, so a double bass kit was always my choice and that had to do also with what my favourite drummers were using back then. So starting with the double bass set up was a need to be able to play the music I loved.

Lately my pedal set up got a little bit out of control. Watching drummers like Marco Minnemann and Thomas Lang I got inspired to study different patterns, get into different directions, and get as many new ideas in my playing as possible in order to progress as a drummer and make the whole

thing more fun for me as well. I have added a remote hi hat pedal, an electronic Roland kick on the right side, a Ribbon Crasher on the left, as well as a customized foot snare on the left which is basically a Pearl tambourine I have customized to a foot snare. I don't use all these for Nile except the remote hi hat and the Ribbon Crasher. It's mostly for my personal practice and for getting new ideas into my playing. From left to right my pedal set up is: Ribbon Crasher/ 2.8" footsnare /hi Hat/left kick/right kick/remote hi hat/electronic kick.

What exercises did you practice as your skills progressed to maintain that power and accuracy with your feet?

The most important exercise I did back then was to listen to the music and go for it—simple. I wanted to play metal so this is what I did, nothing more and nothing less. That is the final goal practice as well as to be able to play music, right? I think this is really important and unfortunately people tend to forget that this kind of music needs passion and effort. You need to really go for it and if you really want to do it, things will find their own way.

Now, don't get me wrong, technique is super important as well, in order to get your playing on the next level. As soon as I started listening to drummers that were pushing the limits I felt the need to do the same, so I started analyzing things and trying to figure out how to develop more speed, control, stamina etc. And since there was no internet and Youtube back in





those years I had to figure it out myself. So I started applying my hand technique on my feet, trying to get the same motion and mechanics. There were tons of exercises I came up with; most of them were created for my weak spots and what my body was asking, so I started checking exercises more and more to find out what really works.

Double bass drumming has to do a lot with muscle memory and mechanics, it's a part of our playing that we need to focus on and stay there for long periods in order to develop muscles. There were times I overdid it and I went through pain, but I kept practicing because I really wanted to get faster. It's just something that you have to go through, and this is the reason you don't see so many super fast drummers today—not everybody is patient enough to go through this and I completely understand it.

Still, there are shortcuts that I discovered through my teaching years and I strongly believe that anybody can develop great power and accuracy with less effort than what I put on my earlier years. It's like anything on drums, you need to know what to practice and how to practice it. Shortcuts are not the “easy way,” it's the wise way, and

if it's done right you get the same results faster and in shorter periods.

George, tell our readers a bit about Athens Modern Music School and the Extreme Drumming Department that you started there.

Modern Music School is the best music school in Athens, period. I knew this before I joined them and I knew how serious they were about doing something good for the scene in Greece. The school is so organized and everybody there that's involved is really passionate about it. George Metallinos and Vasilis Metallinos are two people who actually care a lot about drumming and education in Greece, and right now I can tell they are surrounded by a great team that cares about the school as much as they do.

How the whole thing started? We became friends and I did a clinic for the school as a guest which went really well. The kids showed us that they wanted this type of music in the school so [George and Vasilis] made me the offer and I accepted it with no second thought. The idea of having extreme

metal drumming in a music school made me so excited!

It [has] worked well so far. The kids get the education needed plus all the extras that each teacher can give to them about his

each section. It's something new and works great so far. Still this is for a higher level of student, so before they join the program we have exams so we can see if they are able to join or not.



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style and his experience on touring/playing live. All of our teachers are active musicians. It's really important to have a teacher that actually knows what you want to do and what you really need for your playing.

How many graduates does a school like Athens Modern Music School see in a year? Where might they move on to?

