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to life every time he sits down to play.  
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Photo: Eleonora Albertoni

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photo by Nicholas Burnham

## CARTER BEAUFORD

Fresh off the recording of the Dave Matthews Band's latest and most adventurous album, *Before These Crowded Streets*, Carter Beauford is ready and rarin' to go at concert stages around the world. And he's been doing some heavy thinking, too: you just might be surprised at Carter's game plan since *Crashing* into the limelight.

by William F. Miller

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## BILLY MARTIN

In this day of fast-changing musical trends, it's a miracle Medeski, Martin & Wood have drawn legions of young fans to their organ-trio-based music. Maybe it's MMW's unique way of reconfiguring the past. Maybe it's their positively futuristic vision. One thing's for sure: The transcendental drumming of Billy Martin plays a big part in the equation.

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## MIKE CLARK

Like long-time compatriot Herbie Hancock, Mike Clark is always looking for new ways to apply his frighteningly deep musical prowess. Recently, though, Herbie, Mike, and the rest of funk/jazz pioneers the Headhunters have reunited for an album and tour. Resting on past accomplishments? Hah! Dig *these* new grooves.

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# CARTER BEA



# UFORD

## REVISITED

by William F. Miller

photos by Nicholas Burnham



As an *MD* editor, I've found myself in some pretty interesting situations. One particularly memorable moment occurred last summer during the taping of Carter Beauford's DCI video, *Under The Table And Drumming*. On the first day of taping—scheduled as the performance day—Beauford was cruising, offering up blistering new takes of Matthews tunes. (He was playing along to drum-less album tracks.)

Unfortunately, a few hours into the shoot the production hit a snag: Due to the fact that there was no audible reference point during the odd-length intro of "Say Goodbye," Beauford had no way of telling when the tune segued from the open intro to the verse. Also adding to the confusion was the drummer's wish to play a massive four-bar, 32nd-note, single-stroke fill around the toms, a measure *longer* than what's on the original recording. (No question, the man has some serious chops.)

It was suggested (I *knew* I should have kept my mouth shut) that the only way to make this happen was to give Carter a visual cue. Someone was going to have to crouch on the floor in front of the drumkit, just out of the view of cameras, count *several* measures, and give Beauford the nod. (I was volunteered.)

With the cue sussed out—give the high sign four bars before the fill—the drummer nailed the involved tune on the second take. Yeah. And while it was a trip for me to play a small part in the taping, it was actually downright astounding to witness such talent from three feet away!

It was a Beauford onslaught: incredibly fast hands, left-hand lead, twisted beats, cross-sticking cymbal crashes, and pile-driving double pedal chops—all emanating from a wrap-around, multi-cymbaled kit. By the end of the take my heart was pumpin' harder than Carter's!

Everybody knows about the Dave Matthews Band. Something like ten million copies sold of their first two RCA releases, *Under The Table And Dreaming* and *Crash*. Even last fall's *Live At Red Rocks* 8.15.95 has been certified platinum. And the new one, *Before These Crowded Streets*, will undoubtedly go through the roof. There's something about this band—Dave Matthews' odd lyrics and loopy melodies, violinist Boyd Tinsley's muscular sawing, Leroi Moore's phat sax lines, and bassist Stefan Lessard's reliable undertow—that has connected with the masses. But anybody reading this magazine knows the *real* secret to their success: the simply amazing drumming of Carter Beauford.



**WFM:** You stayed fairly busy last year making your educational video, doing a six-week tour, and working on the new album. But you were apart from the band for a while. How did that time off affect things?

**CB:** We were talking about this the other day. We compared the last few years of being in the band to lifting weights. The band worked really hard recording and touring non-stop—like a weight lifter pumping iron. All that time exercising and breaking down the muscle. But we got to a point where we needed time to chill out and rest. The time off last year let all of the muscles heal and grow, and now we're bigger, badder, and stronger.

**WFM:** That's a nice analogy, but can you be a bit more specific?

**CB:** Sorry, I was getting a bit colorful there! [laughs] The time off let us get our individual thoughts together so that we could come back to the band and introduce what each of us had been working on—new ideas, new concepts. Because of that I think our music has matured, and each of us has really improved on

our instruments, too. This new record says exactly what I want to be saying right now for us as a band. The first few albums were great, but even at the time I thought they had that garage band sort of vibe to them.

**WFM:** What do you mean by that?

**CB:** All of the notes could have been perfect, all of the licks could have been great, but the records somehow don't seem as finished or complete. This record is more developed, more mature. The music speaks; the music says it all. So, yeah, everything has grown in a major way.

