Brush Lesson with Adam Nussbaum

For many, the brushes in particular have been a mystery because of the different kinds of motion required to articulate the time.

The brushes can be played in vertical motion like sticks. But their truly unique trait is in the way they can be played in a circular or horizontal manner that creates wonderful feeling.

When the brushes are played in this way, you’re not only articulating the beat but also playing the space between the beats. This creates a legato flow that has made me aware of hearing that space. This has had a positive effect on my stick playing as well. I’m now more aware of the width of the beat.

Now you probably wonder how can we articulate this with the brushes? Try this exercise. It’s easier than it sounds. Take a snare drum and look at the batter head as if it were a clock. 12 o’clock at the top, 3 o’clock on the right, 6 o’clock at the bottom, and 9 o’clock on the left (See the diagram below).

(Ex. 1) Put your left hand at the 9 o’clock. That’s the setting place, beat 1. Now sweep up clockwise past 12, and downwards to 3 o’clock, beat 2. Continue the sweeping motion down past 6, and back upward to 9 o’clock, which is now beat 3. Keep moving up past 12 and down over to 3 o’clock, now beat 4. Continue the motion around to beat 1. Repeat and keep this clock-wise motion smooth and seamless. You know have made two 360-degree motions each equaling a half note.

What about the other hand? We just start in a different place and go the other direction but the same concept holds true. (Diagram ex. 1).

(Ex 2) Put the right hand at 3 o’clock. That’s the starting place, beat 1. Now sweep counter-clockwise up past 12, and downwards to 9 o’clock, beat 2. Continue the sweeping motion down past 6, and back up to 3 o’clock, beat 3. Keep moving up past 12, down back to 9 o’clock and beat 4. Continue the motion around to beat 1. Repeat and keep the counter-clockwise motion smooth. (Diagram ex. 2)

Within this system the beat can be subdivided many ways. Here’s one way. Divide the drum into eighth notes. 12 o’clock can be the 1 and, also 3 and, 6 o’clock can be the 2 and, also the 4 and. Another way is to divide the drum into triplet segments. These divisions can help you gauge the speed of your motion “the time# and keep it even.

Remember this equation: motion = time & time = motion. The slower the tempo means you have more space and bigger motion. The faster the tempo means less space and a smaller motion. Try to apply different kinds of sticking articulations to the brushes. Experiment!!!

Listen to the greats and watch how everyone has their own choreography. Having some knowledge of the brushes has expanded my tonal palette and generally improved my playing.

The Art of Playing with Brushes
How to use the Play-Along CD

The Play-Along CD included in this set contains the same tracks that were used in the making of the DVD and mirrors the DVD chapters sequence: Swing, Ballad, Latin and 3/4. The CD allows you to play along just like the artists did on this project, plus there are some additional tempos for you to practice to. Make up your own playlists in your MP3 player; for example you can simply have all of the tempos go from the slowest to the fastest, or mix up the tempos and feel as though you are playing a gig. All the selections are based on tried and true standard compositions. A good thing to do is to listen for what the songs are, just from the structures you are hearing from the bass and guitar.

The Play-Along can be utilized the same way that it’s used on the DVD, where you play a brush pattern that goes with each specific tempo. I have also used it in some other ways: For instance, on the slow ballad selections I sometimes play double time, where I play 2 beats per each bass note. Also I sometimes play in triple time, where I play 3 beats per each bass note, which implies 3/4 time or 12/8 time. On the Latin selections I can imply and play a rock rhythm. Use your imagination. Experiment and have fun. The 17 tracks that are presented are here for you to learn and develop your own moves. Remember that word PLAY. It’s supposed to be fun!

If you enjoy this play-along there are many great recordings available that have no drums that are fun to play with as well. One of my favorite groups was the original Nat ‘King’ Cole Trio that was piano, bass & guitar. Another great trio was the original Ahmad Jamal trio that featured the same instrumentation. The vibraphonist Red Norvo had a wonderful trio with Tal Farlow and Charles Mingus.

There are other great duos such as Jim Hall & Ron Carter. You can investigate and find others too. I enjoy playing the songs and finding ways to help orchestrate the music utilizing different moves in each section.

Have Fun,

Adam Nussbaum

PS. It’s best if you can play on a snare drum, but any rough surface can work. I used to play on a newspaper, or rough surface album cover when it was too late at night to play on the drums with sticks. I’d play along with records (remember them?!?!) with headphones. I’d put them over one ear and listen to the music and what I was playing. It was a good learning experience and big fun too.

PPS. All other instrumentalists will have fun playing with Vic & Jay too!!
1. Slow Swing – quarter-note = 90 (5:02)
   12 bar Blues - 8 choruses
2. Swing – quarter-note = 120 (4:28)
   32 bar AABA form - 4 choruses of “Rhythm Changes”
   *Bass plays in 2 on the ‘A’ sections of the 1st chorus
   32 bars - 5 Choruses
   *Bass plays in 2 on the 1st chorus
   32 bars - 6 choruses
   *Bass plays in 2 on the 1st chorus
5. Bright Medium Swing – quarter-note = 196 (4:37)
   32 + 4 bar form - 6 choruses
   32 bar AABA form - 8 choruses
7. Medium Fast Swing – quarter-note = 264 (4:34)
   32 bar AABA form - 9 choruses of “Rhythm Changes”
   12 bar Blues - 23 choruses
   48 bar AABA form - 3 choruses
10. Slow Ballad – quarter-note = 45 (5:59)
    32 bar AABA form - 2 choruses
11. Ballad – quarter-note = 60 (4:30)
    32 bar AABA form - 2 choruses
12. Walking Ballad – quarter-note = 75 (5:18)
    16 bars - 6 choruses
13. Latin – quarter-note = 135 (5:34)
    40 bar AABA Form 12/12/8/12
    4 bar vamp intro & 2 bar vamp ending - 4 choruses
    32 Bar AABA - 7 choruses
15. Latin – quarter-note = 240 + half-note = 120 (3:48)
    54 bar AABA Form 16/16/8/16 - 4 choruses
16. 3/4 Swing – quarter-note = 110 (3:31)
    40 bar AB Form 16/24 - 3 Choruses
17. 3/4 Swing quarter-note = 180 (3:24)
    48 bar AABA Form - 3 choruses
    * 1st choruses bass plays one note per bar, then walks
      2nd and 3rd choruses
The Sounds of Brushes

The Sound

Music is sound. To study the art of the brushes without paying careful attention to the sound of the brushes is pointless. The brush masters used the sound of the brushes at many different tempos, and in many different contexts, and styles. Many played with the snares off when they played with brushes, preferring the rich, dark sound of the drum without the high-end frequencies brought out by the snares. Developing a good brush sound and technique involves the correct tools (heads and brushes), education, watching and listening to the art form, and practice.