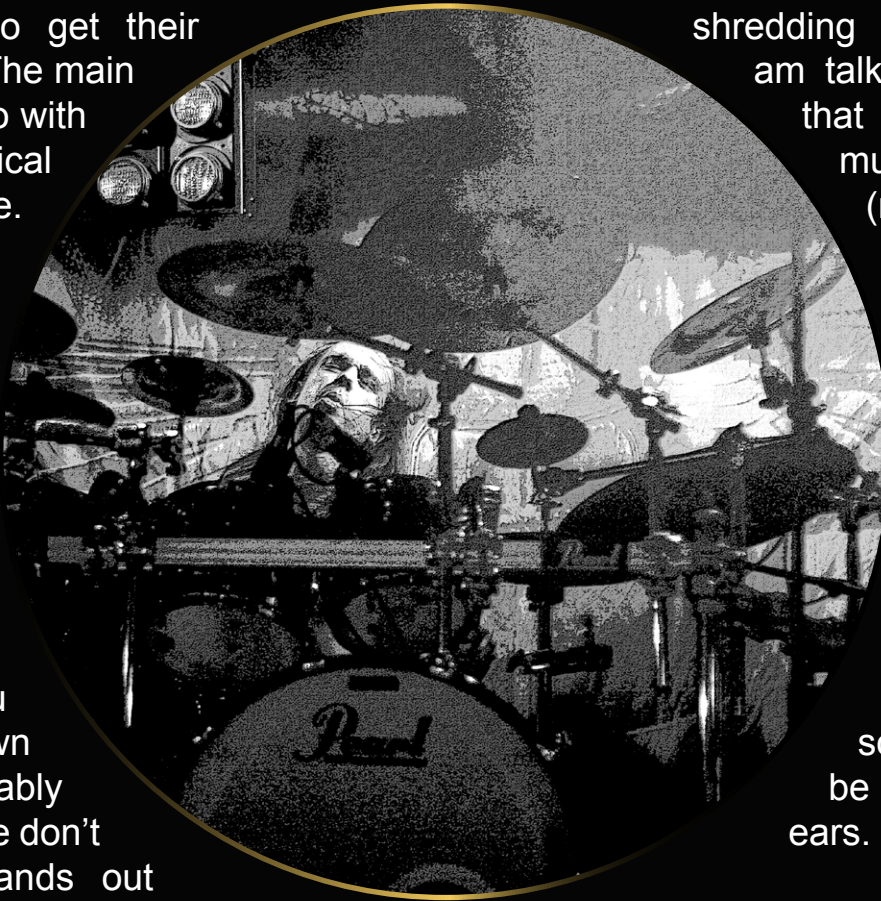
That depends, since we always upgrade and add different levels that students want to follow. For example, now we have just introduced to our students our brand new Professional Program. What this is actually is a different level of study (mostly advanced) where students get the chance to follow this program even if they are students of our school or not. It's a whole new area which prepares every student to be a professional musician. The students have to go through all the important sections of drumming with the different teachers that specialize in

What is the music and drumming industry like in Greece? Being that Greece is a small country, what opportunities are there for drummers?

Well, things are getting better and better in Greece, although we are far away from saying that we got have opportunities for the younger musicians. There is better education which is a big plus, but still we are missing a lot compared to other countries like Germany, Sweden, and United States. We have lots of great bands and great musicians, although the most popular music here would be Greek pop and laika which both are, I don't know, bad? For some weird reason even young people get into it, and it's such a shame. I support all the metal/rock/jazz bands that dare to try to do something good for our scene. I really don't care about any other style that is not based on love [of] music.

As for Greek rock/metal bands, it's very

hard for them to get their name out there. The main problem has to do with the geographical position of Greece. Bands that want to get out on the road and tour find it pretty hard every time. There have to be flights involved which cost a lot of money, especially if you carry your own gear. This is probably the reason that we don't get so many bands out there, except a few that made it and got some support from their labels or touring agencies.



shredding it. So intense! I am talking about players that don't have any music education (most of them) but their technique is incredible. It's inspiring! As for Dimotika, I was never into it, but again it depends. Some areas in Greece have their own style, their own signatures and some of them can be really good to my ears.