**WFM:** You sound excited about being back.

**CB:** Oh yeah! Everybody is. We want to get back on the road and see where things go with this new music. The old songs really evolved and got better as we played them over time. I can't imagine what these new tunes are going to be doing a few months from now. But we all feel like it's time to get the muscles burning and the sweat popping and get it happening, you know?

We are also psyched about doing Europe this year. We are going to do some touring there on our own, and we're also going to do some dates with the Rolling Stones. *That will be fun.* We





did two shows with them last winter, and it was great meeting those guys—you know, meeting the masters of rock 'n' roll. Plus the shows were exciting. Charlie Watts is one of my heroes. He's a bad, bad boy.

**WFM:** He swings, but I'm surprised to hear that he's a big inspiration of yours.

**CB:** He swings in a *major* way. When it comes to rock 'n' roll drumming, that's the way it's supposed to feel.

**WFM:** Talking about how everybody in the DMB has grown as players during the time off, is there anything in particular about *your* playing that has improved?

**CB:** What I see in myself now is that I'm listening with more intensity and not trying to immediately follow up on every lick that I hear. For instance, if Leroi plays something on his horn, I try not to crowd him. I used to just jump on so many of the ideas the other guys would play. Now what I'm trying to do is give it some breathing room, keep the music open, and give it some space. It's important to play the spaces. Silence can speak so loudly.

I think you can hear a little bit of that approach from the drums on the new record. I'm coming from more of a simpler approach, going back to the basics and not playing so much over the top of the music. And to me the music sounds so much more complete and satisfying. Of course, there are a couple of tunes where I guess you might say I do my thing. [laughs]

**WFM:** What do you think made you realize that leaving more space and playing in this more controlled way was a good thing?

**CB:** When I was home during the break I dusted off some CDs and did a lot of listening. A few things caught my ear. It was like, "Man, that's the way I should be approaching this."

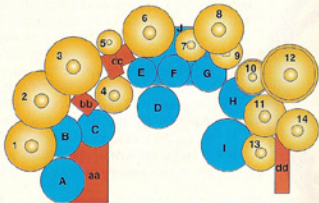
One of the groups I got a lot of inspiration from was Tony! Toni! Tone! I think those guys are from Oakland, and they

are some bad boys. I ran across their disc again, popped it on, and *boom*—the cats were really playing some stuff. I don't even know the drummer's name, but he and the bass player just hooked so well together—not a whole lot of flash, just some laid-back, pumpin' pocket stuff, with a few little things here and there that make you burp up some juices. So I took that inspiration and tried to apply it to the Matthews Band.

**WFM:** Drummers love all of your flash, but the pocket you lay down is *so* strong. I think it's the combination of the technique and feel that makes your playing so special.

**CB:** Thanks. I guess that pocket thing comes from my love of all the old James Brown stuff, especially the stuff with Clyde Stubblefield. I was way into Sly & the Family Stone and Stevie Wonder, big time. And then when the soul bands hit I was really into it—the Bar-Kays, Con Funk Shun—they were all about pocket. And what about George Clinton and P-Funk? *That's* pocket, man. Dennis Chambers was the master at that, plus he

## CARTER'S KIT



### Drumset: Yamaha Recording Custom

- A. 15" LP Tito Puente model timbale
- B. 14" LP Tito Puente model timbale
- C. 11x13 tom
- D. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 carbon steel Ocheltree snare
- E. 8x8 tom
- F. 9x10 tom
- G. 10x12 tom
- H. 12x14 tom
- I. 16x18 floor tom
- J. 18x22 bass drum

### Percussion: LP

- aa. Granite Blocks (five)
- bb. agogo bells
- cc. percussion tree (Jam Block, Ridge Rider cowbell, tambourine)
- dd. chimes

**Hardware:** Yamaha rack and stands, DW 5002 double pedal with extra-wide foot plate, DW hi-hat stand

**Sticks:** Pro-Mark Carter Beauford 5A8 model

### Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 18" Azuka Salsa Timbale cymbal
- 2. 20" A Custom flat ride with Pro-Mark Rattler
- 3. 20" A Custom Projection ride
- 4. 13" hi-hats (Dyna Beat top, K Custom top used for bottom)
- 5. 6" Zil-Bal
- 6. 18" K Dark thin crash (brilliant)
- 7. 10" A Custom splash
- 8. 17" K Custom Dark crash
- 9. 10" A splash (brilliant)
- 10. 8" K splash (brilliant) directly above 12" A splash (brilliant)
- 11. 14" K Dark thin crash (brilliant)
- 12. 18" Oriental China Trash (with Rattler) piggybacking a 20" China
- 13. 13" A Projection hi-hats (bottom over top)
- 14. 14" K Mini China with livers

