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Of Tool

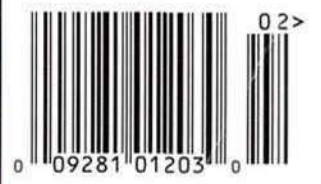
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# Danny Carey

## Of Fool





by Matt Deffen

Danny Carey lives in a part of Hollywood you don't see on postcards or television. Indeed, it's a chore merely finding his home among the camouflage of seedy storefronts and streetwalkers. Even after entering the dark alley that serves as his driveway, the only clue you're at the right place is the basketball hoop outside—a dead giveaway to anyone who knows about Carey's longtime affection for the game. Don't bother ringing the doorbell (it doesn't work) or peering in the windows (there are none). But if the double-wide industrial swing door isn't padlocked, odds are that Danny's home.

Most musicians in bands with less commercial success would have moved out long ago, if for no other reason than aesthetics. But it's a statement not just about Carey, but about his band, Tool, that he

# The Metaphysics Of Drumming

photos by Kevin Willis

still lives and works in the same converted warehouse he moved into shortly after coming to Los Angeles in the mid-'80s

Some of today's most intoxicatingly sick, twisted, heavy, beautiful music is born in Carey's entry room, where Tool has rehearsed ever since the drummer heard Maynard James Keenan yelling at neighbors behind his alley and thought he'd make a good singer.

For clues to the bizarre imagery embedded in Tool's music, check out the giant Enochian magic board behind Carey's kit, or step into the next room, where Carey has layered his cream-colored

walls with slanted crosses, demonic figurines, colorful paintings of geometric shapes, and what he calls "symbolic passageways into a fourth dimension." They, along with a shelf full of books on magic and spiritual awareness, are all products of Carey's enduring fascination with metaphysics.

It only takes an earful of Tool's music, though, to clear any mysteries about Carey's skills as a drummer. *Ænima*, Tool's new record of detuned depravity, is peppered with intricate fills, double-kick blasts, tempo-teasing beats, jazz-influenced ride patterns, and four-limbed polyrhythms—enough to dot an instructional manual.

Carey, who studied music for over three years at the University of Missouri, still finds time to plant himself in front of a music stand and practice patterns from the stained, fragile pages of John Pratt's *Modern Contest Solos For Snare Drum*. Indeed, you don't have to understand Carey's personal and artistic motivations to appreciate what he does behind the kit.

Tool's 1992 debut, the *Opiate* EP, had sold only 13,000 copies by the time the group broke big in 1994 with *Undertow*. *Undertow*'s rise to platinum qualifies as the decade's quietist climb to that plateau, a trip fueled more by club-level touring than any consistent radio support. It's no less stunning, then, that more people grabbed up *Ænima* than they did Nirvana's newly released live collection when the albums simultaneously hit stores this past October.

No longer a secret or a mystery, Danny Carey recently dissolved a few other secrets and mysteries in a conversation about music, magic, myth, and motivation, just before Tool embarked on its first nationwide headlining tour.

**MP:** One of the things you guys have going for you is that people can't attribute Tool's popularity to any particular trend or wave. I can't remember an album going platinum with as little media attention as *Undertow*.

**DC:** Yeah, the whole thing sort of snuck up on us, too, because it was such a slow buildup. We didn't feel like we had any surefire singles or hits. The video for "Sober" really helped out, probably because it was so cool. But more than that, I think touring opened things up for us, especially *Lollapalooza*. We just seemed to play to more and more people every time we'd pass through a city.

So I think you're right about that being a plus. We didn't feel like we had to write another "Sober" or do anything other than what our imaginations and creativity led us to. It's really a liberating feeling, and the best thing about success is not having to have a day job and just being able to concentrate on music.

**MP:** Until Tool's success, were you serious about music in a long-term career sense? I know you were serious about basketball at one point.

