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With the mega-success of the Dave Matthews Band, lucky listeners are being exposed to more unbridled drum chops than they've heard in a long, long time. It's no surprise that drummer Carter Beauford is digging the hell out of this gig.

by William F. Miller

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Your average couch potato might know him as the shirtless Hootie dude, but don't even *think* Jim Sonefeld doesn't get it done behind the kit.

by Robyn Flans

Highlights Of MD's Festival Weekend '96

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Elvin Jones, Omar Hakim, Tim Alexander, Trilok Gurtu, Dave Lombardo, Sheila E & Peter Michael Escovedo, Walfredo Reyes, Jr., Narada Michael Walden. Amazing opening acts and countless giveaways. Some are saying it was the best MD Festival ever. We'd say they've got a pretty strong case.

The first month on the base was as close to hell as you can get. We stayed in a cold, unsanitary warehouse for a few weeks. We also pulled guard duty at the main gate of the air base and the headquarters building. Things were looking bad for our supposedly musical mission. But by the second month here the purely military duties started to diminish and our musical activities picked up. Our living conditions also improved, and things were looking up.

Our days start at 8:00 A.M. with a gathering, followed by rehearsals until 4:30 P.M. (with a lunch break). The rest of the day is left for individual practice, sectionals, or administrative duties. Our total band of forty musicians is capable of providing a woodwind quintet, a brass quintet, a Latin jazz band, a variety combo, a stage band, a concert band, and a marching band. Out of all of these, the variety combo and the quintets are doing the most work.

Collectively, our favorite group is the variety combo called the Mo Better Blues Band. James Alescio is the drummer, Paul Baker plays percussion and sings, and Robert Habib (one of those "I play every-

thing" people and the percussion section leader) plays keyboards and sings. The band is a ten-piece group consisting of a full rhythm section, four horns, and a couple of vocalists. We play a variety of music including jazz, funk, R&B, and C&W. We like to stay as high-energy as possible, and to play something for everybody. We also include a "live karaoke" set in which the soldiers we play for get to participate. Most of the soldiers in Bosnia have it a lot worse than we do, and the shows we perform give them a chance to unwind and have a great time. Our main mission is to support troop morale, and the Mo Better Blues Band is the most-requested group within our organization. We also recently toured northern Bosnia, where we did one show for the Russian troops here as part of the peace-keeping force. They really love American music and were extremely pleased with our performance.

We hope that our current situation allows all musicians to realize that music brings happiness to everyone, no matter where they are in the world. And regardless of where we are in the world, what we

are doing, or the sacrifices we have to make as service members, we still love what we do. Our shows have had a tremendous impact on thousands of soldiers. As we see our impact on this peace-keeping mission, we will continue to bring music and happiness into everyone's lives.

James Alescio, Specialist, USA
Robert Habib, Sergeant, USA
Paul Baker, Sergeant, USA
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Carter



Beauford

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As for the bells of the cymbals, well, they're not great. One of the three had a bell sound you might be able to get away with. But who cares? You want a bell sound? Move to another cymbal, like the crash/ride. The *Mel Lewis* ride is a fine musical instrument that I can confidently say *any* jazz drummer would be inspired by. (How's that for a "ringing" endorsement?)

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In terms of price, the *Mel Lewis* series ranges a little bit higher than other similar-size cymbals on the market. The 14" hi-hats list for \$425 per pair, the 19" crash/ride for \$350, and the 21" ride for \$450. Yes, it's a high price, but these cymbals are of a quality that makes the price seem...well...reasonable. And on a positive note, with the sale of each *Mel Lewis* series cymbal Istanbul pays a royalty to Mel's widow.

After having lived with these cymbals for a couple of months, it's going to be hard to send them back. Did they help me sound better? Yes. Did they help me swing harder? Possibly. Did I sound like Mel? Well, no, but just for a moment I heard that sound and got a little deeper into the music. I think Mel would approve.



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Carter Beauford Of The Dave Matthews Band

By William F. Miller

The torch continues to be passed: Gene lit the fire, focusing the attention, then Buddy dominated. Max thoughtfully emerged, then passed it to Tony and Elvin. Billy raised the ante and Steve refined it. Next up was Neil, followed by Vinnie, who went left with it. Dave honed it to a sharp point, and now Dennis is guiding the way.

But who will be the next guy, the player who will capture our imagination? Carter Beauford is a pretty good bet.

Placing Beauford's name (pronounced BO-ford) next on that list really isn't too much of a stretch. Check out his playing with the genre-crossing Dave Matthews Band—creative ideas combined with tremendous technique, over-the-top flailing executed with pinpoint control, all rolled up in the groove of *death*. It's simply an awesome combination that has drummers smiling as they race to the woodshed.

Carter's landslide victory in the Up & Coming category of this year's *MD Readers Poll*, along with an avalanche of reader mail demanding an immediate cover story (some letters downright threatening), further demonstrate his dominance. Drummers are loving this guy, and with good reason. Why? Maybe it's because he's expanding the limits of drumming in a pop context. Fusion-type beats, round-house fills, and double pedal being played on multi-million-selling records? How shocking.

Next In Line

Photos by Ebet Roberts

Carter Beauford

The Dave Matthews Band's rise to prominence—and Carter Beauford's—began six years ago in Charlottesville, Virginia. It was a fairly slow climb, as the musicians—Beauford, along with Dave Matthews on vocals and acoustic guitar, Stefan Lessard on bass, Boyd Tinsley on violin, and Leroi Moore on sax—learned how to blend their disparate musical backgrounds together. Rock, pop, bluegrass, R&B, country, and jazz could all be found on these bandmembers' résumés. With Beauford as its fusion/funk foundation, the Matthews Band grew into a solid, style-hopping quintet that eventually wowed audiences on a local level.