**Heads:** Evans *Genesis HD* coated on snare batter, 200 *Hazy* on snare side, clear *G2s* on tops of toms, black *Resonants* on bottoms, *EG3* on bass drum batter with black *Resonant* on front

Designed and maintained by Carter's tech, Henry Luniewski



could play anything he wanted to over that feel.

Dennis is my man. He actually called me once when we were on the road, and we had a nice chat. We laughed about how much we looked alike—the twin brothers—well, that is, before he shaved his head! But he's been a big inspiration to me. Dennis is definitely the monster in my book.

Basically I grew up on pocket. When it comes to music, that's the bottom-line rule for me. Growing up, the jazz influences were there as well, but don't forget there's a pocket to jazz too. I'm at a point now where I want to get that into our music in the heaviest way possible.

**WFM:** Watching the band play last Friday, it seemed that everybody was really digging in and centered on the groove. Maybe you're inspiring this.

**CB:** I hear people say that, but I won't take credit for it. I'm just so happy with the way the band plays together and excited at how we're going to be sounding a couple of weeks into the tour. We really have grown. When the band started out, the time was not great. We've improved so much. Now everything is

locking. Maybe I bring the pocket thing to everybody's attention, but these cats have it in them.

**WFM:** Part of that "band lock" must involve the material. I got the impression from the interview I did with Dave two years ago that he writes in such a way that everyone is given room to contribute, to play to each member's strengths.

**CB:** That's all true, and it's a smart way to go. Dave does have his own unique style, though. He writes some weird, even quirky music, but it's amazing stuff. And we're for-



## A LESSON WITH CARTER

Did you ever wish you could sit down with a topflight drummer and take a lesson? How about with Carter Beauford? What are his thoughts on practicing, developing technique, and getting your act together on the drums? We posed several "chops" questions to Mr. Beauford—as if we were taking a lesson from the man himself—to get his take on improving at the drums.

### WARMING UP & HAND DEVELOPMENT

"Before I do any playing, I make sure that I gently stretch my hands and wrists, turning the sticks around in my hands and carefully moving my fingers. Playing drums is such a physical thing—it's like working out. You should stretch before you do any type of exercise. This is something that I feel very strongly about.

"Once I've stretched a bit, I like to sit down with a pair of sticks at a pad or a pillow and get my hands moving. Start slow and easy. Runners don't immediately race down a track, they warm up first. I don't have any specific

exercises that I stick to, but I favor simple single and double strokes. I just get my fingers and wrists moving, and as soon as I feel a little tension, I back off. Once I start to feel a bit loose I'll push it just a little further, until eventually I break a little sweat. Then that's it; I put the sticks down, relax for just a bit, and go play the gig.

"As far as developing hand chops, there are tons of exercises you can do, and I don't think spending time working on any of them is a bad thing. I've always enjoyed working on my singles and getting them moving. That's the stroke I use most with the band. And practicing them on pillows is something I've been doing for years. I'm right there with doubles, too—and all sorts of combinations. If you're into it, go ahead and do it for a couple of hours; that'll give you some serious hands in no time."

### THE "CORRECT" GRIP

"Just what is the 'correct' grip? Hey, I recommend holding the sticks the way that is the most comfortable for you. A lot of cats play a

lot of different ways, and I think that's something you need to experiment with. As for me, the traditional grip is cool, but times have changed and I just don't think it's as versatile as matched. That said, there are a lot of guys going back to it and even using it on big kits, and they're making it work. For most of the stuff I do, though, I favor matched.

"A lot of people ask me about my grip. I hold the sticks with my thumbs up, which some people call the "French" technique, but to me French is all about the fingers. I call what I'm doing an "African" grip, because I use my fingers and my wrists. It gives me a lot of power, and I think it's a good way to play fast single strokes.

"As far as developing the thumbs-up grip, I don't have any specific exercises. Hold the sticks in that position and just start really slow with alternating strokes. Eventually it will start to feel natural and then you can take it up. Like anything, it just takes practice, practice, and more practice."





tunate that we can all bring something to the table as far as the arranging of the material. That said, it's always been a challenge for me to try to come up with ideas, rhythms, and grooves for the stuff he writes.