The Education

There have been many books and videos on playing the brushes. Philly, Joe Jones’s book “Brush Artistry” was published by Premier Drums in 1968; it is unfortunately out of print, but it is worth looking for. “The Drums” by Papa Jo Jones has a section of Jo talking about brushes and tap dancers. “The Drums” comes as a small book and a CD and is indispensable. Ed Thigpen’s book, “The Sound Of Brushes” is a wonderful treatise on playing with brushes; it focuses on many different patterns and feels to play with the brushes. Ed also has an excellent DVD called “The Essence of Brushes.” Louis Bellson also authored an exceptional book on the brushes called “Contemporary Brush Techniques.” Clayton Cameron has helped bring attention to the brushes in recent years. His DVD “The Living Art of Brushes” is an outstanding educational guide and reference to the vast realm of brush playing, as are his 2005 DVD and book, both titled “Brushworks.”

The Snare Drum Head

The snare drum head is one the most important aspects of your brush sound. The historical standard for brush playing has been the calfskin head. Calfskin heads provide a warm, natural, and thick brush sound. However, calfskin is inconsistent, expensive, is greatly affected by the weather, and is very hard to find. Today Remo, Evans, Aquarian, and Attack have all given us many different brush textures from which to coax a high quality brush sound. Since the innovation of the mylar drumhead in 1957, a white “coated” head (which all of the drum head manufacturers make in one form or another) works well for brushes, especially when it is worn in. Some of the synthetic drumheads that are good for brush playing are the Remo Fyberskin, Evans J1 Etched, Aquarian Modern Vintage, and Attack’s Jeff Ocheltree “Old School” models.
The Sounds of Brushes

The Brush

Many years ago, there was not as much variety available when it came to brushes. In today’s world there are many different kinds of brushes on the market. Brushes are now made out of both metal and nylon. Most brushes are retractable, but some are non-retractable. The handles are now made out of wood, rubber, aluminum, or plastic. We often forget the reasons behind all of these options – it all gets down to choices in sound and feel. Steve Smith comments, “Sometimes I use up to 3 or 4 different pairs of brushes on a gig or recording session. With sticks, I may switch between a 5A and a 7A, or use a maple stick or a hickory stick to get different sounds and feels. I do the same thing with the brushes. Generally I use the ‘purple’ Vic Firth brushes but I also use the Classic Regal Tip Calato brush, the Jeff Hamilton brushes, and the Steve Gadd brushes; they all sound different and feel different in my hands.”

The Jeff Hamilton Regal Tip Calato brushes have a heavy gauge wire for a bigger sound and more rebound. Both Ed Thigpen and Clayton Cameron have their own Calato signature brushes with unique characteristics. The Zildjian Russ Miller brush is similar to the Hamilton brush in weight but with a sharp upturn at the end of the wires, which adds more volume to the sound. The Vic Firth Steve Gadd signature brush also has a bend in the wires, similar to the curve of a well “broken-in” pair of brushes. For the traditionalist, Vic Firth offers the Heritage brush (with the purple handle), and Calato offers their Classic brush, one of the most popular pairs of brushes on the market. Zildjian, Vater, Pro Mark, and other stick companies all offer their own individual take on this traditional tool for drummers. Gone are the days where the jazz drummer would not use a nylon brush. Many great jazz drummers use the nylon version of the brush, including Jack DeJohnette, Al Foster, and the late, great Billy Higgins.

It is also worth noting that many drummers occasionally use the metal-ringed handle to play time on the ride cymbal for a different texture or as a halfway sound between the brushes and sticks. This same metal ring can be used to create a metallic scraping sound on a cymbal as well. Some of the brush manufacturers put a metal bead on the end of a few of their models to be used for this effect. The rubber handle of the brush is often used for a soft mallet type of cymbal roll. For another rolling effect, the brush can be split between the top and bottom of a cymbal, to create a one-handed roll. The different gauge wires (or “wires” made of alternative materials), offer a plethora of sounds and textures to match the many uses, applications, and approaches in which brushes can be used in today’s musical landscape. Experiment with the various models of brushes in your musical situations to expand your sound palette. No matter what type of brush you use, or what style of music you play, the brushes are a most versatile tool to have in your stick bag.

By Mark Griffith – drummer, recording artist, author, historian
Edited By Steve Smith

The Art of Playing with Brushes
Joe Morello

Joe Morello was born on July 17, 1929, in Springfield, Massachusetts. Having impaired vision since birth, he devoted himself to indoor activities. Joe’s first drum teacher, Joe Sefcik, was a pit drummer for all the shows in the Springfield area. He was an excellent teacher and gave Joe much encouragement. Soon Joe began sitting in with any group that would allow it. When he was not sitting in, he and his friends would get together and jam in any place they could find and he would play any job he was called for. As a result, his musical experiences ranged from rudimental military playing to weddings and social occasions. Eventually, Mr. Sefcik decided it was time for Joe to move on. He recommended a teacher in Boston, the great George Lawrence Stone.