In 1993 the band released a live disk called *Remember Two*

Things, and once it began to sell in the thousands regionally, the major labels came knocking. RCA signed the band and put them in the studio with veteran producer Steve Lillywhite to record *Under The Table And Dreaming*. That album was released in September of 1994, and on the strength of several singles, including the monster hit "What Would You Say," sold more than four million copies. And apparently quite a few of those four million disks made their way into the hands of drummers, because the Beauford buzz exploded at that point.

As you might expect, Carter Beauford didn't just start playing. (He's proud to say he's been at it for nearly thirty years.) Carter actually racked up some decent local credits before joining the Matthews band. In fact, tremors were coming out of the Richmond, Virginia area ten years ago about some heavy cat who was playing in a fusion band called Secrets. That gig led to other work for Beauford, including a Washington, D.C.-

based television show for the BET network led by jazz great Ramsey Lewis. For the four years he did that show, Carter got to play with some top-name performers, including Michel Camilo, Roy Hargrove, and Maceo Parker. Carter kept very busy doing the show and the Matthews Band at the same time, but as the band began to take off, he ended his TV career. Obviously, the right decision.

Now the Matthews Band is on tour in support of *Crash*, their follow-up record. You'd think they might have tried to duplicate the sales success of *Under The Table* by coming up with a "What Would You Say, Part 2," but to their credit they didn't. *Crash* shows the band exploring styles and pushing the limits of pop even further. And Carter Beauford is right in the middle of it all, giving outstanding performances on track after track.

All of this success—both musical and financial—hasn't affected the bandmembers. At a day-long photo shoot in New York City recently, the camaraderie was obvious. No ego problems here, just musicians happy to be making their own music on their own terms.

Sitting across from me in an exclusive midtown Manhattan hotel a few hours after the photo shoot, Carter's infectious, Cheshire-cat smile lit up the room. His down-to-earth, affable style reveals a man at ease with himself, although his conversation shows a deep devotion to developing his craft. (He doesn't yet realize the impact he's already made on the drumming community.) But it's that warm, genial personality—along with all of those terrific chops—that makes Carter Beauford the next in line.



WFM: Watching the band today at the photo shoot was very interesting, because everybody got along and there were no "star" trips. And it seemed like there was no real "leader," per se.

CB: As a matter of fact, that's one of the things about this band that everybody likes: There isn't a leader. Each one of us can express ourselves musically without being choked by a leader. Everybody can offer what they feel is gonna enhance the music. So, yeah, that's the main thing that all the guys—especially me—feel make this band happen. It's the freedom that we have to speak with our instruments.

WFM: You've got to feel *great* about this band. It's a unique situation in the music industry.

CB: Yeah, I do feel great about it. There has only been one other band that I've played in where I was able to do what I wanted—and that was a fusion band. Here I'm in a situation where I can play what I think will be right for the music. And I do appreciate it because I've played in a lot of bands over the years where I felt I couldn't contribute. So yeah, I've only been in two bands that allowed me the freedom

to create. And I probably have more freedom in the Matthews band than I did with that fusion band!

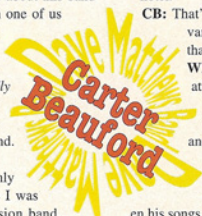
WFM: I don't imagine the fusion band was staying in this swank hotel.

CB: That's true! [laughs] We were *living* in a beat-up 1974 van. It was a nightmare. But that's behind me now, thank God.

WFM: Since the Matthews band is a "total group situation," how does the material get written?

CB: Most of the material *used* to be written by Dave. He wrote the melodies, the chord structures, and the lyrics. Dave would bring in a song and say, "Look, this is how it goes, but I want you to do your thing and take it to another level." So each one of us added our own parts and ideas to strengthen his songs.

But now we're writing as a group. In fact, a lot of the songs on *Crash* were written by everybody. We all went into the studio, started jamming, and came up with the ideas. We didn't have any songs that were pre-written, yet everything was like "boom"





when we got in the studio, just idea after idea. We created the stuff right on the spot.

WFM: That must have been fun—and gratifying.

CB: Oh, it felt great. And this is the reason we feel *Crash* is the best work we've done so far—it's the *shit*. We are so psyched about it because we were able to go in and create something from the ground up and see it develop. And at the end of the day to have songs that really work is just so satisfying.

WFM: And the band has its own sound that, by what you're saying, is really a product of everybody's contribution.

CB: Oh yeah. We're five individuals coming together, but coming from different musical backgrounds. That's where our sound

comes from. We have a jazz thing happening here, we have a rock thing happening there, we even have a classical thing happening with our fiddle player, Boyd. All this stuff somehow comes together and creates our sound.

WFM: You talked about not being reined in by a leader. But when everybody was sitting around the studio coming up with ideas, did the group have comments about what you played? The reason I ask is because you have the chops to go out if you want to. I would think it might have happened.

CB: Well, maybe just once or twice! [laughs] As a matter of fact, that's another good thing about the band. We can all give and receive constructive criticism. I think we trust each other and realize that we're all trying to make the best music we can, so we're willing to listen to each other. But that's a totally different situation from being told by a leader what you can and cannot play. The reason we're able to do it is because there aren't any ego problems in this band.

We've had some rough times together. We've been on the road for a long time—six years now—and we really started from the bottom. We scratched and clawed our way up, and I think we all remember what it was like when we didn't have anything. So everybody is chilled out on the whole ego thing.

WFM: When the band is writing material together, what is your input from the drums?

CB: I come from a jazz background—well, that's what I listened to and what my dad listened to when I was a kid—every

**Carter
Beauford**

single day. So that's pretty much the way I think about music—it's just deep down inside of me. When I listen to anything that somebody brings me—any kind of idea someone might have—I'm going to think jazz. How can I add my little jazz attitude to this bluegrass song? How do I add a jazz thing to this funk tune? That's the challenge for me: trying to incorporate that jazz background into something that really doesn't have anything to do with jazz. But it seems to work itself out every time.

