

# WIBE

**DRUM!**  
PLAY BETTER FASTER

**SPONTANEOUS INGENUITY  
WITH THE MAVERICKS**

# Paul Deakin

*By Bob Doerschuk*

**W**hen Paul Deakin was around 19 years old and getting into his jazz studies at the University Of Miami, a video game nearly derailed his career. Luckily for him and for The Mavericks, with whom he's been associated for more than 25 years, he had the right teacher at the right time. ▶▶▶

# VIBE Paul Deakin

"I was playing six nights a week at a bar," he remembers. "They had a table-top *Donkey Kong* machine, so on my breaks I'm sitting there, hitting the 'fire' button so hard that I had to have surgery on my wrist for tendinitis. Because I had decided before then to become a rock star, I had switched from traditional grip to French grip or timpani grip, with the thumbs up. The shock going up my thumb exacerbated the problem.

"So I was talking with my teacher, Steve Rucker," Deakin continues. "He changed my grip completely to allow for what he called an 'unobstructed backbeat.' You flatten your hands backwards, which is how you would normally play concert snare drum, so your fulcrum is in between your thumb and forefinger instead of thumbs up and facing each other. It's more wrist, so the shock didn't go up my thumb anymore. He also showed me how to play open-handed, so I wouldn't play so hard with my left hand. I pushed my hi-hat forward so it almost touches the rack tom. My left stick never goes under my right arm, unless I'm doing a side snare. He really saved my playing."

And he made it possible for Deakin to accept an offer from his friend, bassist Robert Reynolds, to join him and guitarist/singer/songwriter Raul Malo in the first lineup of The Mavericks. At that time their sound centered on classic country music, so of course they relocated to Nashville, added some new members, and began racking up awards from the Country Music Association, the Academy Of Country Music and, in 1996, a Grammy Award.

Soon, though, the band's sound expanded and their groove intensified as Malo added elements of blues, rock, jazz, and his own Cuban background. Today they're harder than ever to pigeonhole: Their new album, *Brand New Day*, tosses a few more ingredients into the mix — a Texas polka



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feel on "Rolling Along," retro-'60s tiki bar on "Easy As It Seems," a ska/shuffle flavor on "I Think of You," some Western swing on "For The Ages," even a manly romantic tune, complete with a seductive spoken passage from Malo channeling Elvis on "I Will Be Yours."

Much of that has to do with the approach the band has developed for its sessions. "Our songs are written and arranged as we record,

mostly by Raul," Deakin explains. "It all comes from whatever is inspiring him at the time. We don't listen to demos. We'll just get in there and Raul is like, 'Okay, here's the idea.' Sometimes he'll write a second verse and come back to add it. But for the most part, we write and record live. Knowing each other as long as we have, we can do that. It's part of who we are." He chuckles. "There's

## QUICK LICKS *Transcription by Andy Ziker*

### "Wish You Well"

Even if you're not a fan of country and rockabilly, do yourself a favor and go see The Mavericks live (and rush over to your device to buy their new album, *Brand New Day*). In "Wish You Well," Paul Deakin shows why he's the ideal drummer to play behind Raul Malo's Orbison-esque vocals. Here he plays an unrelenting rock rumba with brushes on snare and toms. The drums are recorded with such clarity that you can imagine yourself sitting behind the kit, feeling the vibrations of those cutting snare accents shoot up your arm.

♩ = 83  
0:01 brushes

A musical notation for a drum lick. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 83. The notation includes various drum symbols: a snare drum (S), a tom (T), and a cymbal (C). The rhythm is a complex, unrelenting rock rumba pattern. The second and third staves continue the pattern with different drum sounds. The notation is written in a clear, legible font.

an old Johnny Cash quote from when he was in the middle of a session: 'Okay, guys, let's cut this before we learn it.' That's us!"

Except for two tracks cut at Capitol Studios in L.A., *Brand New Day* was cut at Nashville's Blackbird Studio. Deakin played his Gretsch kit for the West Coast session. At Blackbird, though, the sky was the limit, thanks to studio owner and sound engineer John McBride.

"The first time we went into Blackbird to do our album *In Time* (2012), John said to me, 'Hey, Paul, what drums do you use?'" Deakin recalls. "I said, 'I'm going to use one of my Slingerland kits,' because I was endorsing Slingerland at the time. He said, 'You know what? Taking drums to Blackbird is like taking sand to the beach.' He leads me into this room and he's got 30 to 40 vintage kits and about 120 snare drums. It's the most amazing collection of drums I've ever seen! And he said, 'You can use anything in here.'"

Deakin did dig into the toy box at Blackbird for *Brand New Day*, using multiple sizes of kick and snare drums as well as fine-tuning for each track. On one cut, he even hauled out a concert bass drum. With all these tweaks, though, he kept his parts simple.

"I approach drumming as an accompanist," he points out. "The best compliment I've ever gotten was when someone told me, 'You're a *songwriter's* drummer. You play what fits in the song.'" I do that from listening and being in the moment. And it's not as much about what I'm playing as being in the present. Raul has said, 'This band has a hive mind.' It's like that. What keeps it alive for us is that we're all there."

When someone is less than 100 percent, everyone else in the band can feel it. Deakin learned this onstage in New York. Breaking from his normal routine when on the road, he went out on the town with a friend from Brooklyn the night before the show. The next day was spent trying to shake off the effects of their partying. Apparently it didn't work: "After one song Raul turned around on the stage to look at me and say, 'I hope you and your friend had a great time last night because *today you sound like s\*\*t!*'"

Since that uncomfortable night, Deakin has done what he knows any drummer has to do when playing with The Mavericks. "You lock down that groove," he insists. "I never get bored playing a simple part. It's

not rocket science, but when you're part of the groove, that's a hypnotic state. Then when that energy goes out to the audience and comes back to you, it's cyclical and exponential. And *that's* why we all bring our A-game, every night."

## VITALS

**BAND** The Mavericks

**CURRENT ALBUM** *Brand New Day*

**WEBSITES** [themavericksband.com](http://themavericksband.com)

**AGE** 57

**BIRTHPLACE** Painesville, Ohio

**INFLUENCES** Elvin Jones, Stewart Copeland, Charlie Watts, John Bonham, Steve Gadd

## GEAR

**DRUMS** Gretsch Broadkaster Series

**CYMBALS** Paiste

**STICKS** Innovative Percussion

**HEADS** Remo (mostly)

**HARDWARE** DW

**ELECTRONICS** Zoom MRT-3