**WFM:** How did the material come together for the new album?

**CB:** Pretty much the same way as in the past: Dave wrote the material and we had a hand in arranging it. We also developed some of the basic ideas we had fooled around with at soundchecks during the last tour.

One of the "soundcheck" songs that I really like is a tune called "Rapunzel." We didn't have a title for it at first because there were no lyrics. Dave wrote the lyrics after the music was finished. That tune was actually called "Funk In Five" because of the odd meter. I dig playing odd time signatures; man, that's my bread & butter—I eat it up. And I love the way that bit developed into a song.

**WFM:** Even though "Rapunzel" is in five, you make it feel good. The pulse is strong.

**CB:** When I'm playing an odd meter I never count it. I work on the odd time enough so that I become totally comfortable with it and internalize how it feels. Then when the band is playing I don't have to think about it. If you're having to count it you're really limited to how you can interpret the meter. For instance, I don't play the off-meter section of "Rapunzel" by stressing the 1 of every measure. I'm playing over it to make the section more interesting.

#### SOLID TIME

"How do you develop solid time? This has been said before, but you have to practice to a metronome, both on and off the kit. It's all about enhancing your internal meter. That means being comfortable with a variety of tempos.

"I'll work with a metronome at a medium tempo and get comfy with the feel of that pulse. Then I'll slow it way down and play lots of stuff between the beats, making sure everything I play lands with the clicks. Then I'll speed it up and play quick. All that is helping you internalize the feel of that pulse. All musicians should spend a lot of time with a metronome."

#### BASS DRUM POWER

"I've been playing for a long time, and I think the power has developed over time. But something I used to do that I think helped my bass drum chops is practice along to dance records—old disco stuff like Donna Summer and the Bee Gees. That music's got that solid four stamping out a strong pulse at a pretty good tempo. With that going on, you have a lot of options. You can stomp out the four with the bass drum. I used to pick certain beats in the measure to lay into, just trying to develop the control to go from playing loud to soft and soft

to loud. You can play faster, more-involved stuff against the solid disco beat, too. And those songs are generally long and without a lot of breaks, so it keeps you focused on the time and your bass drum."

#### Faster Double Pedal Chops

"I mentioned before about practicing on a pillow to get your hands together. Well, I do the same thing for my feet. I have a little contraption at home that holds a pillow in front of my double pedal. The beauty of it is I can lay the beaters into the pillow like I would on a bass drum, or I can play off of the pillow. I play with my heels up most of the time, and I don't have my pedals tensioned too tight—I guess a medium tension. But working on pillows away from the drums really helps me get my control together. And it's developing the control that lets you play faster."

#### SEAT HEIGHT AND POSTURE

"I try to sit at a height where there's as little tension on my legs, knees, and the rest of my joints as possible. I find that sitting at a height where my thighs are just above parallel to the floor is what works best. It's very comfortable, my balance feels good, and I can play with

power when I need to. As for posture, sitting up straight is one of the most important things you can do. [See the main interview for more specifics from Carter on posture.]

"I was asked what it was like to see myself on camera when I was shooting the video for DCI. Except for looking like I swallowed a midget [laughs], I wasn't surprised at the way I was playing, because I used to practice in front of a mirror. I think it's really important to do that so you can watch all of your motions and make sure the movements make sense. I think practicing in front of a mirror really helped my posture, too, because when you're sitting up straight you look a whole lot better than when you're slouched over."

#### ON PRACTICE

"Practice is something that you have to do to stay on top of your game. What I do is strive to make whatever I do sound seamless, to make the strokes smoother and to make things easier for myself playing-wise: trying to keep my elbows bent, my posture correct, my bass drum strong, and the time flowing. I want to make my playing as smooth as possible. Those are the things that I work on every time I play."

**WFM:** I was kind of surprised to hear that Steve Lillywhite was producing *Before These Crowded Streets*. You had mentioned last year that everyone—even Lillywhite—felt that after working together so much [he produced the previous two DMB releases] it would be best for the band to make a change.

**CB:** I meant after *this* record. [laughs] Steve's a great producer and he works so well with us that we really wanted him again. He is such a warm and genuine individual. Some people may not tell you something because they don't want to hurt your feelings, or they will tell you in a way that is counterproductive. Steve has a way of talking to you without hurting your feelings. He's very diplomatic. Plus with that British accent of his, he could curse me out and I wouldn't get mad.