WFM: That's one of the beauties of the band; there are all these styles creeping into the songs here and there. But have you ever had a problem where you were using your jazz head to play a country feel, for instance, and somebody complained that the feel wasn't right?

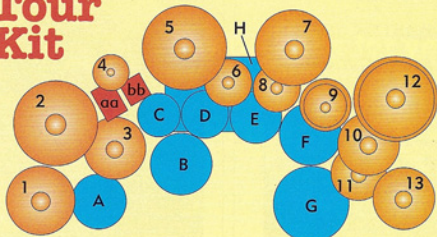
CB: Never in this band, although it used to happen to me quite a bit in other situations. If there's an idea that Dave or someone brings to the band and they have something in mind for the feel, then I'm gonna get into whatever they're thinking. If they're thinking polka, I'm not going to think jazz. But after listening to jazz so much—and playing it quite a bit—I think it's just a part of me. It seems to seep through the cracks. [laughs]

WFM: But that's probably one of the reasons the Matthews band has its own sound. When the band plays these different styles, somehow you're able to make it your own. It isn't a straight country thing, a straight rock thing, or even a straight fusion thing.

CB: Yeah, but it isn't something we think a lot about; it just comes out that way. Again, for me, it comes back to the jazz thing. And Leroi, our sax player, has that jazz background. Stefan, our bassist, has a new wave kind of thing going on, because he's a bit younger than the rest of us. And like I said, Boyd brings a touch of classical and bluegrass to the band. It's just a big stew of influences.

WFM: I heard your new single on the radio recently and afterwards the DJ raved about it, saying the band had bro-

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- C. 8 x 8 tom
- D. 10 x 10 tom
- E. 10 x 12 tom
- F. 12 x 14 tom
- G. 16 x 18 floor tom
- H. 16 x 22 bass drum

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- aa. Ridge Rider cowbell
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Cymbals: Zildjian

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- 2. 20" K Custom ride
- 3. 14" A New Beat hi-hats
- 4. 6" Zil-Bel
- 5. 20" K Dark crash thin
- 6. 10" A splash
- 7. 18" A medium crash
- 8. 10" A Custom splash
- 9. 12" and 8" A splashes (piggybacked, with felt washers separating cymbals)
- 10. 14" K Dark crash thin
- 11. 13" Dyno Beat hi-hats (closed)
- 12. 18" and 20" Oriental China Trashes (piggybacked with felt washers separating cymbals)
- 13. 14" China crash

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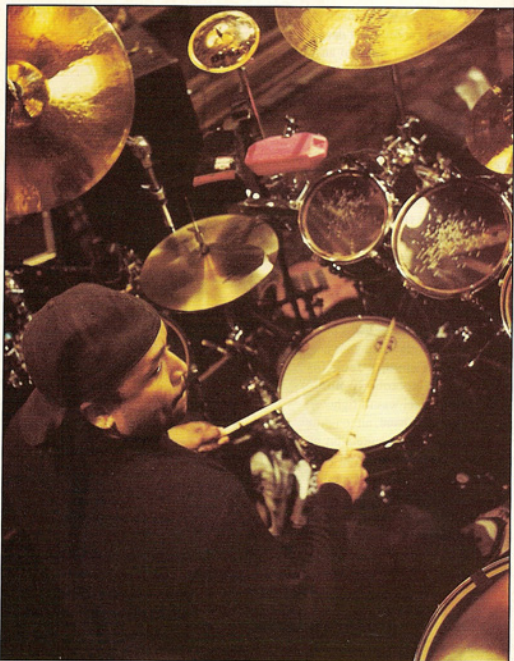
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ken new ground. Do you feel that you've broken new ground with *Crash*?

CB: Definitely, and the reason for it is that the band has this attitude that we never want to play the same song the same way twice. We've done so many shows and we're always changing the tunes. I'm beginning to wonder if it's a problem, because there are some nights when I want to do some things exactly the same. There are those nights when everything is kicking butt, and I'm like, "Man, I want to relive that!"

I think that is the key to your question—we're constantly changing things and challenging things, and I think that's what keeps our audiences coming back. People tell us that all the time. It's like, "I like the way you guys did 'Tripping Billies' last night. I've never heard it that way before." As a matter of fact, I've never heard it

played that way before either! But I think going for that has helped the band progress.

WFM: Well, why is it that, when you're trying to progress and expand in so many new directions, the band would choose the same producer and studio for *Crash* as you had on the last record?

CB: That was because we wanted to get everything we could out of Bearsville. When we went in there for *Under The Table*, it was the first time working with Steve Lillywhite, it was the first time for us doing a major label record, and there were a lot of other "first times" for us. We felt as though there was more for us to get out of Bearsville, that we didn't do everything we wanted to the first time. And the reason for using Steve again was simple: He's a great producer. I think the guy is incredible.

Steve makes the studio setting so com-

portable, which makes it easier to do what you're supposed to do. He makes it such a relaxed environment that you can get in there and play stuff that you never played before. Plus, if there are things that you play that he doesn't like, he won't snap at you or say things that are going to weird you out.

WFM: How did you decide on Lillywhite in the first place?

CB: When we started juggling producers' names around, we had a few guys in mind, like Hugh Padgham and T-Bone Burnett. But eventually our manager told us about Steve: "He's worked with the Rolling Stones, U2, Peter Gabriel, Aretha Franklin, INXS," and we were like, "Whoa. This guy has done some serious stuff. Let's rap with him." When we did meet with him he was totally open-arms. He told us, "Look guys, I'm not here to change you or your music. I'm not going to put my concept on your band. I'm just going to make your album sound good. And I guarantee you the record will go platinum." I think we all got excited by everything he said, but even better was the sense we got from him that he was sincere. So we went with him, and he lived up to everything he said.