Mr. Stone did many things for Joe Morello. He gave Joe most of the tools necessary for developing technique, and he taught him to read music. But most important of all, he helped Joe realize that his future was in jazz, not “legitimate” percussion as Joe had once hoped. Through his studies with Mr. Stone, Joe became known as the best drummer in Springfield and rudimental champion of New England.

Joe’s playing activity increased: he soon found himself on the road with several groups, and then moving to New York City. A difficult year followed, but with Joe’s determination he began to be noticed. Soon he found himself playing with an impressive cast of musicians that included Gil Melle, Johnny Smith, Tal Farlow, Jimmy Raney, Stan Kenton, and Marian McPartland. While Joe was busy working in many guitar and piano trios his brush playing got a serious workout. After leaving Marian McPartland’s trio, he turned down offers from the Benny Goodman band and the Tommy Dorsey band to accept a two-month temporary gig with the Dave Brubeck Quartet replacing drummer Joe Dodge. This association ended up lasting twelve-and-a-half years and producing 60 recordings.

Morello’s ease in making Brubeck’s often difficult and knotty compositions swing naturally, along with his highly developed technique, earned him a great deal of respect amongst drummers. In 1959 Brubeck’s group recorded the album “Time Out,” which included the Paul Desmond composition “Take Five.” As the title implies the tune is in 5/4 time, and also includes a renowned solo by Morello. This recording, and its melodic and rhythmically inventive drum solo, inspired drummers in the ‘60s and still continues to inspire drummers to this day. “Take Five” was not the only difficult tune from the Brubeck Quartet. The band became known for their unconventional time signatures and recorded “Time Further Out” in 1961, and later “Countdown, Time in Outer Space.”

Even as a working pro, Morello continued to study, and it was during this period that Joe’s technique received its finishing touches from the great Billy Gladstone. Joe developed an identifiable sound and touch on the drums. The tonality of his drums was as sonically clear and lyrical as that of Max Roach. His cymbal sound of the ‘60s was a bit of a departure from the popular sound of the day. His cymbals (at the time Paiste 602’s) were clearer and brighter than the popular dark Zildjian K sounds of Elvin and Blakey.

Since 1968, when the Dave Brubeck Quartet disbanded, Joe has spread his talents over a variety of areas. He has made great educational contributions to drumming by way of his clinics, books, videos, lectures and guest solo appearances. Joe has appeared on over 120 albums and CDs. While he will always be associated with the Dave Brubeck Quartet from 1956-1967, his recordings with Gary Burton “New Vibe Man In Town” and the excellent larger group recording “Who Is Gary Burton” are outstanding as well (as are his earlier recordings with Gil Melle, Phil Woods, and Charles Mingus). Joe Morello’s elegant touch and refined technique at the drums is legendary, and his contributions to the art of drumming are indispensable.
Eddie Locke

Eddie Locke was born on February 8, 1930, and is a true “musician’s drummer.” He was brought up in the fertile Detroit Jazz scene, performing early on with Motown stalwart Earl Van Dyke. The feeling that Eddie Locke brings to the bandstand is one of joy and of a true love for the music. As a drummer he has recorded and toured with jazz immortality: Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Earl Hines, Paul Gonzalves, Red Allen, and Teddy Wilson. He was the longtime house drummer at Jimmy Ryan’s famed New York City jazz club, and was the drummer on the television shows The Tonight Show, Dial M For Music, and the Mike Douglas Show.

Locke moved to New York from his native Detroit in 1954, after five years of touring as a song and dance act called Bop and Lock with fellow drummer Oliver Jackson. Both Jackson and Locke sang, danced, and playing drums as part of the act. In New York he began to work with many fellow Detroit jazz musicians including Barry Harris, Tommy Flanagan, and Kenny Burrell. Soon after, none other than “Papa” Jo Jones took the young Locke under his wing, as well as into his home, where Locke lived and learned from the master for two years.

Locke has passed on the lessons that he learned from Papa Jo to his young students at New York City’s Trevor Day School for over twenty years, as well as to up and coming jazz musicians in New York City. In 1985 he was the first jazz teacher ever awarded a certificate of excellence as a distinguished teacher, by the Presidential Scholars in the Arts program.

Eddie never succumbed to the “bebop” approach to drumming: his timekeeping always has a touch of “old school” swing with a pinch of New Orleans “bounce” at its core. Eddie Locke is on such influential recordings as Coleman Hawkins’ 1962 recordings “Today and Now” and “No Strings,” and 1965’s “Wrapped Tight.” His playing with pianist Earl Hines on “At The Village Vanguard” is joyful and bouncy. His recordings with singer Anita O’Day on “Indestructible,” with Earl May and Barry Harris on “Swingin’ The Blues,” with Sir Roland Hanna on “Dream,” and with saxophonist Jon Gordon on his 1999 recording “Things We Need,” show his mastery with a pair of brushes and a deep sense of swing that is very strong.

Eddie Locke brings to this project a direct link to “Papa” Jo Jones, and an effortless sense of swing. His class, engaging personality, eagerness to share what he has learned, and the sheer joy of making music he posses is what being a musician is all about. Mr. Eddie Locke will sweep you off of your feet; he is one of the greats.
Charli Persip

Charli Persip was born in Morristown, New Jersey in 1929. He gained early experience in the Elks Drum and Bugle Corps, studied with the renowned teacher Al Germansky, and later attended Julliard. He is one of the few drummers in jazz history that is equally known as an excellent drummer in both big bands and small groups. Persip gained early experience playing with Tadd Dameron in 1953, which led to a five year gig replacing Teddy Stewart (and Kenny Clarke earlier) in Dizzy Gillespie’s big band and quintet from 1953 to 1958. Persip is a tasteful big band drummer who reads well, and not only sets up the brass, but leaves room for the reeds. In 1959, he formed his own group and recorded his first album “The Jazz Statesmen,” a high quality session worth searching out.