Greece is deeply rooted in traditional music styles like Paleá dhimotiká and Cretan music. With the influence of internet and the popularity of metal, how are the two influences manifesting in the younger generations of musicians?

It's so funny you asked this question since lately I am turning more and more to our traditional music. I don't really think young people are getting into this music. I mean this is a shame but young people always forget our roots. I am no different though. Just recently I started discovering some songs and artists that are really good and have a big influence on me these days.

I like some of the Cretan music and some from Cyprus, there are some great songs and some players that are absolutely

What led you to extreme metal drumming? Are there other genres that you practice and/or play live?

I would say drummers like Lars Ulrich, Igor Cavalera and Pete Savdoval were the reason I wanted to play fast. It was in my blood; I loved speed. Still their "fast" is really different than "today's fast." I really never thought I would ever play for a band that plays four times faster than Metallica on Kill 'Em All (*laughs*). So, I loved their music and all these drummers. Each one of them gave me enough inspiration to get my own band together, go out there, play live and practice to get better. I don't know, I just got so excited with fast drumming and extreme music.

Extreme metal is the style I love and I want to play, that's a fact. But yeah, I'm into several different styles as well, and in fact this is what I practice the last four to five years. I practice a lot of jazz/pop/rock songs



and not so much metal anymore; that's just because I tour with Nile so much that metal [has] become very easy and I am on an auto pilot every time I play. So I am trying to get involved with different types of music and get into new directions, discover new areas and add as much as I can into my playing. I need new things to inspire me and get me going. This is the most important thing for a musician I think. If a metal drummer spends his time playing metal only, they will never go further. Everybody needs to open their ears and listen to some great music. There are tons of great music out there as well as hundreds of great drummers.

How did it come to be that you hooked up with Nile?

What happened with Nile was really simple actually, but it was also a surprise because nobody talked to me before Karl Sanders sent me an email. I never expected it. When Tony Laureano decided to leave Nile the guys called Derek Roddy to see if he knew anybody that would be able to do the gig. By that time, I had no idea that Tony left the band and I barely knew Derek. I met him in Greece when Hate Eternal came there on a European tour. I got the chance to say hello to him and give him one promo CD demo I

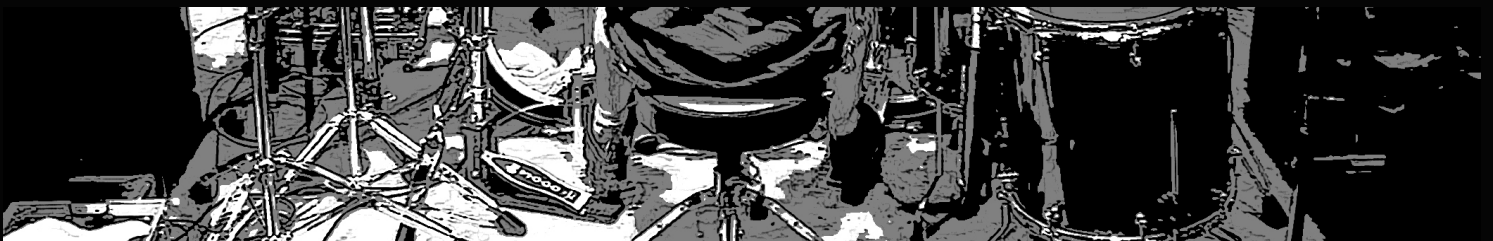
had with my ex-band, Sickening Horror.

So he talked to Nile about me and also sent them some videos of me, then Karl got in touch and asked me to join Nile. I was pretty excited of course, but I did a lot of thinking before I said yes, just to make sure that the band could count on me. Joining a band is not that simple; there are lots of tours and obligations that you have to commit to do.