WFM: Lillywhite's known for getting killer drum sounds. Do you think he "captured" your sound?

CB: Oh God, yes. As a matter of fact, he enhanced it more than I thought could be done. The first time we went into the studio for *Under The Table*, though, I had the biggest problem with my drum sound. I had the drums set up in a booth, but it was so dead that the drums just didn't sing. Steve said, "Look, let's take the drums out of the booth and hear how they sound in different spots around the studio." I was like, "Okay, let's try it." We moved them around the room and played them in every nook and cranny that we could find, but we didn't find any spot that we liked. But then it occurred to Steve to carry the drums up to a loft above the studio, so we dragged them upstairs and got one of the best sounds that I've ever heard in my life! He took the time to experiment and got a killer drum sound.

For *Crash* we deliberately didn't use the loft just so the sound would be a bit different. We went for a slightly more controlled thing, but with a different personality. I'm happy with it. But that attitude of doing

Crash Symbols

These are the albums Carter lists as most representative of his drumming...

Artist	Album
Dave Matthews Band	Remember Two Things
Dave Matthews Band	Recently
The Vertical Horizon	Running On Ice
Dave Matthews Band	Under The Table And Dreaming
Dave Matthews Band	Crash
Secrets	Secrets

...and these are the artists (not necessarily drummers) most inspiring to him. Elvin Jones, Will Kennedy of the Yellowjackets, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Giovanni Hidalgo, Bobby McFerrin, David Garibaldi, and Ray Obeido.

things differently than we have in the past influenced the drum sound this time.

WFM: One of the things that stands out on *Crash* over *Under The Table* was the sound of the cymbals.

CB: Well, thanks to Zildjian.

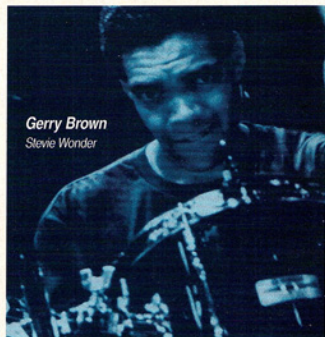
WFM: Oh, so that's why you called the record *Crash*.

CB: Ha! [laughs] Why didn't I think of that?! But the guys at Zildjian really know their stuff. I used Zildjians on the last record and was very happy with how they

sounded. But before we recorded *Crash* I actually went to the Zildjian factory and picked out exactly what I wanted. They let me sit in a room and try anything I wanted to.

WFM: You lucky guy.

CB: Oh, man! I was like, "I want that, and that, and that, and that." [laughs] But I was able to get the cymbal sound that I've been hearing in my head for years and years. In fact, I think I've gotten pretty close to my ideal drum sound as well.



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WFM: So what's the ideal "Carter Beauford drum sound"?

CB: I've been trying to get a certain sound for many years. And then a few years back I heard someone who had a sound that was very close to what I thought of as ideal, Dave Weckl. Dave's sound was, and is, amazing.

WFM: That's funny, because you don't play anything like Dave.

CB: Nothing like Dave. But his *sound* was what I wanted. Like I said, that was a few years ago. Now I'd add to that Marvin "Smitty" Smith's sound, Dennis Chambers' sound, and Vinnie Colaiuta's sound. Add a little David Garibaldi in there as well and *that's* the sound I'm going for. Those cats all have different sounds, but to me there is something in between all of them that I'm trying to get.

I feel I'm very close with my snare drum and cymbals. I like kind of a washy sound from my cymbals, but not an overbearing wash. It's a wash that is there but doesn't drown out everything.

WFM: Can you describe your sound a little bit more in detail? For instance, go into the way the snare drum is tuned, the way the bass drum is dampened, that kind of thing.

CB: Well, starting with the snare drum, I'll tell you *who* comes closest to the snare drum sound that I like—Will Kennedy of the Yellowjackets. He gets a jazz kit kind of snare drum sound, yet he also gets a great funk/pop 2 and 4 kind of thing. I love it. My sound is close to that, but tuned a bit higher and a tad drier.

As for the kick, I'm looking for something a bit more open. My kick drum sound right now is a little too muffled. I've been working on that and working with different pads, trying to get the sound to be just as direct but with a wider spread.

WFM: I suppose that with all of the double pedal stuff you play you need the kick to be defined.

CB: Yeah, defined, but still with presence. As for the toms, I think my tom sound is right where I want it. I've never really had any problems with the Yamaha [Recording Custom] toms, because the sound is defined and controlled, but there's still body. Overall I feel like I'm very close to having my ideal sound. And I thought we got a mind-blowing drum sound on *Crash*.

WFM: Let's talk about the recording of

Crash. Take me through the process.

CB: We did record three songs individually—building up parts—but we also did a lot of group stuff. For those, we went in, set up, and just hit it: "We're going to do this song. Okay, let's think about an arrangement. What about sounds? Let's run it." We just went for it. We started jamming and Steve would start recording without telling us. And that's how a lot of the stuff was recorded. We'd take a break and he'd say, "Guys, come in here," and we'd be like, "What are you doing?" And he'd play the stuff for us and it would be amazing—good performances, great sounds, everything.

WFM: Are you saying that you guys didn't use a click on this record?

CB: We did use a click on some of the songs, but I'm not exactly sure on which performances. We would do something like fifteen takes of one song, and on some takes we would use a click and on others we wouldn't. I'm not sure which takes were the ones used for the record.

WFM: On the songs that you did use a click, did you have a certain type of click that you liked to use? I've heard that

Lillywhite is pretty creative with the click.

CB: Steve does have a certain pattern and sound that he uses, which is like a multi-tone cowbell thing with a pretty cool rhythm. We used it a lot on *Under The Table*. We all liked the sound of it so much that we wanted him to actually mix it into some of the tunes, because it blended so well with what we were doing. But he wouldn't do it.