**DC:** Yeah, I always did have a love of basketball. I even had a couple of offers to play at small colleges. But I knew I wasn't good enough to play major-college basketball or go pro. I also didn't have the desire to go that far with it. I still play about two or three times a week. But music was always my main interest. The coach at my school asked me to play, but I didn't want to sacrifice what I had going on with music in bands and at the conservatory just to play ball.

The thing about music was I never really had to work very hard at it. I took lessons and I practiced, but things just sort of happened for me. I'm a person who really just goes with the flow and doesn't try to force anything.



"When you sit behind a kit, there are optimum points of drum, cymbal, and stand placement depending on your physical proportions, and it even has to do with a spiritual plane."





I think most Americans have a hard work ethic and they just want to achieve things for the sake of money, power, and ego. There's nothing wrong with goals and ambition, but it's the motivation behind those goals that I don't quite understand. I think people would be much happier if they just did what they enjoyed doing. The money will come.

**MP:** It is a lot easier to say that when you're in a great band, making lots of money. Have you always been so carefree about life?

**DC:** [laughs] Yeah, I've spent my entire life avoiding jobs and

# Tool Tracks

*Ænima*, Tool's new release, is a personal showcase for Danny Carey's style and strengths as a musician—inventive rhythms, a variety of hand-foot combinations, and a knack for composition. The following are breakdowns of Danny's contributions to many of *Ænima*'s songs, including transcriptions by Carey himself.

**"Stinkfist"**—Carey incorporates singular tom strokes into a tribal groove that syncs up with bassline accents. Though he stepped into these waters sporadically on Tool's previous album, *Undertow*, Carey dives in head-first here, lacing the music with another layer of complexity.

**"Eulogy"**—A low-to-high tom fill sets up a series of connected patterns that culminates with the following beat. This was "chiefly inspired by Maynard's three-against-four vocal pattern throughout the song," Carey says. "Throwing the hi-hat into three just seemed to make it flow a little nicer over the four-bar phrase."



**"H"**—Carey has made a trademark of hypnotic, tribal grooves that seemingly run independent of the guitar lines. But listen late in the song for the subtle connection.

**"Forty Six & 2"**—Near the end of the song, a 32nd-note tom run leads into a double-bass blast and, eventually, a few bars of a triplet-based hand-kick quad pattern. (The quad "sticking" is right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot). Carey calls quads a personal "crutch" that, when anything else eludes him, he can rely on to carry out a song's momentum.

**"Hooker With A Penis"**—Again, another explosive ending, this one warping from bars of 6/16 and 5/8 into straight time.

**"Jimmy"**—Carey uses the toms for his primary backbeat in the chorus and bridge, going to the snare only for accents.

**"Pushit"**—The beat toggles between a rolling 6/4 and a double-time 6/8, building to a fifty-second mosh-friendly climax.

**"Ænima"**—Carey opens the song with a series of time-defying 4/4 beats, moving later into the incessant tom-kick pattern transcribed here. "This beat was just an exercise I used to play around with," Carey says. "The two-against-three in the hands over the bass drum ostinato created the thunderous effect that the song begged for after the light vocal breakdown."

**Basic Pattern:**



**Two-Against-Three Variation:**



**"Third Eye"**—The tune opens with Carey playing over samples and loops, then taking over on kit to lead an extended, free-form musical interlude before closing with an industrial-inspired bash.

**Matt Peiken**



work. I never bought into that way of life because it didn't seem to make people very happy. What's funny is the rest of my family isn't like me in that way at all.

I grew up in a very typical, middle-class American house. My dad was manager for a large insurance company and my mom was a school teacher. I have one older brother and one younger brother, and we were raised to value education. My dad is really into music, though, and my earliest musical memory was when he took me into the music library at the University of Kansas and played *The Planets* by Gustav Hoist. That just blew my mind. I was only a little kid at the time, but it made such an impression on me that, from then on, I think I was musically aware.