After that, I flew to the States for the first time and we got busy writing our new album, *Annihilation of the Wicked*. We have been together since then, are doing really well together, and we have great time touring the world. Like I said, a band is a lot more than skills and business, and I feel that all these years with Nile I found the band I was always looking for.

How did you get started on guitar as a young boy? Do you still play the guitar?

Yeah I started with guitar before I get into drums. I think I was like nine or something. Like I said, I wanted to play metal in any possible way. I always felt I had it and I wanted to do it—always for my own joy, not professionally. It went well. Me and my brother were learning guitar and that was one of the greatest things I have done



because now I see how useful it is for my music. We still have that guitar. It's a white Explorer by Epiphone; always sounded really good.

A couple years later I finally got into drums which I always loved and wanted so much but I never stopped playing guitar. Right now I own five guitars and one bass and I'm playing more than ever. I am writing music non stop, and I plan to record my solo album soon. I am getting lessons here and there from friends. Dallas (Toler-Wade) helped me out with the video lessons and I am getting instructional DVDs of guys like Rusty Cooley or Paul Gilbert to try to learn something, but mostly get me into practicing (*laughs*).

Tell me about your off time away from the kit. What do you do to recharge your batteries?

When I'm home I always feel I am recharging batteries. I don't have to be on holidays or do anything in particular; just being home with my family is good enough for me. My free time is limited though. Most times I'm super busy with my music or my drum activities (drum lessons, clinics, videos etc). Touring [keeps] me away from my personal activities and my life in general. We are not touring like crazy, but it's always enough to mess up my schedule so I try to catch up.

Back in the day I used to play with many bands (playing for anybody) trying to get as much experience as possible and to be honest that never led me anywhere, so now I finally spend my time in the things that are most important to me. I am focusing



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on my drum clinics and my DVDs. It's just great to work for yourself. I love it. There are no deadlines; no stress and you are able to decide anything without compromising. If I want to do something I just do what I want; very simple. I am a team player though. Let's just say that working by my own balances things out and gives me a good kick to discover new things and point new directions for my progress as a musician.

I am into riding a lot and I spend as much time as I can with my dirt bike. I



Yannis definitely did that to me; he got me into jazz drumming and made me open my ears to different styles. He made me think as a teacher and train myself and that was the best thing I got. I slowly realized that even if you are an extreme drummer you need to be able to play anything to a certain level. You musicianship is just more complete—there are less “holes” in your playing. He also helped me with my DVD. I knew what I wanted to give and what I had to give, but that was a really stressful period for me and he helped to organize things and make them as simple as possible so everybody would understand what I wanted to show.

love motorcycling a lot, although I quit for a few years because of music.

Tell me about your studies with Yannis Stavropoulos. What were some of the biggest lessons you have learned from the jazz legend?

Well, Yannis is one of these guys that will inspire you even if you only talk with him, period. He is more than just an amazing drummer and musician.

When I first joined his class I was already on a good playing level but I was only playing metal, and I had already started getting into technical metal and bands like Cynic, Death, Spastik Ink. So in some ways even though I was able to pull off the songs I felt I was missing the next level. I needed more information and concepts in order to play everything I wanted the way I supposed to and also get more influence from other styles so I could start building my personal style.

Tell me about your influences growing up. For those of us outside of Greece there must be many great players we have not been exposed to.

My influences, unfortunately, were always the ones outside Greece. That had to do with the fact that nobody was actually playing the music I was into when I first started playing. So starting with drums back in 1990 I was into drummers like Lars Ulrich, Igor Cavalera, Dave Lombardo, Pete Savdoval and many other drummers from my favourite bands by that time. I basically started playing their songs and working my way up through their songs, listening closely to what they did and trying to learn from them

Later on, I started getting into jazz, and we had some killer drummers by the time. I remember when I got a CD with Yannis Stavropoulos, Giorgos Trandalidis and Spyros Panagiotopoulos. It was a drum trio actually, a promotion CD for Gabriel Drums, a great drum company from Greece that

I endorsed for four years. This is when I started getting into these drummers and I tried to find any recordings they did.