WFM: Talking specifically about your playing on *Crash*, you progressed from the last album in that you played some wackier, even more creative beats. Things like the bridge to "So Much To Say" is somewhat "Latiny," "Two Step" has your playing double pedal 16ths under a country feel, and "Drive In Drive Out" is sort of a fusion-inspired pattern. Where are these types of things coming from?

CB: Well, believe it or not, I was really inspired by percussionists. Miguel Pomier used to be the percussionist in our band, but he passed away about three years ago. He was phenomenal. He gave me all sorts of ideas for patterns and different ways to look at rhythm. The other cat who inspired me—and continues to do so—is Giovanni



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Hidalgo. He's a mind-blowing percussionist. I can't believe some of the rhythms that come out of him. But those rhythms just totally inspire me, and I guess I sort of translate that stuff into drumset parts.

WFM: What about some of the other people who have inspired or influenced you over the years?

CB: First of all, there was my dad. I have to give credit to him. He was a trumpet player, and like I said before, his thing was jazz. He turned me on to all the heavyweights. At the time I didn't want to hear those cats; I wanted to hear about the Dave Clark Five, the Beatles, and all the pop guys. But in the same breath, I was still listening on the sly to the jazz cats: Max Roach, Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Cozy Cole, Louie Bellson—all of them. My father said to me, "If you want to play drums, these are the cats."

WFM: It sounds like your dad was really into the idea of your playing drums.

CB: He was. Well, he was into the idea of my playing *anything*, whether it be harmonica, drums, or even cello. He thought that was something that kids should get into and learn about. I feel the same way: Kids should get into the arts. It's a happening thing.

But Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Louie Bellson were the first cats for me. And then, once I really got into them, I got hungry for the drums and wanted to learn more. I just fell in love with it and I haven't stopped.

I can remember wanting to take the drumming thing further and not just play somebody else's licks. I wanted to play things that I had in my head, ideas that I had even as a kid. I just wanted to go further with the drums and go into areas that other drummers hadn't. That was a goal even at a real young age.

The cat who really turned it around for me was Tony Williams. Tony and his first Lifetime band really moved me, because I was thinking about somehow trying to combine jazz with rock. He did it with that first group. Tony opened up a whole new world for me. I can remember thinking that Tony showed what could be done, and it was just a matter of practicing until I got it together. Well, to this day I still can't play half of the stuff he was doing! [laughs]

WFM: It's obvious you did a lot of practicing, but did you take lessons?

CB: No, I didn't have any formal training at all. I was pretty much self-taught until I got to college. When I got to college I became friends with a drummer by the name of Billy Drummond, and he showed me a lot of things.

WFM: Is that *the* Billy Drummond, the New York jazz drummer?

CB: Yeah, and he's a monster. Billy's one of my best friends. He and I went to the Shenandoah Conservatory together. We used to practice together every day, and I would study the way he played. Billy turned me on to some of the other heavy cats, like Elvin Jones and Philly Joe Jones.

WFM: Did you study music in college?

CB: No, I studied occupational therapy. And the reason I wasn't studying music was because I didn't have any formal training. I couldn't read music at that point. So I took up the occupational therapy thing and got my degree in it, and actually taught high school for a while. My mother was happy about that, but I knew I wanted to play. When I quit the teaching gig to play full-time she wasn't happy, but my dad told her that I *had* to do the music thing. He knew that down deep I was a musician.

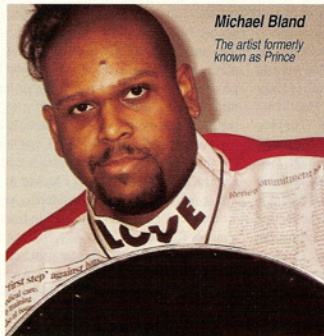
WFM: Since you didn't have any "formal" lessons you must have had a lot of playing experience.

CB: Oh yeah. I played my first gig when I was nine years old. I started playing with these cats who were in their twenties and thirties. I think they hired me because I was a bit of an attraction—the "kid drummer who could play" kind of thing. We would play a lot of Herbie Hancock, Miles Davis, and a lot of standards. I heard that music every day at home, so it was nothing to me.

When I went to audition for that group they put on a record and said, "Okay, play along." I think the tune was "Autumn Leaves," and I played it almost note-for-note, and they were tripping. So I got the job and stayed with them for years, all through junior high and into high school. But I played for a lot of other bands too. I did a lot of country bands, and even some bluegrass stuff.

WFM: All of that experience at such a young age is fantastic. *That* was your education.

CB: Exactly. There is nothing like hands-on experience. You can go to any college in the world and they can sit you down and



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write out everything that you should know, but you'll never *really* know it until you can play it on stage with other musicians.

WFM: I still find it hard to believe that you didn't have any lessons or any music education. You slip in some fairly advanced concepts with the Matthews band, like on the live version of "Tripping Billies" [originally on the Matthews band's self-released album *Remember Two Things*, and now available on the *Columbia Records Radio Hour, Volume 2* disk]. During the violin solo, you phrase in five over the double bass roll. I can't imagine just picking that sort of thing up.

CB: I got most of that from listening and checking out the cats. It's all out there, you just have to be open to it.

WFM: What types of things did you work on with Drummond?

CB: I had worked on a lot of technical things on my own—almost rudimental types of things—although I didn't know exactly what I was playing in terms of what they're called. When I got with Billy, he would play things and I'd ask him to explain them to me, and he could relate some of them to rudiments. So I learned

from both sides.

I also learned just from watching Billy's approach to the drums. He has perfect posture and he looks very relaxed when he plays. I really wanted to have my playing go in that direction, so I actually set up a mirror so I could watch myself play. It really helped me because I could see when my posture was good, or how I was holding the sticks when I would play a certain pattern, or just how relaxed I looked at the kit. It really helped my confidence, and I would recommend it. I practiced in front of a mirror for months.