My dad also played saxophone a little bit, but he wasn't at all into playing like I was into drumming, and I think it took my

"One of the great things about Tool is that I feel like I can use a lot of my chops and apply enough of my training to keep me satisfied on a technical level, yet the music also has enough emotional power for me to bury myself in."





lost their ass on them, but I got two of them used and they're better than anything else I've seen on the market. The zone intelligence on those pads is amazing, with just a multitude of options and parameters, and there's no limit with whatever I want to do in terms of dynamics or blending sounds.

**MP:** Something else you're known for is

your strong double bass playing. What got you into it?

**DC:** I've been playing double bass since I was a kid, but it had nothing to do with or any of those other guys in the glam bands. In fact, if anything, those guys turned me away from acoustic drums to begin with. I was really into the jazz and fusion thing,

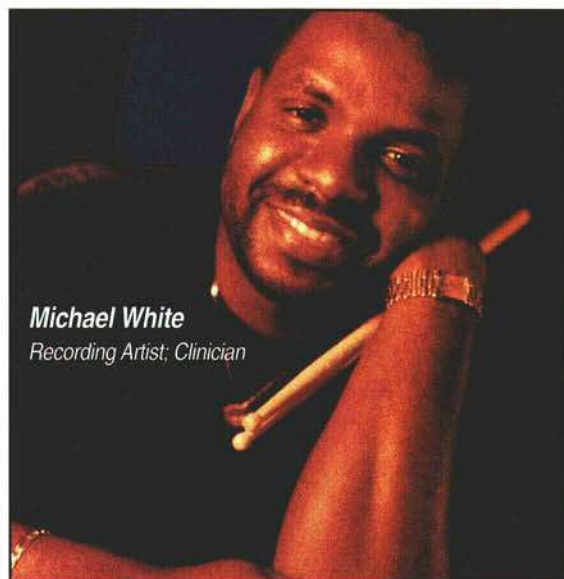
and I got into guys like Cobham and Louie Bellson, especially in high school. That's where my double bass influences came from.

I still love playing jazz when I get the chance, but I don't know if it's something I would like to do on a full-time basis. I really get into jazz when it's real electric, but I'm not of the age yet where jazz thoroughly satisfies me. I like to play things with a little more power to them—while I still have the strength to play it! One of the great things about Tool is that I feel like I can use a lot of my chops and apply enough of my training to keep me satisfied on a technical level, yet the music also has enough emotional power for me to bury myself in.

**MP:** I think your jazz influences come across most in your knack for pushing and pulling a song. Especially on the new record, it seems like you're feeding directly off a guitar riff or bass run at some points and directly off Maynard at others. And it doesn't sound random. It seems like you're very intentional about your parts.

**DC:** I think about those things a lot as we put the songs together, and I'll go back to the tapes to pick up nuances in a song and see if anything jumps out at me. But my parts shift a lot, all the way up to the time we put them on the record.

Sometimes I'll try to bring a foundation to what I feel is the pulse, or maybe I'll want to add some texture by playing off something that's more in the background. In fact, there are some parts, like the bridge