Persip appeared on many sessions in the 1950’s and ‘60s with such players as Hank Mobley, Red Garland, Lee Morgan, Gil Evans, Don Ellis, Gene Ammons, and Archie Shepp, among others. During this time he roomed with good friend Elvin Jones, and appeared with Elvin, Blakey, and Philly Joe Jones on the outstanding recording “Gretsch Drum Night at Birdland.” This recording finds Charli, Elvin, and Philly Joe exchanging some thrilling brush work on the piece “Tune Up.” Persip went on to work with David “Fathead” Newman, which led to a stint with Ray Charles. He later toured with singer Billy Eckstine from 1966 to 1973, a gig that no doubt afforded him time to hone his brush chops. In fact, Charli has a great deal experience in supporting great singers such as Etta Jones, Joe Williams, and Dinah Washington.

Persip’s professionalism, versatility, and musicality has made him a mainstay on the international music scene for over 50 years. Charli spent years as the drummer in the house band at the Apollo Theater. He also played R&B, Doo Wop and many styles outside of the jazz lexicon. In addition to being a hard-working musician with a long playing career, Charli is also passing down his accumulated wisdom to the younger generations of drummers and musicians. Charli was the main drum instructor for New York’s Jazzmobile in the mid ‘70s, educating many drummers that have gone on to noted success. Persip has also authored an insightful book titled “How Not To Play The Drums” and has led his Superband big band since the early ‘80s, recording several dates and featuring the youngest and the brightest future stars of jazz.
Bios

Billy Hart

Billy Hart was born in 1940 in Washington, D.C. He first gained attention working with Jimmy Smith in 1961, and made the recording “Live At The Village Gate” with the legendary organist. Billy went on to work with Wes Montgomery; however, he had already been working around Washington, D.C. with the great singer Shirley Horn. Horn was known for her very slow tempos, and Hart made most of her early recordings.

Throughout his career Billy has learned about music from the best in their fields. He learned to groove from Jimmy Smith and Wes Montgomery and he learned to explore from Pharaoh Sanders and Herbie Hancock. You can still hear the patience in Hart’s drumming that he learned from vocalist Shirley Horn. Today he brings it all to the table, ready at any instant to follow a soloist into uncharted waters.

Billy Hart is a supreme accompanist, hearing tendencies and spaces in soloists that even they don’t hear in themselves. This sense of accompaniment and adventure found him exploring with Herbie Hancock’s Mwandishi band in the ’70s (one of the earliest fusion bands), recording the remarkable album “Sextant,” as well as playing with McCoy Tyner’s 1970’s groups.

There is a belief behind every note that Billy Hart plays, and a spirituality in every sound. Billy Hart is constantly reacting to the sounds surrounding him, always on the verge of freedom, while never forsaking the groove. Billy’s accompaniment can be heard on recordings by Miles Davis, Stan Getz, Clark Terry, Charles Lloyd, Tom Harrell, and Eddie Harris. He is part of the collective band Quest, and has recorded with the Saxophone Summit -- Michael Brecker, Dave Liebman, and Joe Lovano. All told, Billy has participated on close to 500 recordings. Of importance to this project, check out his brushwork on the Great Jazz Trio recordings (with Hank Jones) on “Standard Collection Vol. 1” and “Vol. 2”, and on Marc Copland’s exploring date “Paradiso.”

Billy Hart has become a scholar and a historian of the drum set. His playing has become an accumulation of the entire history of jazz drumming. This can be heard by the strong influence many different types of jazz drummers throughout history have had on Mr. Hart. He has absorbed the versatility of Albert “Tootie” Heath, the fearlessness of Elvin Jones, the drive of Max Roach, the freedom of Sunny Murray, and the sensitivity of Billy Higgins.

Like Art Blakey, Billy Hart has taken pride in giving younger musicians further exposure in his bands (check out “Oshware”, “Rah”, “Amethyst”, and “Oceans Of Time”, and “Quartet,” which all feature the best of the young generation of jazz musicians). All of these recordings also feature many of Hart’s own songs as Billy is a wonderful composer.

Thankfully, through this DVD project and his frequent teaching at The Oberlin Conservatory of Music, New England Conservatory of Music, and Western Michigan University, he is passing on his “unique view from within” on the history of jazz drumming.

The Art of Playing with Brushes
Ben Riley

Ben Riley was born in 1933 in the state of Georgia and his family moved to New York City when he was four years old. Ben made his recording debut in 1961 with Johnny Griffin. In his nearly 50 years on the scene, Ben’s drumming has had a subtle quality that is unmatched. His sparse, sometimes jagged, and comedic drumming can be traced to his one-time employer Thelonious Monk, whose “Live At The It Club” shows Ben in high form. Riley made many recordings and circled the globe several times with the legendary bandleader.

Pianists love playing with Ben Riley. His off-kilter rhythmic vocabulary is featured on “Eternal Spirit,” and “Shades,” with pianist Andrew Hill. The list of great pianists that have called on Riley’s accompaniment is almost endless: Ahmad Jamal, Billy Taylor, Alice Coltrane, Abdullah Ibrahim, Hank Jones, Roland Hanna, Red Garland, and Larry Willis are just the beginning of the piano players who have dialed Ben’s number. But it is Ben Riley’s telepathic relationship with pianist Kenny Barron that is extra special. It is with the collective band Sphere that Barron and Riley (along with Charlie Rouse and Buster Williams) have played for many years. They have many recordings under their belt as a band, with “Four For All” and “On Tour” being standouts. You can also hear the rhythm section of Riley and Barron (with bassist Ray Drummond) offer first-class support of Stan Getz on “Yours and Mine” and Eddie Harris on “There Was a Time, Echo Of Harlem.”

It is not only pianists that desire Ben’s perfect support. In fact, it was a piano-less recording on which Ben participated that became a renowned jazz classic. Sonny Rollins’ “The Bridge” is Riley at his understated peak. He supports the very different soloists Sonny Rollins and Jim Hall with splendor and extreme taste. “The Bridge” captures Ben’s specialty of burning high on a low flame. That being said, Riley can also turn it up with the best of them. This is evidenced on Benny Golson’s outstanding “Time Speaks” (with Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw), and Gary Bartz’ aggressive “There Goes The Neighborhood.”