**WFM:** What kind of things did he say to you about what he wanted you to play?

**CB:** He didn't have too many specifics for me, although he did give me the groove pattern for "Don't Drink The Water." Originally there were portions of that song where I was doing a double-time thing, and it just didn't fit. I was racking my brain trying to figure out something that Dave would like. But Steve came up with the idea of playing it with that sort of laid-back, half-time feel. I think it works great.

That's a good example of something that I do that I'd like to change: I have a tendency to play busier parts. *That* seems to come easy to me; when it comes to playing a simple, basic groove I'll take all the help I can get!

**WFM:** The band recorded with Lillywhite at the Plant in

California. You had done the previous two records—and your educational video—at Bearsville in New York state.

**CB:** We felt it was time to take a different approach, and I'm glad we did, because this record is different from anything we've ever

## CARTER MEETS COBHAM

One of Carter Beauford's favorite fills, and one that is seemingly misunderstood by a lot of drummers, is a lick that he picked up from fusion great Billy Cobham. According to Beauford, "I've been playing that lick for over twenty years—it's one of my favorites." In fact, Beauford applies the "Cobham Rudiment" in several different ways in the Matthews Band's music. If you've seen the band live you've undoubtedly witnessed him playing it (most memorably at the end of "Ants Marching").

The fill is based on a repeated four-note grouping, which creates a polyrhythmic effect over the given pulse. The best way to learn this lick is to first get comfortable with the sticking of the four-note grouping and then apply it polyrhythmically. Here's the four-note part of the lick (practice this leading with either hand, as indicated):



Once you have the previous motion under your hands, it's very easy to apply the four-note pattern in a polyrhythmic way, which is the actual "Cobham Rudiment." Here is the basic fill applied to one measure of 4/4. You'll notice that the four notes are not written as triplets; here they're creating a 4-over-3 polyrhythm.



You can come up with two easy rhythmic variations of the lick by simply beginning it at different points in the measure. For instance, you can start it on the "&" of 1. (There's a clear example of this variation played descending down several toms by Phil Collins on the tune "No Self Control," from Peter Gabriel's third album.)



You can also begin the lick on the "&" of 1:



What makes this fill particularly cool is how you orchestrate it around the drums. Start simply by playing the first note of the four-note grouping on a tom and the other three notes on the snare. Then expand from there. Billy Cobham played just about every combination you can imagine with the fill, including playing it on two bass drums with his feet. (Find a copy of his *Magic* album and be amazed at "Magic Carpet Ride.")

Carter has a few different ways he likes to "voice" the lick, but one of the most impressive is when he incorporates cymbals and double pedal—with his right hand hitting a crash or Chirca on his right and his left hand hitting a ride cymbal on his left. He normally sneaks this variation in a couple of times during a Matthews Band show, repeating the four-note grouping over the barlines of several measures and creating a lot of motion and excitement from the drums. And the audience reaction? They go nuts!



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done. The new environment really helped us to do that.

When we got out to the Plant I think we were all impressed with the history of the place. You walk in and it's like, "Whoa, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Fleetwood Mac—so many of the greats recorded here. We were just in awe of the place. Once you finally get over that, you sit down at your ax, start playing, and all of this energy sort of saturates you. It gets into you and it comes out in the music.

And I think that's one of the reasons we went out there, because we needed something to help us get a different thing happening for this record.

**WFM:** It sounds almost as if the place was a bit intimidating.

**CB:** Well, yeah. That studio, to me, helped create some important moments in music history. As a matter of fact, I saw a documentary on TV one day where Stevie Wonder was showing the viewers how *Songs In The Key Of Life* was done, and he

was at the Plant. It was like, "Whoa, that's deep." I have to admit that it plays a big number on your head when you are sitting in the same spot where Stevie sat—and many other great artists—and recording an album. All those vibes, all those juices got in me, and I think came out in my playing. It made me want to play in a different way—a better way, I think.

**WFM:** Besides all of this mental stuff, were there any specific challenges for you with making this record?

**CB:** It's always a challenge playing Matthews Band music, but the only serious challenge for me was recording "Don't Drink The Water." I think that was the case for all the guys. It was a difficult tune to play because we are so used to playing everything more or less with an up-tempo, good-time attitude. This tune is a bit dark. We had to pull back on the reins a bit to get that tune to come across the way it's supposed to. It was a challenge.

**WFM:** How was the album recorded?

**CB:** We pretty much played live as a band—at the very least as the rhythm section. Leroi and Boyd occasionally did not play along with us, but for the most part it was all of us together. As far as I'm concerned, that's a great way to record because you're there inspiring each other.