**Michael White**  
Recording Artist; Clinician

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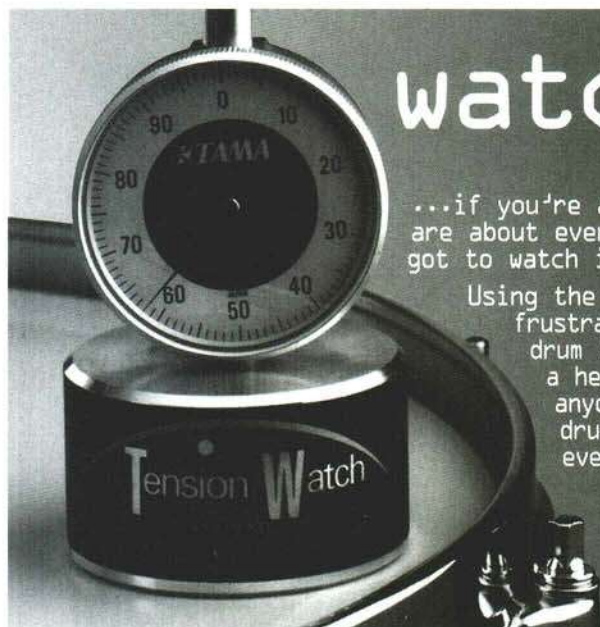
*Michael White's credentials are impeccable. He's toured or recorded with an array of artists: George Benson, Diana Ross, David Sanborn, Maze featuring Frankie Beverly, Whitney Houston, Luther Vandross, Patrice Rushen, Ricki Lee Jones, Stanley Clarke, Earth Wind & Fire, as well as jingles for Coca-Cola, McDonalds, and Budweiser. He's also earned four gold records from his gig with Frankie Beverly and Maze. His diversity is his trademark.*

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of "Forty Six & 2," where I'm trying to give as much air as I can to the guitar and bass, which have this really neat, interacting thing going, and I'm just accenting the end of each bar. Then in "Pushit," there's this part near the end of the song that's almost like heavy swing. It starts with guitar, bass, and drums, and then the guitars cut out for a couple of bars and I just slam into it heavier and Maynard is singing on top of it. Then the guitars come back in and the whole thing just rocks.

One of the things I do a lot is listen to where the highs and lows are in the guitar parts, where the riffs or phrases rise and fall, and I'll shape my parts around that. I might keep the ride pattern constant and move my kick and snare hits around to connect with those highs and lows. It can make for a lot bigger, meatier impact.

**MP:** Some of the songs and segments on *Ænima* seem to stem directly from a given drum part.

**DC:** Yeah, there are certainly parts of songs that came from something I started up. There's this extended triplet pattern in '*Ænima*' that grew out of a pattern where I'm riding with my right hand, playing two kick drums, and using my left hand to accent on the toms. In that case, the bass and guitar are strictly enhancing what I'm doing. There were a couple of things on *Undertow* that were constructed the same way.

But that's how this band works. Maynard will sometimes come into practice with a little melody or phrase in his head, and we'll just start jamming to that. Adam [Jones, guitar] is good for coming up with riffs that will just mushroom into entire songs during a jam. I've done the same thing with my drum beats sometimes, and it just snowballs from there.

It's real organic and it all pretty much happens right here, just from going nuts in this room. There are very few parts, if any, that are written outside rehearsal. We were never good at writing on the road, which is one of the main reasons it took us so long to come out with this record. We tried, but it was strange and very difficult to come up with a comfortable environment to create in. There are always people around and it's very distracting.

**MP:** More so than on *Undertow*, the songs on *Ænima* seem to shift a lot in mood, tempo, time signature.... Do you compose



all these parts intentionally as part of the same song, or do you come up with them at different times and piece them together later on?

**DC:** It's kind of a combination of both. Take a song like "Eulogy," which has this passage near the end where I'm riding 16ths on the hi-hat and opening it every third stroke, sort of a polyrhythm over what I'm doing with the kick and snare. That's something I might have woodshedded without any idea of putting it into a song. Sometimes I'll have an idea for a strange pattern and try to flesh it out on my own, almost like an exercise.

I can't tell you why I chose that particular pattern to go into "Eulogy"—it probably just came out while we were jamming—but it seemed to create a neat transition at that point in the song. The triplet pattern in "*Friend*" is another part that came out of something I'd developed on my own. And it's that sort of woodshedding that really pays off when you're writing songs, because it gives you some tools to draw from. But most of this record didn't come from anything labored or practiced. It was more just a matter of finding a good groove and having everyone fall into that.

Something I did on this record that I'd never really done before was incorporate electronics into the general beat. On "Third Eye" I had some loops I'd created on my Simmons sampler, and I synced them up with the drum machine and played along with them. I just got into the Simmons thing at the end of doing *Undertow*, and I used them on "Disgustipated," but I've been getting a lot more into the electronics again since then. It's not so much for loops, but just to have access to samples and more sounds.