After I moved to Athens in 2000, I also met a lot of metal drummers in Greece that were totally inspiring, mostly drummers from my generation. Fotis Benardo of Septic Flesh was and still is one of my favorites. Septic Flesh is a legendary band which I always liked and Fotis is the man for this band. He is a machine behind the drum kit and for sure my favourite Greek metal drummer.

Vangelis from Inveracity is also one of the best extreme drummers I know. He and Inveracity were always something that Greek metal scene should be proud of and they are still kicking! Vangelis is a world class extreme metal drummer. There are still some new guys in the scene that I saw and I got blown away. George from Mass Infection is another awesome drummer. He is younger than the rest of us and I am sure people will hear about him really soon. He is a beast!

For someone wanting to explore the music of Greece (modern or not) what Greek artists would be required listening, in your opinion?

That's a good question. Well, let me suggest

some that will cover different styles.

The first band would be Nukeleus; this is the band my teacher Yannis Stavropoulos is in and they are a jazz band of course. Yannis and the team there are insane. They are about to release their first CD and I highly recommend it to everybody! They have plenty of videos online that you can go

and watch, and I gotta say Yannis and Sami Amiri (piano) are totally into what I do as well.

They are very open-minded musicians and that's another thing that makes them the best. Every time we meet they talk about Nile with the best words and coming from them that's already too much for me (laughs).

Another really interesting band would be Mode Plagal; it's a very unique band that combines traditional

Greek music with jazz in a fantastic way. This band is one-of-a-kind, great musicianship, inspiring to watch, and to listen to. Greek traditional music has some insane time signatures already; getting everything down in jazz forms makes it even crazier.

Last, I would suggest an artist named Alkinoos Ioannidis. He is a traditional artist who mixes some older elements with modern music. I am really into his music, to be honest, even though some people might think his music is too relaxing. To me, it works the opposite; it's really intense! I



"I WAS PLAYING WITH NO TOMORROW ... SETTING UP GOALS THAT WERE NOT THAT FAR FROM ME AND HAD A LOT OF FUN GETTING TO EACH ONE OF THEM"

love everything he does and I am trying to watch him live as much as I can. It's really inspiring to. His band is also over the top. Mike Kapilidis (the drummer) is one of my favourite drummers of all time, his playing is totally insane, he can play anything you can imagine and his touch on the set is unbelievable.

What do you have coming up in the next few months?

We obviously have a lot of touring dates coming up for our new album. The band is always a priority to me and everything I do aside the band has to wait until I am not busy with Nile. I am a very busy person

in general. I love working and I always try to do as much as I can—always around music, of course. Touring is really tough and usually gets my personal schedule behind so I have to arrange everything around it, but it's necessary and I love doing it for me and our fans.

Other than my Nile schedule I'm getting ready to record my first solo album which I am really excited about it, and I'm also writing down my next Instructional DVD. The album will be done sometime this summer and I will start shooting the DVD later this year. This time I will have support from a major company so it will be much better than my first one, Intense Metal Drumming, which had some amazing reviews.

Looking forward to start recording my solo album. It will obviously be a crazy experience for me, since I am planning to record every instrument in there, but I am going to focus a lot on drumming. I want to play the most extreme stuff I ever played in there! The material so far is really good too. I'm getting great comments from the demos I posted online so far and that makes me really happy. There will be many guests who have offered to play guitar solos in [the studio]—actually there are some of the best musicians today! One of them will be Rusty Cooley, a legendary guitar player that I had the luck to meet this last year. Rusty is an insane guitar player. We are going to collaborate and possibly record an album very soon. That was a dream I had for years! I am so happy that we met and we are now talking about this project. It's going to be insane! ♀