Whether Ben is hitting hard or tippin’, his strong and musical pulse is never lost. He is often heard playing flat rides and thin china cymbals, and he controls their every vibration with a deft touch. That touch is on clear display when Ben picks up a pair of brushes. Also recommended are the many recordings he did with the Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis and Johnny Griffin Band, especially “Lookin At Monk” and “Griff and Lock.”

Ben Riley has not remained content with his sideman status. In the 2000’s he has finally become a bandleader. He has combined two of the approaches for which he is best known (Sonny Rollins’ quartet with guitarist Jim Hall with the music of Thelonious Monk), in a piano-less Thelonious Monk “tribute” band, which has made two critically acclaimed recordings. In this band, Ben is exposing a band of deserving young talent, while playing unique piano-less arrangements of lesser-known Monk tunes (written by veteran trumpeter Don Sickler) to sold-out crowds around the world.

From the list of musicians that Ben has supported, it can be concluded that it is not only pianists that love playing with Ben Riley, but saxophonists, trumpeters, bassists, and just about any musician who has a strong need for tasteful support on the bandstand or in the recording studio. His career and his musicianship supports the statement that Ben Riley is the supreme New York jazz drumming accompanist. He has set the standard for all of the freelance jazz drummers that have followed him.
Steve Smith was born near Boston, MA, in 1954. He was originally drawn to the drums by hearing marching bands in parades as a child in his native Massachusetts. At age nine, Smith began studying the instrument in earnest with local teacher Bill Flanagan. After high school Smith began studying music at the famed Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1972. There he received valuable instruction from such renowned teachers as Gary Chaffee and Alan Dawson.

In 1974 Smith’s professional career began with his tenure in the Lin Biviano Big Band, whom he toured and recorded with for the next two years. At that same time he also performed with bebopper Buddy DeFranco and was a member of the free-jazz group The Fringe featuring George Garzone. In 1976, Smith began his association with jazz-rock by joining violinist Jean Luc Ponty’s band and recording the album “Enigmatic Ocean,” which also featured guitarist Allan Holdsworth. However, it was while touring with guitarist Ronnie Montrose in 1978 that Smith was asked to join the popular rock band Journey, which brought his playing to the attention of a young rock audience.

In 1985 Smith left Journey to pursue his original passion, jazz, and to continue his developing career as a session player. Over the past 25+ years, Smith has played on many hits with such diverse pop artists as Mariah Carey, Bryan Adams, Zucchero, Andrea Bocelli, Ray Price, and Savage Garden.

In 1983, while still a member of Journey, Smith began leading his own fusion band: Steve Smith and Vital Information, which is still going strong, having released 12 albums to date and maintaining a dense touring schedule. He is also the bandleader of Steve Smith’s Jazz Legacy, a group carrying on the tradition of many of the great drummer-lead jazz bands: communicating with music lovers of all generations, striving for excellence, and playing non-compromising, burning, straight-ahead jazz.

Aside from his own two groups, Smith maintains an extensive touring and recording career, appearing with many jazz luminaries such as Mike Mainieri’s group Steps Ahead, and Soulbop, an all-star group featuring Bill Evans and Randy Brecker. Other high-profile jazz touring and/or recording gigs that have filled the drummer’s schedule include such artists as Ahmad Jamal, Stanley Clarke, George Brooks’ Summit featuring Zakir Hussain, and the Buddy Rich Big Band, with whom he has performed in many tribute concerts to the late drumming idol.

Smith is also an active educator; his calendar includes many drum clinics. In 2003 his Hudson Music DVD “Steve Smith Drumset Technique/History of the U.S. Beat” was voted the #1 educational DVD of 2003 by the readers of Modern Drummer magazine and has gone on to sell over 25,000 copies.

Smith’s drumming, while always decidedly modern, can best be described as a style that embodies the history of U.S. music. He refers to himself as a “U.S. ethnic drummer, playing the percussion instrument of his country and culture.” Modern Drummer Magazine named him one of the Top 25 Drummers of All Time and in 2002 voted him into the Modern Drummer Hall of Fame.

Steve Smith is consistently pushing the boundaries of creative drumming and always expanding upon his already strong and musical voice at the top of the international drumming community; this is most recently witnessed in his current use of Indian rhythms applied to the drumset and incorporating the South Indian art of vocal percussion, called konnakol, into his repertoire of percussive abilities. As a bandleader he is one of the very few drummers whose nonstop touring schedule brings world-class bands to all corners of the globe through an endless regimen of live performances. As an educator Smith is both the eternal student and the eternal teacher of the drums. With his DVDs and worldwide clinics, he is helping drummers young and old learn about the history of drumming and improve upon the many skills necessary to follow in his footsteps and become better drummers and more creative musicians.
Adam Nussbaum

Adam Nussbaum was born New York City in 1955, and is THE quintessential freelance New York City jazz drummer. He initially studied piano, then bass and saxophone while being involved playing the drums in local rock bands where he grew up in Norwalk, Connecticut.

His teachers have included Joe Cusatis and Charli Persip. He is an occasional co-band leader in the collective “We 3” (with Dave Liebman and Steve Swallow), and has taught in the noted jazz programs at New York University, the New School, and State University of New York at Purchase, while also giving clinics throughout the world. Adam Nussbaum is a hard-working and busy sideman that can be seen with James Moody, John Abercrombie, Jerry Bergonzi, and even the young New York guitarist Oz Noy among others.

Adam moved back to New York City in 1975 to attend The Davis Center for Performing Arts at City College. While there he began working with pianist Albert Dailey and singer Sheila Jordan. He also played with the great Sonny Rollins. In 1978 he joined Dave Liebman’s quintet, recording and played on his first European tour with John Scofield recording “Rough House.” He recorded “Doin’ It Again” and “If They Only Knew” with Liebman’s quintet the following year. It was with Scofield that Adam earned his early popularity on the New York jazz scene. His wonderful playing with Scofield and Liebman had the looseness of Elvin Jones and the sensitivity of Al Foster.