As for technique, I always watched my hands and tried to find the best way for them to move. I think I found the best way for me to play, and I've worked on different exercises to keep building my chops.

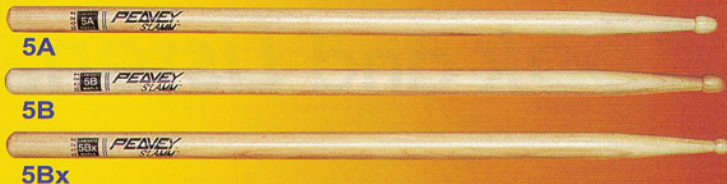
WFM: Are there specific rudimental exercises that you still work on?

CB: I practice my double and triple strokes with each hand, and a few other basic rudimental things, every time I sit down at the kit. But what I do on stage is basically nothing but single strokes, because that's what works best for the types of things I play with the band.

Speaking of singles, I'm completely blown away by what Buddy Rich did with the single-stroke thing. How the hell did he make his single-stroke rolls sound like press rolls? Buddy has been a big inspiration to me for that, so you'll hear me do a lot of that type of thing with the band. But when I'm practicing, I always have to go back to the basics—you know, the doubles, triples, paradiddles, and those things. While I play a lot of singles with the band, it's all of the other stuff that puts a certain amount of finesse in your playing. It would be crazy to study single strokes and nothing else.

WFM: On the song "Say Goodbye," from *Crash*, you play a very tasty single-stroke fill around the kit in the intro of the tune—and you're playing the roll with some type of multi-rod. It's fast, yet it sounds relaxed. I've noticed that you play with a thumbs-up type of grip—sort of a classic French-grip style. Does that grip help you play fast singles around the kit, like on "Say Goodbye"?

CB: Yeah, it does. I call it an African grip, because the thumbs are up but I'm using a combination of wrist and fingers. To me,



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it's a power grip. When I'm playing a straight-ahead gig I'll use traditional grip, because I don't need that power or that kind of speed. When I'm playing anything else, though, it's a matched, thumbs-up grip.

WFM: I've seen a lot of guys use that type of grip, but you look very relaxed with it. Your form looks excellent, with your thumbs up and your elbows out slightly, very similar to Cobham's stroke.

CB: Well, I think using a mirror really helped me to improve my form. When you actually watch yourself play you can learn a lot.

WFM: Besides just watching your hands, what types of things have you worked on to get your singles together?

CB: Practicing on a pillow for me is the best thing for singles, and it's something that I've been doing for years. I've also been working on each hand individually, concentrating on each hand by itself. Then when you put the two together, man, you can fly.

I've also used the pillow idea to get my bass drum chops together. I have a setup at home where there's a pillow in front of my

double pedal. I hit the pillow, but I try to have control of the beaters so they don't sink into the pillow. They just touch the edge of the pillow. I do that because I'm trying to gain control so that when I get on the drums I'll have control of the beaters and not just bury them into the head.

WFM: And you play with your heels up?

CB: Yeah, so it takes a lot of work to really develop control playing that way. I've found that the pillow thing really works, as long as I stay focused on not just burying the beaters into the pillow.

WFM: So your goal is not just to play faster and louder singles with your hands and feet?

CB: No, that shouldn't be the only goal. Control is what I want. I don't want to overpower my kit; I want to play musically with a good sound. When I was talking about the sound I want to get, the control you have when you play is as important to the sound as the kind of drums or cymbals you use.

WFM: Another somewhat unique approach you have is leading and playing ride rhythms with your left hand.

CB: I actually switched from the normal

way of playing to my left because I found it was much easier for me to play certain things that way. I hated playing with my hands crossed in front of me. I was always having sticking problems, and those just went away when I started leading with my left.

I realized after a while that I could play either way, from my right or left side. My mom actually told me that when I was young I would eat dinner with my left hand and she would go, [slap] "Don't do that." As a kid I didn't understand, because it felt natural for me to eat with either hand. But that slap on the wrist never changed anything! I guess I'm naturally ambidextrous.

WFM: But when you switched from right-hand to left-hand lead, did you give up on the right side?

CB: No, not at all. What's happening is, now I have two China cymbals on my right side. They are piggybacked and set up so I can ride on them with my right hand, playing the kind of things you'd hear Billy Cobham play—the upbeat 8ths. So I've used that a lot and it feels just as comfortable.

But the thing is, it's so much easier to

play my kit leading with the left hand, just in terms of how the kit is set up. I don't have to cross over like I would if I rode with my right.

WFM: And you sing background vocals while you play. I would think that leading with your left would allow you to play with a more open stance, which probably helps with your singing.

CB: Right. When you're crossed up—leading with your right—it's harder to sing. You have that mic' in front of you, your sticks are crossed underneath, and your body is turned a little bit. That's uncomfortable. It's so much easier when you play open-handed.

WFM: Another Carter Beauford trademark—and one that a lot of drummers are talking about—is your rhythmic concepts for the hi-hat. Most drummers will play a repeated figure within a tune, but you vary up the hi-hat rhythms—it's kind of free-form in a way.

CB: I really can't take credit for that because that whole hi-hat thing came from Tony Williams. Tony is not a timekeeper; he plays melodically, theme and variation. He takes the whole timekeeper thing and

threw it out the window. Drummers are musicians too. We are not just timekeepers. So, with that in mind, I feel I can lay down the groove and still be creative with what I'm playing on the hi-hat, or drop little splash hits into a pattern. I love playing that stuff.

I've been inspired by people like Steve Gadd and Stewart Copeland. Those cats have done some very creative things with the hi-hat. Dennis Chambers has done some amazing things too, so the information is out there.

WFM: Yeah, but you go way left with it.

CB: Well, I've always played like that. I guess, varying up the hi-hat and really playing off the beat. A lot of people call that beat displacement, but I call it playing around the groove, but at the same time keeping the groove happening. I just think it's another way of expressing yourself on your instrument instead of only keeping that 2 and 4 happening.