It was a *happening* session. Everybody was ready to do it and in good spirits. There wasn't a whole lot of goofing off either, although you need that from time to time just to break the monotony.

**WFM:** Speaking of monotony, before this last break the band played a ton of gigs over a three- or four-year period. As rough as that may have been, did that constant playing bring your drumming up to a certain level?

**CB:** I actually had a similar type of playing schedule at one point earlier in my career. That happened when I was in that fusion band *Secrets*. We were fairly popular in jazz circles on the East Coast. It seemed like everybody knew us, and we worked constantly. Playing in that situation did a lot for my drumming.

When I left that band to work with Ramsey Lewis on the BET network, my work really slowed down. The BET thing was a once-in-a-while kind of thing. Every three or four months we would go up and tape shows—like twelve of them—and that would be it for the next few months. Then I

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would hunt for gigs. And that's when the weekend thing started to happen. As much as I missed the way I felt playing regularly, I think *not* working so much at that point made me really appreciate the gigs I did have. I didn't take any of them for granted.

**WFM:** So you've experienced both sides—from tons of work to periods where you weren't busy at all. But that being the case, what did you learn from those stretches of constant gigging?

**CB:** The main thing I've learned, and this

was invaluable, was not to force things—to not press and press with my playing. For the longest time I would just push myself—do this lick, do that lick, force something to make the music happen. Now I've matured to the point where I don't have to do all the chops stuff.

I don't want to put myself on his level, but I can compare it to Michael Jordan: In the early days he would do his flips, his somersaults—you name it, he was doing it—and scoring forty points a game. Now

he doesn't do all that, but he still scores forty points a game. So it's kind of like that for me. I don't really have to do all the crazy stuff to try to make the music speak, to make the music breathe and sound right. And every once in a while, yeah, I'll lay something in there that is gonna give the music that spark, but I'm trying to be better at picking my spots. There are other things that I'm working on now to try to make the music happen.

**WFM:** On subtlety, for instance?

**CB:** Exactly. We toured with Me'Shell NdegéOcello, and her drummer, Gene Lake, is a monster. I learned a lot from rapping with that guy. He probably got me over the hump, as far as reserving myself. You just don't have to be explosive every five seconds. You don't have to shoot your wad every moment you're playing.

When I watched Gene play, he made things look effortless. He wasn't sweating when he got off the stage, either. I was like, "Man, when I come off the stage I'm a dripping mess, huddled in a corner somewhere gasping for breath!" [laughs] He just hipped me to that whole thing. It's probably something that people have been trying to tell me for years, but I just hadn't paid attention to it. That type of thing can be a major change in your playing. I just couldn't start playing that way overnight. It's been gradual.

**WFM:** You know you can make things happen by playing with a certain intensity...

**CB:** ...but I'm still learning to trust things and let it happen. At this point I'm experimenting to find the right balance for me and for the music.

**WFM:** It's very nice of you to acknowledge other players like Gene Lake—you're always doing that. Some artists try to give the impression that what they do comes out of thin air.

**CB:** I guarantee it didn't happen that way for me. Yeah, a lot of cats will try to make it seem that way, though—and I used to believe it, actually. I used to believe that people either have it or they don't, but now I know it's not the case.

**WFM:** Well, maybe Tony Williams or Buddy Rich....

**CB:** Yep, Tony and Buddy were the only two! They were born with that talent.

**WFM:** We were talking about all of the playing you've done over the last several

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years. I've talked to a lot of pro drummers who, like professional athletes, developed some physical problems from so much performing. How's that been for you?

**CB:** Oh yeah, I've had my problems, especially with my left thumb. The way I held the stick caused the bone at the base of the thumb to protrude out to the right, which over time became very painful. It was a sharp pain shooting right through my hand. This was happening about four years ago. I talked to a doctor about it, and he looked at how I was holding the sticks and immediately said, "You are going to have to change your grip." I was holding the stick with my thumb pointed a little bit inward towards the top knuckles on my fingers. If I pressed too hard, this position would cause the bone at the bottom of the thumb to push out.

I've really worked on keeping my thumb from moving too far to the left. More importantly, I've worked at not gripping the stick too tight. The doctor compared it to writing with a pen. If you grip too hard on a pen you are going to get writer's cramp fast. Anyway, within about a year the pain was completely gone, and I haven't had a problem since.