During the early ‘80s he continued working with John Scofield in the celebrated trio with Steve Swallow recording “Bar Talk,” “Shinola,” and “Out Like A Light.” In 1983, Adam became a member of the Gil Evans Orchestra making the “Live At Sweet Basil” recordings, and played with Stan Getz. He would also join the Eliane Elias/Randy Brecker Quartet, and toured with Gary Burton and ‘Toots’ Thielemans. In 1987, he began touring with the popular Michael Brecker Quintet, which also featuring Joey Calderazzo, Jeff Andrews, and Mike Stern. In 1988, Brecker’s band recorded the Grammy winning “Don’t Try This At Home.” In 1992 Nussbaum was part of the Carla Bley Big Band, while guitarist John Abercrombie hired him to complete his organ trio with Dan Wall and making three recordings for ECM.

One of Nussbaum’s strongest traits as a drummer is his remarkable versatility: his straight-ahead playing with James Moody swings hard; his loose, elastic time feel and explosive creativity come to the forefront with Liebman and the We 3 trio and with Carla Bley. When he is playing in a big band setting like George Gruntz or with the WDR Big Band, Nussbaum gives every soloist exactly what they need, sounding like an ultra-modern Mel Lewis tailoring the music with taste and touch.

Adam Nussbaum brings with him many years of playing experience and educating drummers at the university level, and at the ever-popular Jamey Abersold annual jazz camps. “The Art Of Playing With Brushes” started as Adam’s idea and has developed into an important contribution to the drumming community.

By Mark Griffith - drummer, recording artist, author, historian
Edited By Steve Smith
In addition to the brushes demonstrations and words of wisdom that we have seen and heard from the exceptional drummers involved in The Art of Playing with Brushes, we recommend that those of you who are interested lend a serious ear to their recordings to get a first-hand listen and feel for these “brush masters.”

**Eddie Locke**

Throughout the years with his one-time boss Coleman Hawkins, Eddie Locke made many wonderful recordings. In 1962, Eddie made not one, but two exquisite recordings with Hawkins. “No Strings” is a quartet date with some of Locke’s best drumming on record. He plays brushes on several tunes, and his swinging groove is absolutely masterful. Pay special attention to the clear tone that Eddie gets on the cymbals with his brushes. You can almost hear his hands (and fingers) snapping the brush away from the cymbal to create a crystal clear attack that cuts through, and blends perfectly with the music. This is very evident on the tune “Be My Host.” On the song “The Man Who Has Everything,” listen to the silky-smooth sweeping sound that Locke creates, establishing a big soft cushion for the musicians to lean upon.

Also in 1962, Hawkins called on Locke for his “Desafinado” recording. This is a unique recording in many ways. It was made during a time that many musicians were making bossa nova “theme” records. In retrospect, many of those recordings now sound a little contrived. However, this recording is definitely not one of them. “Desafinado” is one of the hippest bossa nova recordings ever made. Eddie Locke plays brushes throughout, and contributes a hypnotic groove that creates the feeling of sitting in a Brazilian cafe enjoying the ocean breeze in the sixties. Locke varies his bossa brush grooves slightly from tune to tune, creating subtle variations on the “theme.” One of the strongest effects of Locke’s deft brushwork on this recording is that his sliding brushes often sound very much like shakers, and his short and controlled sweeps are never too legato for the musical style. This important recording could be considered a manual for playing bossa nova music in a jazz setting.

**Ben Riley**

Ben Riley made many significant recordings with Thelonious Monk (among many others). However, there may be no recording on his resume that is as important as Sonny Rollins’ “The Bridge.” This is the perfect recording to check out Ben’s “heavy pulse with a light stroke” approach to drumming. Ben plays brushes on much of this record (which also features guitarist Jim Hall). He uses the brushes traditionally, often playing the melodies with brushes before switching to sticks for the solos, as he does on “You Do Something To Me.” Mr. Riley’s relaxed tempo on the ballad “Where Are You” is a model of patience and relaxation. Because of the musical sparseness on “Without A Song,” Ben’s flawless brush sound can be fully appreciated. Check out the authority that Ben exhibits with his brushes when he re-enters the tune after Rollins’ helping of unaccompanied saxophone. Who ever said that the brushes couldn’t be as strong as sticks? Some re-releases of The Bridge include “The Night Has A Thousand Eyes,” in which Ben plays a relaxed bossa nova feel using one stick and one brush.

Many drummers often pick up their brushes for bass solos, but like Kenny Clarke before him, Ben Riley has never really used the brushes just to play quietly. Throughout his career Ben has relied on his brushwork for creating different musical textures, as opposed to a lower dynamic. Ben already has one of the quietest approaches to drumming -- he doesn’t need brushes to play quietly. Instead, he uses the brushes to shade the music, providing the soloists and the music with exactly what is needed. Also notice Ben’s hi-hat work during his brush playing, often providing short upbeats, and long splashes to complement the soloist.
Another recording that has provided a spotlight for Ben Riley’s brushes is pianist Rob Schnieder’s “Standards.” Here, his timekeeping is comprised of a more gentle and staccato brush sound, which matches his sensitive stick work throughout. Check out the many types of strokes that Ben uses on his solo on the tune “Love Letters.” There are open and muted taps, slides, sweeps, and dead-strokes all contained in this angular and educational solo. For some of Ben’s best brushwork on record, check out the composition “LaVerne” from Andrew Hill’s “Shades” recording. Ben’s brushes follow Andrew’s floating piano approach to perfection. Also check out Mr. Riley’s brushwork on “How Am I To Know” from Johnny Griffin and Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis’ recording “Tough Tenor Favorites.”

Joe Morello

How many drummers get to lay claim to participating in an undisputed classic recording? Joe Morello is one of them, and he even contributed a classic drum solo to the recording. However, when you mention Dave Brubeck’s “Time Out” recording, most people immediately think of the seminal “odd time” recording of “Take Five” and the equally unique “Blue Rondo A La Turk.” Although these compositions and performances are indeed important in the jazz pantheon, there is much more to this enduring recording.

