

## black midi *Schlagenheim*

**Genre-defying new English rockers break barriers, generate a huge buzz, and play festivals worldwide only a year after forming.**

First impressions are crucial in these social-media-centered days, and black midi, who stylize their moniker without capitalization, made it delightfully difficult to pin down what they are or where they're going based on the live material they made available prior to the release of their debut full-length, *Schlagenheim*. Moments that evoke Jeff Buckley's weirder passages, classic King Crimson bombast, your favorite new wave band, grungy noise-rock chaos, and thoughtfully crafted post rock are all par for the course here.



Twenty-year-old drummer **Morgan Simpson** proves himself capable and mature beyond his years on *Schlagenheim* and provides the drive, prodding, and at times restraint necessary to anchor the London-based quartet. Sometimes over-the-top in the manner of some of his stated prog-rock influences, Simpson also plays with the touch of a jazzier and the heart of a punk rocker on the album's ten wildly variant tracks. In particular, Simpson's jazzy swagger and sensitivity on "Western," punk-rock abandon on "953," carefully crafted groove on "Speedway," and incendiary drive on "Near DT, MI" stand out. (Rough Trade Records) **Ben Meyer**

## BOOKS

### *Melodic Stick Control* by Matt Matson

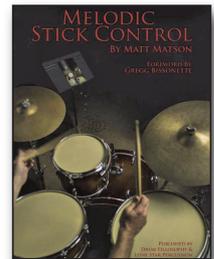
**The author has produced something rare here: a sticking investigation that uses melody to shape technique, and not the other way around.**

In *Melodic Stick Control* Matt Matson explores ten straightforward snare melodies by introducing variations in their sticking and orchestration. He bends the phrases by changing rate (subdivision) and feel (straight *and* swing). Using the simple melodies as a guide, Matson's exercises fill the spaces between the notes with streams of varying subdivisions, something he calls "overlays." For anyone who has studied Ted Reed's *Syncopation*, the melodies will sound familiar. For anyone who has studied Alan Dawson's *application of Syncopation*, these overlay exercises will sound familiar, too. Like Dawson, Matson's approach focuses on the way the overlays and altered stickings can embellish, reshape, and even rejuvenate those straightforward figures.

Matson introduces each new concept with a wealth of context, including preparatory exercises and tips on how to actually practice them. His detail-oriented approach makes each concept's goal and the progressive steps required to achieve it clear. However, he doesn't spell out every "R" and "L" for each exercise either, a pleasant surprise for a book so focused on sticking. Instead he supplies contingencies for each hand. ("If your last stroke was on your right, then...") This prevents you from getting lost in a sea of notation, and more importantly, makes applying these concepts to music in the "real world" much easier.

*Melodic Stick Control* is probably most useful to drummers who are already comfortable with rudiment and technique basics. Beginners might drown in the book's alphabet soup of terminology, such as "diddles," "ta'diddles," and references to hybrid subdivisions like 16th notes within triplets played as ruffs.

There are times where the sticking concepts and subdivisional combinations seem better suited for marching percussion than a kit. Yet *Melodic Stick Control* offers a great, almost sneaky way to get drumset players to work on rudiments—they occur naturally, while your mind is on articulating a melody, rather than which hand does what, and when. It allows you to keep your mind trained on the thing that likely made you want to get behind a kit in the first place: creating music. (Drum Fillosophy/Lone Star Percussion) **Keith Carne**



### *Jazz from Detroit* by Mark Stryker

**While Detroit often evokes the soul of Motown, the drive of techno, or the grit of garage rock, a new book sheds light on the city's equally energetic and important jazz scene.**

Although Mark Stryker's *Jazz from Detroit* is not specifically about drummers, there are plenty of stick wielders featured in its pages, including Louis Hayes and the iconic Elvin Jones. The author moves from the onset of jazz in the 1900s through contemporary artists like jazz/hip-hop heavyweight Karriem Riggins, whose credits range from Donald Byrd and Norah Jones to Slum Village and Erykah Badu.

The stories convey the realities facing anyone who wants to pursue a career in jazz. For example, vibraphonist Milt Jackson's feelings towards the Modern Jazz Quartet show a musician who felt artistically constricted by the group's brand while simultaneously acknowledging that their tours and recordings helped maintain his own stable income and lifestyle. Bassist Ralphe Armstrong's story demonstrates the benefits of confidence in marketing and the open-mindedness needed to perform with diverse artists including Mahavishnu Orchestra, Aretha Franklin, Frank Zappa, and Herbie Hancock.

Although *Jazz from Detroit* packs multiple decades into its pages, the writing does not come across as academic. Stryker does a good job of outlining the history of the music and profiling the personalities that created it. His own careers as a saxophonist and a journalist allow him to articulate the subtleties of music in the written word, and there are plenty of quotes from the musicians themselves. Still, this book is best read while you're listening to the artists and recordings explored here, fully immersing yourself in the music. (University of Michigan Press, \$39.95) **Drew Schultz**