**MP:** How did getting a new bass player affect you and your approach to rhythm for this album?

**DC:** We were about four songs into the writing when Paul [D'Amour] left. He'd had a shift in his musical taste away from the heavy, powerful riffs, and he wanted to do something more experimental. He's a guitarist at heart, anyway, and he's doing more of that in his new band.

Justin Chancellor, our new bass player, is more of a low-end player, where Paul almost played bass like a guitar, which is what helped give us such an interesting

sound; he had that high-end cut. Justin goes more for a low-end punch, which has us sounding kind of fatter on this record. Justin wrote most of the riffs on "Forty Six & 2," which is a really cool song.

It's a little strange for me because Justin feels time a little differently than Paul does. I don't know if that's because Justin's from England or what, but we're still trying to find each other and find common ground when it comes to locking in. By the time this article comes out, things will be a lot different. But at this point, we haven't played together all that much. We wrote these songs, but we've only played four shows together. I guess we have yet to take the true test of locking in.

**MP:** One of the more interesting things you said about *Undertow* was that you actually tuned your drums to match particular pitches coming from the guitars. Did you do the same thing for *Ænima*?

**DC:** Somewhat. The whole thing behind that is about making things more powerful. It's not that you can really hear the difference if you don't tune to specific pitches, but when you do, it makes the drums sound bigger and fuller. With some kits, I think it would be impossible to do that, and you'd drive yourself crazy trying to make your drums match the tones of the guitars. I mean, it's hard enough just keeping drums in tune. But most of our songs are in D, and I've been lucky enough to have drums that tune easily to the triads in the key of D.

My set was kind of a hodgepodge for this record. The kick drums were actually old Sonor *Phonic Pluses*, 18x24s. I just got a Sonor *Designer Series* kit that I used on some of the record, and I took more time in picking and choosing which drums to use for particular songs. That kind of slows things down a bit, because every time you change drums, you have to move mic's, and it just takes away from the creative harmony. But I was lucky enough to have a great tech working with me, and it went pretty smoothly.

**MP:** When you're laying down your drum tracks, are you fairly loose and easygoing about the whole thing, or do you focus and concentrate really intently, psyching yourself up?

**DC:** It's not like a psyching-up thing, it's more of a meditation, where I try to remove myself from the room and bring things in that will help bring out as much



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of my subconscious as possible. That's why we brought in the huge, old Enochian magic board that sits behind my kit, just so we could try to set up the proper mental and spiritual environment to record and create in. So the music ends up being just a postcard, a picture of what happened in that room on that day.

It's not that I need things like that to play music. But we'll do whatever we believe we need to do to put ourselves in the proper frame of mind, whether it's objects or fragrances to strike our subconscious, high-tech computer art—whatever. It's not a crutch; it's a choice.

It only took me four or five days to put down all my drum tracks this time, which was a lot quicker than we expected. And it wouldn't have even taken that long except that I hit pretty hard and I like using thin heads in the studio, so we were changing heads between every two or three takes—and always between songs—and it's just another chore you have to go through. But to get the live, bright sound I like, that's just something I have to do.

**MP:** I imagine you cut your tracks first, so I'm wondering whether you had any pref-

erence about the order of songs for recording.

**DC:** Yeah, and it all had to do with stamina. We'd rehearsed a lot in the process of writing over the past few months, but it wasn't like touring, so my chops weren't all that strong. But you have to rise to that level when you're tracking because that's when the drums should sound the best. I've always been of the belief that you have to hit a drum hard to make it sound good, especially in louder sections. That sets the whole shell into vibration instead of just the head, and the sound is just so much more complete and satisfying. But when you hit hard and play the kind of music we do, it can really wear you out, especially when you're not in touring shape, and you can hear the difference between the first take and the third take.