If you overlook the other tunes on the recording, you are doing yourself a huge disservice. Drum-wise, it is these songs that provide a masterclass of brush playing. On “Everybody’s Jumpin’,” Joe gets an illustrious brush sound while opting to leave his snares on, and he also takes a very good brush solo. “Kathy’s Waltz” begins innocently enough -- in 4/4 time! But you soon hear Morello’s brushes implying a metric modulation playing two bars of 3/4 over one bar of 4/4. The band follows and they effectively play in both the basic 4/4 tempo with Joe staying in the new “3 over 2” tempo. He opts to play a “straight four” type of brush feel, while keeping the hi-hat playing on alternating beats (1, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2) throughout the entire 3/4 groove of the tune. “Three To Get Ready” has a rhythmic structure that consists of two bars of 3/4 followed by two bars of 4/4. As if that wasn’t tricky enough, Morello navigates the whole tune with a constantly shifting, sweeping brush groove that propels this eccentric composition with a smooth finesse. (There is an outstanding live version of “Three To Get Ready” on the album “The Dave Brubeck Quartet at Carnegie Hall.”) Mr. Morello’s even and smooth legato brush approach on “Strange Meadowlark,” is not to be overlooked either. Due to Brubeck’s sparse comping on this tune, you can hear Joe’s picture perfect brush sound better than ever. You can also hear Joe’s hi-hat comping loud and clear on this tune.

It is easy to get caught up in the metric abnormalities of Brubeck’s “Time Out” and “Time Further Out.” The odd time signatures that Brubeck’s quartet use get a great deal of attention from the drum community, and deservedly so. But what is often overlooked is the fact that Joe played many of these compositions with a sweeping, smooth, and musical brush approach. The next time you are working on your “odd time grooves,” challenge yourself to play in 5, 7, or 9 with a sweeping brush groove. Joe Morello’s fluid brush playing in these challenging compositions invented a sub-genre of brush playing: odd-time brush playing. This is an unrecognized approach that few have attempted, and perhaps none have mastered, except Joe Morello. This is a truly unique vocabulary and these recordings are the textbooks.

The Art of Playing with Brushes
Charli Persip

Like Joe Morello, Charli Persip can also lay claim to participating in a truly classic recording. The recording “Sonny Side Up” is a meeting of three musical legends: Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, and Sonny Stitt got together in 1957 to produce a recording that will go down in jazz history; and the rhythm section on the date was anchored by Charli Persip.

This recording featured not one, not two, but three classic recordings of three superb compositions. “On The Sunny Side Of The Street” is one of the quintessential jazz cuts ever recorded. It must have been difficult for Charli Persip to play brushes throughout this entire tune; most of us would have succumbed to the temptation to switch to sticks. While Rollins, Gillespie, and Stitt are simply tearing it up, Persip thankfully shows the maturity he learned while playing in Gillespie’s big band and sticks to his guns (or his brushes, if you will), by staying with the brushes. Persip’s understated but monumentally strong brushwork on this tune makes it a true classic. Elsewhere on this essential recording, the song “The Eternal Triangle” doesn’t feature any brushwork, but it has to be mentioned as an archetypal up-tempo performance for the ages. Charli keeps the brisk tempo driving for more than 14 minutes, keeping the feel relaxed when most others would border on frantic. When the band plays “After Hours” they aren’t just playing a blues, they are playing THE BLUES, and Charli’s fat back beat shows why Louis Jordan, Ray Charles, and Big Joe Turner were all one-time employers.

“Gretsch Night At Birdland” is a jazz drumming extravaganza, with four of the all-time greats converging on one stage. Getting back to the brushes, what can be said about the brushwork on the tune “Tune Up?” On this selection Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, and Charli Persip trade eights and play extended brush solos. These three legends show us everything that can be played on the brushes, and then some!

Billy Hart

Billy Hart has never played an inappropriate note in his life. He is consistently accompanying the other musicians, and pushing the music into places that were previously uncharted. When brushes are called upon to uplift and compliment the music, Mr. Hart’s brushwork more than fits the bill. Billy approaches every song with a blank slate, reacting to and complimenting the music like none other. Many musical drummers have cut their teeth playing with singers, and Billy Hart is no exception. Billy’s brushes and unique accompaniment traits can be heard on any of his recorded work with singer and pianist Shirley Horn, who was a master of slow tempos. Most of her recordings feature Hart’s (or Horn’s regular drummer Steve Williams’) supreme brush playing. Of special note is Horn’s 1991 recording “You Won’t Forget Me.” Shirley Horn was one of jazz’s great vocalists, and Billy Hart was a distinguished part of so much of her music.

Billy’s most outstanding recorded brushwork to date is on Hank Jones’ Great Jazz Trio recordings “Standard Collection Volume 1,” and “Volume 2.” Not only are these recordings a prime study of Billy’s sublime brushwork, they are perfect recordings from which to learn the standards. Mr. Hart’s patient groove on “Summertime” is the essence of musical maturity. On “The Days Of Wine And Roses” and “Gone With The Wind,” Billy’s medium swing is stupendous, and his brush solos show his pristine touch at the drums. Notice how Hart’s bass drum and tom sounds match his brush tone. It is important to note that when he is using a pair of brushes, Billy achieves a consistent sound around the set. Billy keeps his snares on for the brushwork on this record, and his sweeping sound is smooth and gentle. When Billy switches from brushes to sticks in “On Green Dolphin Street,” the switch is hardly noticed because of Hart’s exquisite touch with both sets of “tools.”

The Art of
Playing with
Brushes
Billy’s cymbal sound with brushes is a sizzling masterpiece. Listen to it on “As Time Goes By” and the bossa nova stalwart “Black Orpheus.” Mr. Hart’s ballad brush sweeping on “Summer Knows” and “Danny Boy” is what great timekeeping is about. And listen to “Angel Eyes” for a surprising and unique accompaniment from Mr. Hart’s brushes and mallets. For further listening, Billy also plays some loose and free brushwork on Charles Lloyd’s “Canto.”