I find the beat displacement thing fascinating to play with. I feel as though it's a part of the magic of music. There are no set rules with music. You take a 4/4 groove and you can just play anything you want

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inside of that 4/4, as long as when you come back to that 1 you're on the 1. Besides, the displacement stuff and the hi-hat stuff is just so much fun!

WFM: You mentioned Stewart Copeland. When I interviewed him years ago he said that he'd always played that way—in his style and with that way he had of playing the hi-hat. He said he kept getting fired from bands because nobody wanted to hear that stuff. Then he formed the Police....

CB: Yeah, I've been fired a lot, too. [laughs] It's happened a few times! I'm glad you said that. Some bands I worked with wanted a timekeeper, but to me that's just boring. I'd do it if they were willing to pay some bucks, but that's the only way I'd play a disco tune all night. I don't want to do that.

I like excitement when it comes to music. And that goes for ballads, too. There are ballads that, if the feel is right, take off and go places. I love playing ballads. It's a challenge to me. But a disco tune? Nah! And I've been fired from a couple of disco bands. "Carter, you're not keeping the time. This is Donna Summers' Heaven Knows." You've got to play it like

the record." But I wanted to add so many different things because I was hearing so many different things. I felt as though it would make the music say something. But they didn't want to hear that so they got rid of me.

WFM: Another fairly unique thing about your playing is the choices you make when playing fills—they're hardly ever standard-type fills. Take, for instance, the fill on "What Would You Say," the one with the odd-placed splash hits. It's just a little bit out.

CB: A lot of the stuff that I do I don't really think about. Nothing is planned. When I'm on stage or in the studio I play what I'm feeling. I'll play off of what the sax player is doing or what the bass player is doing. It's all about the moment and the interaction between the musicians, the audience, whatever.

WFM: So you don't play that break in "What Would You Say" the same way every time?

CB: You know, there have been a couple of times when I felt the urge to do that, because maybe the audience wants to hear it—like it's a signature thing. But no, I

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Matthews On Beauford: So Much To Say



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"I'd like to say that Carter is the most natural musician I've ever met," insists Dave Matthews, the namesake and frontman of one of today's most popular bands. "But that would belittle all of the work he's put into becoming the great player that he is. Let's say that [Beauford's musical abilities] are a combination of talent and a devotion to his craft."

After six years of playing with Beauford, Dave Matthews is in a unique position to know something about Carter's drumming. "He's like a magnet for new ideas," Matthews contends. "I've seen him incorporate new ideas and licks into his playing in a way that seemed almost effortless, because when he plays, those ideas just flow out so naturally. But I know the work he puts in. I've heard him practice a lick over and over until he mastered it. He's constantly working, constantly improving, and always trying to reinvent himself."

While the two have been playing together for six years, Dave points out that he'd actually been a fan of Carter's dating back almost ten years. "I used to go see Carter play in a fusion band in Virginia called Secrets," Dave says. "He would sail with that band, and audiences would just be awed by his playing. I can honestly say that I was overwhelmed. At that point I knew I wanted to be in a band with him."

But what specifically does Beauford bring to the Matthews band? "He's like a clock—impeccable time," Dave enthuses. "And I know that I can throw some skeleton of an idea at him and it will come back with bells and streamers on it. And people don't talk much about Carter's singing, but he's good. If I could get everyone else in the band to sing like him we could be like the Bee Gees."

Drummers around the globe are excited about Carter Beauford's over-the-top playing style, but there are a few musicians around who feel that he can be a bit too busy. "I know musicians who have said that," Dave snarls, "but to me that's a part of Carter's sound. To my ear it perfectly complements what we're doing. And everything he plays feels so good. It's his ability to slice up the silence in such an explosive way that makes us all feel fortunate he's a part of this band."

William F. Miller

don't want to do that. [laughs] I'll do something that is fairly close, sometimes, but most times it's nowhere near what's on the record. I've done that, that moment was there, now let that moment rest. If you want to hear it again, listen to the record.

WFM: Even though there's a lot of "improvising" going on in your playing, at the core of it all is just a deep-felt groove. Your time feel is beautiful.

CB: Thanks, man. I guess that just comes from listening to a lot of the George Clinton stuff. The pocket that brother laid down was some of the most amazing pocket I've ever heard. George Clinton, Sly Stone, James Brown—those cats laid down some serious pocket. And pocket has always been, from day one, a major focus for me. If that feel is not there the tune says nothing, it goes nowhere. The only thing I can recommend for someone to get that together is to listen to music that feels good

and try to get inside what's going on.

WFM: Speaking of the pocket thing, a lot of people talk about the importance of the bass player/drummer relationship. And I hear a similarity in how you play with Stefan with how Billy Cobham worked with Rick Laird in the Mahavishnu Orchestra. In fact, Billy once told me that, since Laird played very simply, it left room for Billy to stretch. I hear that relationship in the Matthews band.

CB: Very much so. I agree with what Billy was saying. Stefan doesn't overlap at all. He lays down a serious groove and does it in a way that doesn't step on anyone's toes. As for me, I'm guilty of overplaying, but I think I'm getting better at picking my spots. But, you're right, when you've got a bass player like Stefan, he makes it easy for me to fly. He's like, "Carter, man, it's your time. Just take it. Do your thing." And a lot of times, like a fool, I do. [laughs]

WFM: When you do lay down a groove, it's so heavy, and a lot of it seems to come from the bass drum. You seem to play with a heavy foot. Does that help the feel?

CB: I think I do play pretty heavy on the bass drum.

WFM: When you're playing a groove, are you thinking from the bass drum up?

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CB: Actually, yeah. Bass drum is the first thing. I mean, that's what I lead off with in my head. Bass drum is the foundation. I think it's gotten to a point for the other guys in the band where the bass drum is the foundation too. When we kick off a tune, boom, that bass drum is like, "Here we are. This is the 1."