TAMBOURINE



"Mr. Tambourine Man"
Jack Ashford

The Motown back beat was the Holy Grail of 1960s pop music, and Jack Ashford's tambourine was at the heart of it. Many have speculated that the tambourine gripped in Jack's right hand and struck against the heel of his left hand,

making tremendous rhythmic sounds, was easily emulated. Those speculations have since been arrested by musicians and laymen alike. These players pay homage to a man who never set out to be a tambourine player; it was a gift brought to life by a jazz band and Marvin Gaye. Such a little thing, yet so earth-shaking in its impact, Jack's tambourine was one of the dominant forces that gave Motown Records the sound it was noted for the motown sound. The "Snake Pit" was the place where Jack recorded

most often, but many producers—other than Motown producers—wanted the tambourine sound or the vibe sound to challenge that magical Motown hit factory. Whenever he could, Jack would do outside dates for a long list of people. The list is so long some have even been forgotten.

So this month I want to discuss the importance of one of the most powerful instruments in any rhythm section, the tambourine. This instrument has a great history and can be heard in most music worldwide. For instance, in Brazil, the tambourine is referred to as a Pandeiro and has a single drum head on a frame with jingles; and in Arabic music this instrument is very similar to the Pandeiro but is referred to as a Riq.

The tambourine can be heard in music ranging from pop, rock, gospel and R&B to jazz, Latin, country and world music. The sound, texture and power that this seemingly simple instrument can bring to the music are one of a kind. I have always maintained that a song isn't complete until the tambourine track has been added. It is the drummers icing on the cake. Listen to "How Sweet it is" by Marvin Gaye. This will help you understand. Jack Ashford is playing that tambourine right in the cracks of the groove, moving the song forward so easily. Also pay attention to how loud it is in the mix, it is louder than the vocals! Also check out "Kissing my Love" by Bill Withers. The tambourine paired with James Gadson's groove will run you over like a freight train.

At first, playing the tambourine can seem pretty simple: We hold it in one hand and hit in on the heel of our other hand. But do we hold it straight up and down to let the jingles move free? Do we play it flat for a more staccato sound? Do we use more wrist or arm when we play? Many things to consider

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Also if we need to play a straight 1/8 or 1/16 note pattern, can we play it evenly? This is much harder than you think. Try playing straight 1/8 notes along with a slow song like John Mayer's "Slow Dancing in a Burning Room." Even though the tambourine is only on the & of 1, try 1/8 notes. Not so easy, hey? Should you use more of the wrist or the whole arm for this tempo? Are all of the notes even? We aren't playing a shuffle feel, are we?

We can also practice a mid tempo pattern along with "Bring Me Some Water" by Melissa Etheridge, and a fast pattern to "Bleed it Out" by Linkin Park. Also try triplets, swing, shuffle, and any other pattern that we may need to play along with. We need to really focus on being even and consistent. The tambourine does find its place within the groove and this is only discovered through commitment and practice (like anything).

Our biggest resource is just listening to music, hearing where the parts are, and how they move through the arrangement of the song. You can find great videos of tambourine players like Jack Ashford online. Also check out Bekka Bramlett. She is a monster vocalist and tambourine player from Nashville with many tricks up her sleeve.

Aside from the handheld tambourine, many

players have used tambourines on their kit. John Bonham used a hat trick on top of his hi-hats for some added spice. Billy Ward has taken this even further with his left foot tambourine antics. Players have also used tambourines mounted on cymbal stands to add in the parts from the kit. Nathan Followill from Kings of Leon uses the tambourine this way, as does Larry Mullen Jr. from U2.

A PET NAMED PEEVE

Here is the scenario: You are on a gig with a cover band playing a casino lounge in Somewhere, North America. The band is doing a variety of material and is made up of talented people who love playing music. As you move through the sets of pop/rock/country tunes, you find that there are definite moments that the groove is really struggling to find a pocket. Of course, as the drummer, you put all of the blame on yourself as this is our department. But, wait. Suddenly, you make an unbelievable observation.