Adam Nussbaum

Adam Nussbaum has some real brush highlights on record. To begin, we have not mentioned many brush recordings in a big band context; the lack of volume from the brushes can often make this a challenge. But check out Adam’s brushwork on Jim McNeely’s big band recording called “East Coast Blow Out.” On the composition “More Questions,” Adam’s brushes guide the band through McNeely’s challenging chart with ease and strength. From pianist McNeely’s earlier album, “From The Heart,” Adam’s effortless brushwork prods the ballad “The Answer Without A Question” with a relaxed yet forward-leaning groove.

The title tune from Dave Liebman’s “If They Only Knew” features a slow progression that begins with Adam’s aggressive brush approach and ends in a cacophonous rumble. Adam’s thick brush sound gives way to mallets, and then finally to sticks. With extraordinary maturity, Nussbaum doesn’t switch tools until he has absolutely no choice, giving the song a slow and deliberate climb to a thunderous crescendo. This is Adam Nussbaum at his best.

Nussbaum’s presence on Tom Harrell’s recording “Sail Away” is very important. Adam frames Harrell’s beautiful music with his signature “classic hipness.” On the title tune, Adam’s “bossa-ish” groove is neither traditional nor avant-garde; it floats in the creative and musical world where this marvelous drummer makes his living. Also listen to the unique and hip “lope” that Nussbaum puts on “Glass Mystery.”

It is with John Scofield that Adam Nussbaum first burst upon the scene. From 1981’s “Shinola,” the ballad brushwork on Scofield’s tune “Yawn” is truly haunting. Also pay attention to his subtle brushwork on “Alster Fields” from the earlier recording “Rough House.” From Jerry Bergonzi’s recording “Standard Gonz” listen to Adam’s smooth transitions between brushes and sticks on the tune “Arbonius Unt.”

Throughout the late 1980’s and early 1990’s Nussbaum’s drumming was heard with Michael Brecker’s working band. With this explosive group, Adam’s sensitive brush playing could be heard on Don Grolnick’s touching composition “The Cost Of Living,” which is on the live recording of the same name. The 2006 release “Three For All” by the collective group “We Three” featuring Dave Liebman, Steve Swallow, and Nussbaum, is another showcase for Adam’s superior musicianship and prowess with a pair of brushes.
Steve Smith

When Steve Smith’s name is mentioned, it is often his grandiose fusion drumming, jaw dropping double-bass drumming, and hard-working bands that are immediate topics. However, in his heart, Smith is a jazz musician. Throughout his career, this arena rock star, turned bandleader, erudite educator/renaissance drummer, has developed a masterful brush approach. It has been a long time from when Smith played brushes on pianist Gil Goldstein’s 1977 debut recording “Pure As Rain,” to his bluesy brush groove on Journey’s “Walks Like A Lady,” to today where his brush prowess in today’s sets with his bands Vital Information and Jazz Legacy make audiences around the world stand up and cheer.

With Buddy’s Buddies, the Buddy Rich alumni tribute band, Smith has recorded the Leonard Bernstein composition “Cool” (from West Side Story) on “Very Live At Ronnie Scott’s - Set Two,” and on the original Buddy’s Buddies studio recording, simply called “Steve Smith and Buddy’s Buddies.” Steve’s melodic and musical approach to the drumset is captured on these recordings. His swinging and distinctive time feel on these selections shows a true respect for the history of the brushes and his sincere love of jazz. “You Stepped Out Of A Dream,” from the studio album, features Steve mixing it up on the brushes with a uniquely modern jazz approach in the context of a sax, bass, and drums “piano-less trio.” On “How Do You Keep The Music Playing?,” from “Very Live At Ronnie Scott’s - Set One,” Smith plays with a brush in his left hand (playing a backbeat on the snare), and a Tala Wand “bundle” in the right hand (on the ride cymbal), showing us how versatile the brushes can be.

On various tracks of the Indian/fusion album “George Brooks Summit,” Smith plays with brushes and uses his patented “brush in one hand/ Tala Wand in the other” approach, keeping the tunes cooking at an intense “low volume burn.”

Country legend Ray Price tapped Smith for his recording “Prisoner Of Love,” and the results are a shuffling and swinging delight. On “Ramblin’ Rose” and “Better Class Of Losers,” Smith provides the classic Ray Price shuffle with authenticity and conviction. Steve’s unhurried time feel on the ballad “Body And Soul” is deep, while his 1940’s-style of swing on “Fly Me To The Moon” would make even Papa Jo proud. Later, Smith keeps the snares off for the country back-beat of The Beatles’ “In My Life,” sounding as if Ringo were wearing a cowboy hat. Steve Smith also sweeps us away with his 3/4 time feel on the tune “I Wish I Was Eighteen Again.”

To hear Smith use the brushes in a more traditional jazz setting check out his work with his highly versatile group Vital Information. On their 1989 recording “Vitalize!” Steve uses brushes to great effect on “(What Lies) Beyond” and “I Should Care.” From their 2000 release “Live Around the World,” check out their re-imagining of Led Zeppelin’s “Moby Dick” and Santana’s “Europa.” On the same double-live album, Steve kicks off their version of Coltrane’s “Mr. P.C.” using brushes at a breakneck tempo. On their 2004 album “Come On In,” listen closely to “A Little Something” for a textbook example of using brushes for a long slow build up before switching to sticks. And on their 2007 release “Vitalization,” Smith winds down the recording with his subtle brushwork on the albums final track, “Positano.”

The brushes hold a great tradition and they offer new horizons for the drummers of today. The brush masters involved in The Art of Playing with Brushes have given us great insights into the techniques and applications of the brushes in all styles of music. It is time that drummers of all genres embrace the tradition of the brushes and look to the future, because the possibilities are endless!

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