WFM: So you have a personal mix in your head of how your kit should work together?

CB: I've never really thought about it that way, but I guess you could say the bass drum and the snare drum are prominent, with the snare being maybe slightly less than the kick. The hi-hat and ghosted snare notes would be just under that. As for everything else, I'm not going to say that it doesn't matter, but everything else can be at whatever level, whatever volume.

WFM: Since you want to hear the bass drum up front, what do you do to get that kind of power from it?

CB: One thing that I try to do, like I mentioned earlier, is not lay the beater into the head. I think that dampens the tone of the drum. It's like taking a drumstick and hitting one of the toms and leaving the stick on the head. It's not going to resonate as much. Give the bass drum head a quick slap and then get the beater off the head.

WFM: Does the height of your seat help you to get power on the bass drum?

CB: One of the reasons that I sit up so high is because I have a big butt. [laughs] Actually, I don't sit that high at all. I try to sit with my thighs just above parallel to the

floor. I don't want any tension on my knees or on the rest of my joints, and I find sitting at that height the most comfortable. I try to focus on keeping my legs very relaxed.

WFM: What about when playing the double pedal? You have some fun ideas for double pedal work, like on the tune "Two Step" from *Crash*. And I was surprised at how much double pedal you play live. You stick it in all over the place.

CB: I like to use it, but I don't practice my double pedal stuff like I used to. I actually started playing double bass when I was about nine or ten, after my dad took me to see Louie Bellson play. I thought it was cool. Years later, I found Tony Williams and then just focused on the single kick, which really helped. I focused on my left-foot hi-hat stuff too.

WFM: When you decided to bring the double pedal back, how did you build up your chops?

CB: A few years back I was inspired by the way Dennis Chambers would play his left foot on both the hi-hat and left bass pedal. I started messing with that idea, and it grew from there.

WFM: Most drummers lead with their right hands, and when they start playing double bass they lead with their left foot because it moves over from the hi-hat. Since you lead with your left hand, which foot do you feel more comfortable leading with?

CB: To be honest, it depends on the pattern. A lot of times it depends on how I'm feeling at a particular moment. I play most

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patterns starting with my left, though.

WFM: How tight are your pedals tensioned?

CB: Fairly loose, actually. I've been told by most drummers who sit down at my kit that they're really loose. Again, I don't want too much tension in my legs.

WFM: I'd like to hear your thoughts on

practice. When you're not on the road with the band, do you work on things?

CB: Oh yeah. We were off for a few months earlier this year, for the first time in a long time, and I was practicing at least four times a week. And it was hard to find that time because I was working on a solo project. But I feel it's important to keep

developing.

WFM: What is this solo project you're working on?

CB: It's something that I've been thinking about for years, and I finally got some equipment that will help me put it together. I bought a computer and some software so I can write music. All you have to do is play your little dummy keyboard thing and the computer will print out the music on the screen and you can dub stuff on top of it.

I've been writing melodies and bass lines and putting songs together. I've been working on it for the past three and a half months, although I won't be able to finish it until the Matthews band finishes this tour, which may be a while.

WFM: Will this solo record be a more fusion-oriented project?

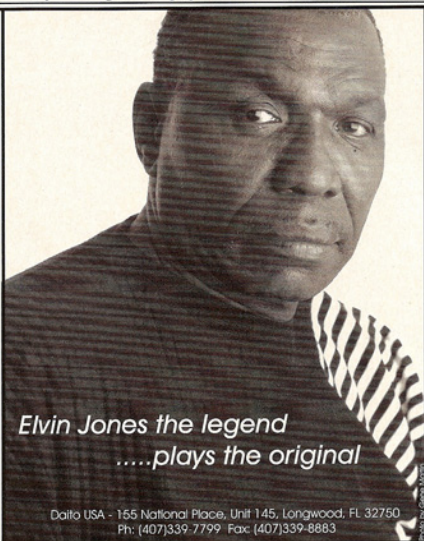
CB: Oh, yeah. I need to get the fusion bug out of my system. I've got some *playing* want to do. Once I get it out of my system I'll move on to some other things I have in mind.

WFM: I hope when you say "get it out of your system" it doesn't mean that, when you come back to the next Matthews band record, you'll be cutting back on the drumming. There's nothing better than having a multi-platinum record with double pedals and big fills on it.

CB: [laughs] Hell no! Don't worry, the playing will be there. That's who I am.

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Carter Beauford: "Satellite"

Transcribed by Paul R. Thompson

MUSIC KEY



This month's *Rock Charts* features our cover artist, Carter Beauford, from the Dave Matthews Band. "Satellite" is from the band's *Under The Table And Dreaming* disk, and has a few classic Carter characteristics. You'll notice Beauford's unique way of playing the hi-hat; he never plays a simple repeating pattern. Carter also plays a few off-beat fills here and there that are fun to listen to (and that really spice up the track). And although the tune is primarily in 6/8, Carter makes it feel so funky.



Zeb Rubens

125

15

The musical notation consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 6/8 time signature, and a tempo marking of 125. A large number '15' is placed above the first measure. The notation includes various drum symbols: a vertical line for the snare, a vertical line with an 'x' for the hi-hat, and a vertical line with a cross for the bass drum. The music features a complex, non-repeating hi-hat pattern and several off-beat fills. The notation is written in a standard drum notation style.

This page contains ten staves of musical notation for a drum set. The notation is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The first staff begins with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Some notes are marked with an 'x' to indicate a specific drum sound, and some are marked with a 'v' to indicate a specific technique. The notation is organized into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes. The first staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The second staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The fifth staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The sixth staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The seventh staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The eighth staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The ninth staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp. The tenth staff has a double bar line at the beginning and a key signature of one sharp.

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