**WFM:** I guess that also goes back to what you were saying earlier about not pressing so much when you play. Overall, though, your approach seems pretty solid, especially your posture.

**CB:** Oh, absolutely. Tony Williams was into the posture thing, Billy Cobham too. I



wanted to look like them when I played. And it *feels* better to sit up at the drums instead of being hunched over. You lose a lot of power and control when you hunch over like that, plus it can be damaging to your back. There are times when I do hunch, depending on what I'm doing, but I try to make sure that I'm upright again as soon as possible.

I'm sure there are things you can do that will destroy your career if you're not careful and there are things you can do that will give you the longevity you need to make your mark. I am sure that posture is an

important part of that. Also, just being aware of how your body feels while you play is so important. I'm really working on getting rid of as much tension as possible.

**WFM:** That's important if you want to be playing when you're in your seventies.

**CB:** Absolutely. I mean, look at Art Blakey—he played right up to the end. Look at Elvin; he's playing beautifully. Playing drums is such a physical thing, and it demands a lot of us.

I have it in my head now that I have to try and stay in the best shape I possibly can—especially since I'm approaching the

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big 4-0. I have a trainer who I've been working out with, and he's given me a bunch of exercises I can do in a hotel room so I'll be able to keep it up on the road. And my diet has really improved too.

I think drummers who are serious about the instrument should be concerned with their health and fitness. I want to play at the top of my game—and be able to keep improving—and that means taking care of my body.

**WFM:** The best players always talk about how they need to keep improving, although a lot of people might look at you and say, "How much better can he get?" But what do you think needs work?

**CB:** Everything! If there's a musician who can say he doesn't need work on *something*, he's the biggest fibber in the whole universe. Let me tell you, everybody needs work. Nobody is perfect. What we do is strive for perfection—striving to be perfect is as close as anybody is going to get. But seriously, I need work on every single thing I can think of.

**WFM:** Are there things that you are focusing on at the moment?

**CB:** Like I mentioned before, I'm really focusing on keeping it clean with the other players in the band. I'm trying not to crowd the music. Unfortunately, there have been numerous occasions when I have done just that.

**WFM:** Does the band let you know?

**CB:** These guys are kind; they don't say anything. But I kick myself in the butt so many times when it comes down to playing with the band. It's like, "Damn, why did I play that? That was so stupid, that was so juvenile of me to do. I shouldn't have done that because I just destroyed that section." I know there have been tunes that have gone perfectly until I jumped in with some dumb, out-of-place fill. And once you play that, everybody remembers that one dumb thing. They forget about how beautiful the song was up to that point.

**WFM:** Let's switch subjects and talk about something that drummers mention as one of your strong points—the way you vary the hi-hat within grooves.

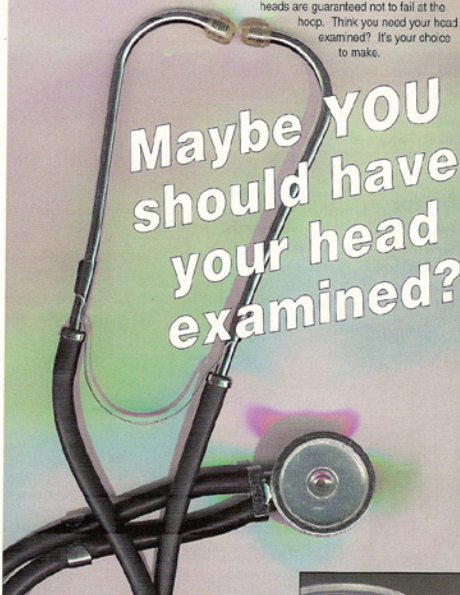
**CB:** Well, I look at the hi-hat as being the primary timekeeper, even though I like to play very syncopated parts. For some people, listening to my hi-hat parts is almost like trying to figure out Morse code. It's not a steady thing. That works for me. It's

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the way I like to keep time.

As far as how someone goes about developing that, I would suggest playing simple grooves with your kick and snare, and just start playing very simple syncopated figures over the top of that on the hi-hat. Play 16ths on the hi-hat and then start leaving notes out. I think it's also helpful to work on a pad, playing syncopated figures along to a metronome. Once you start to hear these types of things, it becomes much easier. That's how you do it—but be care-

ful, that approach doesn't work for every situation.

**WFM:** I remember you telling me you lost a few gigs because of it.

**CB:** I've been fired! You've got to know when to do it, and you have to keep the groove strong while you do it or it sounds lousy. But that's the way I play, and I've found because of that the hi-hat is what I like to have the loudest in my monitor headset.