Ok, before I start into this, I want to make one thing clear. This is an experience I would like to share with you and not a shot at the vocalists out there.

Back to the story: It turns out that the



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lead vocalist, who also happens to be a tambourine player, feels the need to randomly shake the tambourine while (s)he is not singing. To make this even better, (s)he holds it up to the microphone just to make sure the band and audience can hear their performance. So you get through the set and you sit and chat with the vocalist about the tambourine circus just witnessed. You are surprised when their justification for playing the tambourine is because they are bored, I repeat, bored when they are not singing. Wow! In a reasonable manner, you try and explain that once any musician starts participating in rhythm on stage, they are holding a very valuable piece of the groove puzzle.

Boredom? And the singers wonder why their tambourines go “missing” during a gig and magically appear at the end of the night. This is not all singers, mind you. I have played with some who really understand the value and power of a tambourine. They might play on the counts of 4 in verse 1, built to 2 and 4 in the chorus, possibly an 1/8 or 1/16 note pattern in a solo section, and maybe even layout in the bridge. A tambourine player has to support the song and the arrangement, just like the rest of us.

Whether you are a lead vocalist or a drummer, if you want to play the tambourine—for reasons other than boredom—start listening to the parts on songs your band plays. Or go back and listen to a bunch of your favorite songs and really zone in on

the percussion. Whether it be a hand drum part, a cowbell, or shaker and tambourine, pay attention to what this adds to the feel and groove in the music. You will be very surprised at how the band will respond to your newfound skill, and you will get to keep the tambourine for the whole night.

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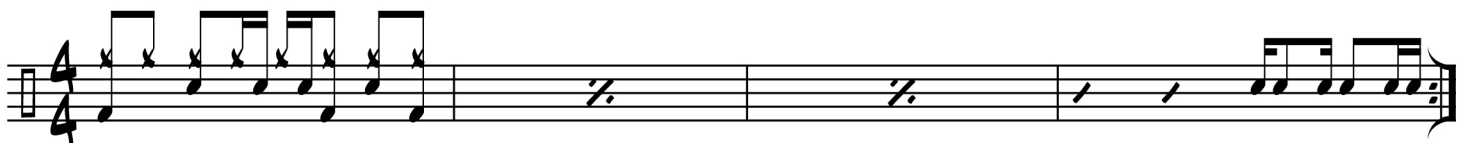


Jayson Brinkworth is an accomplished drummer, percussionist, vocalist, educator and writer. Click on the link below to visit him online.

www.jaysonbrinkworth.com

Back To Basics II: by Ryan Carver

The past couple months we looked at some basic groove concepts. Now it's time to strengthen our grasp on some basic fills. Each one is written with a four measure groove loop that will help you to apply these ideas. For the best example of these fills I recommend listening to some Beatles songs with Ringo on drums. When you are comfortable with these rhythms try to move them around the toms. Remember the point of this exercise is to practice and build on the foundation. Try not to get carried away. The point is to play simple musical ideas and enjoy it.



Ryan Carver is a world reknown educator with a private practice based out of Brick, New Jersey. Click on the link below to visit him on the web or to email Ryan your questions and groove requests. For videos of Ryan's lessons click on his Youtube link.

www.carverdrums.com

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The Black Page is looking for a few good educators. The Global Educators Database is published every month in *The Black Page*. To submit your contact info to our database, email Sean at:

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THE FINAL WORD



Photo: Alex Solca - www.alexsolca.com

IT'S LIKE A BASKETBALL PLAYER. YOU CAN WARM UP ALL YOU WANT AND LEARN ALL YOU WANT, BUT UNTIL YOU GET INTO THE GAME AND YOU'VE GOT GUYS GUARDING YOU AND THE CROWD'S THERE, THERE'S NOTHING REALLY YOU CAN WARM UP FOR. YOU CAN NEVER REALLY GET IT TO THAT LEVEL.

MARK ZONDER