**WFM:** That's funny: Most rock, pop, and

funk drummers talk about building from the bottom—the kick drum.

**CB:** The kick is in there, but not as much as the hi-hat. I have to hear that hi-hat. If I don't it throws my whole rhythm off—my whole vibe is out of sync. But the kick, hi-hat, and snare are basically the things that are in my mix. I hardly put any toms in there.

**WFM:** I was lucky to be at the taping of your DCI video. Hearing you play acoustically from only a few feet away was very revealing, especially feeling the power you have with the kick drum.

**CB:** Yeah, I did lay into it, although that's not a goal of mine now. I'm really trying to lighten my approach and let the mic's do the work. The band is now using an in-ear monitor setup, and that is helping me play a bit lighter because I can clearly hear everything in those monitors. I'm not having to compete with loud stage volumes.

It has taken a little getting used to, because playing at a louder volume gives the music a certain kind of energy. I'm working on finding that balance between not over-pressing and still playing with the energy the music needs.

**WFM:** Speaking of your DCI video, how was that experience for you?

**CB:** I was scared. As you know it was done in three days, and I wish I would have had another two or three weeks! The actual finished product came out great considering what I gave everybody to work with.

**WFM:** Did you learn anything about yourself or your playing from the experience?

**CB:** Yeah, it taught me that I should stick to playing and not talk—let my sticks do the talking! [laughs] The playing went fine, but talking into a camera was very difficult. In fact, I came very close to scrapping the whole thing during the shooting because I felt I was doing a bad job with the raps. But the guys at DCI did a fantastic job editing all of the stuff together.

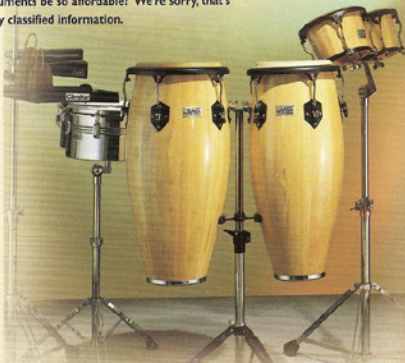
**WFM:** I understand that you've shied away from doing clinics, even though drummers are clamoring for you to do them. Is it because you're concerned about speaking in public?

**CB:** Actually, I have no problem with speaking in public. I used to teach school and I enjoyed that part of it a lot. But for some reason the idea of doing clinics has always weirded me out. I've only done one, and I only agreed to that one because I

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I just don't feel ready for clinics playing-wise. I don't want to go out on a clinic tour unless I have it totally together. I'm working on it, little by little, and maybe in a year or two I'll feel that my playing is at a level where I'll feel good about it.

WFM: I'm sorry if it's a sore subject.

CB: No. I need to talk about it so I can get to a point where I'll feel comfortable with the idea of doing them. I know clinics are

supposed to be about having fun and sharing ideas with drummers—and that's all good. My playing's just not at a point...

WFM: ...you don't give yourself enough credit.

CB: [laughs] It's weird. I honestly feel as though I'm not good enough to do clinics.

WFM: Okay. Another topic we didn't get to discuss last time is dealing with success. In six years, the Matthews Band has gone from playing clubs to huge stadiums, from putting out your own album to selling mil-

lions of records. It must be amazing on many levels, but are there any negative aspects to this kind of rapid rise?

CB: I hate to even mention anything negative, because I feel so fortunate. There have been a couple of odd things, though. Some people do treat you differently after you've had this kind of success. So I try to explain to them, "I'm still the same person that I've always been. I'm just playing in front of 65,000 people instead of 65. You've got my phone number; call me, come over."

Some people lay the star trip on us: They think that when you get to this level, you've changed somehow. That's not the case. People with those attitudes have, I think, caused me to focus more on my home life and on myself when the band isn't working. I go to my studio and I try to be creative.

WFM: It sounds like you've become a bit isolated.

CB: I'm not thrilled about it, but what can you do? It's weird.

WFM: What about the stress involved with performing in front of these huge audiences, like Giants Stadium? Is that a problem?

CB: To be straight-up honest with you, there is no stress on my part. When I walk on stage in front of 65,000 people, I'm like, "This is great!" These people want to see us, so I'm going to give them the best that I can. I'm going to pour myself out and play like it's the last gig I'll ever have. That's the way I treat every gig.

For more info on Beauford's background and playing experience, you may want to "revisit" his October '96 MD cover story.



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