So what I did was get my feet wet with some of the easier songs before going into the songs I knew would be more involved and demanding and take more time to get right. But a lot of it depended on the mood of the day, too, and all of that played a role in what ended up on the record. Like I said, I don't etch my parts in stone, and if you

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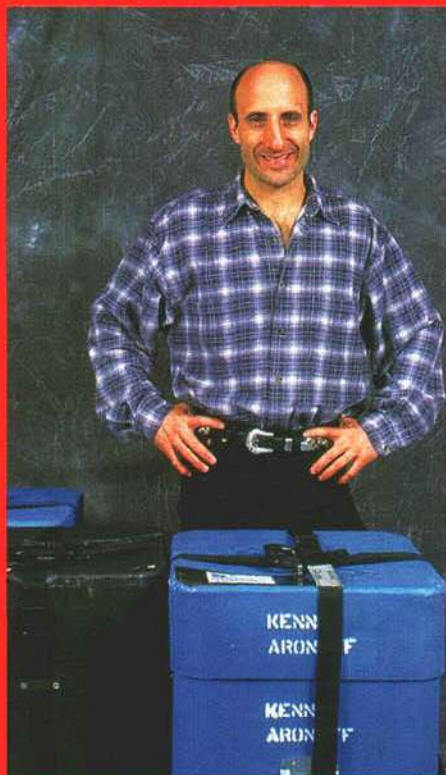


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were to go back to the raw tape to hear the takes of a song like "Forty Six & 2," you could tell there's a lot of spontaneous energy there.

**MP:** How do you think you've changed or grown as a drummer since cutting *Undertow*?

**DC:** Some of the changes happened when I got hooked up with Blair Blake, who's another really good drum tech who also happens to be a strong mathematician. He helped me set up my kit in different ways and make it more harmonic, not only with

my physical proportions, but in a mathematical sense as far as setting up my stands in the right ratio of the "golden section" [a geometric equation].

When you sit behind a kit, there are optimum points of drum, cymbal, and stand placement depending on your physical proportions, and it even has to do with a spiritual plane. I'm 6' 5", and people who sit behind my drums always say they can't play them, probably because of how high the drums are. But I think I sit pretty low compared to most people, and Blair helped

me set up the kit not just for my height, but also to take advantage of my energy.

My toms are set up in a harmonic fashion, to where all my energy flows uninterrupted. There's a symmetry to the way my toms are set up, and it's significant that I have five toms, a number that represents masculinity. Then I've got six six-sided drums [Simmons pads], which represents the female side. It just has to do with balance.


I've studied some ancient geometry, and I feel this doesn't make as big a difference musically as it does for me personally. But that's why I try to bring a lot of these ideas into my natural environment, with all the geometric shapes and paintings on the walls and ceiling. It's all about setting my drums up so that I don't get in the way of the music, so I'm just a *channel* for the music.

**MP:** Tell me about the psychological side of this band. Adam's into scientology, and just by looking around your place, I know you're personally intrigued with magic and certain dark elements. I was just wondering how those influences affect your music.

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**DC:** There's definitely an intensity and power there that has a lot more to do with a mood or scene we're trying to create than just with being sonically heavy. I think we like to dig into people's minds a little more, strike a nerve and make people think. There are bands that are maybe louder and faster and play in a deeper register than we do, but to me, that's almost more comical and stupid than it is heavy. We're just lucky enough that we're four people with similar visions and goals as far as the music is concerned.

**MP:** Do you see yourself branching into other projects or groups in addition to what you have going with Tool?

**DC:** I'm actually working on a side project called ZAUM, which deals more in an electronic medium. It's electronic as far as the instruments and the sounds being pumped to the speakers, but it has more of a human interface controlling it all. The term "ZAUM" comes from a group of artists from the early nineteenth century who felt that by doing their art, they were going to spark evolution. And along with

that, new emotions would be created, and ZAUM was going to be their transcendental language of the future.

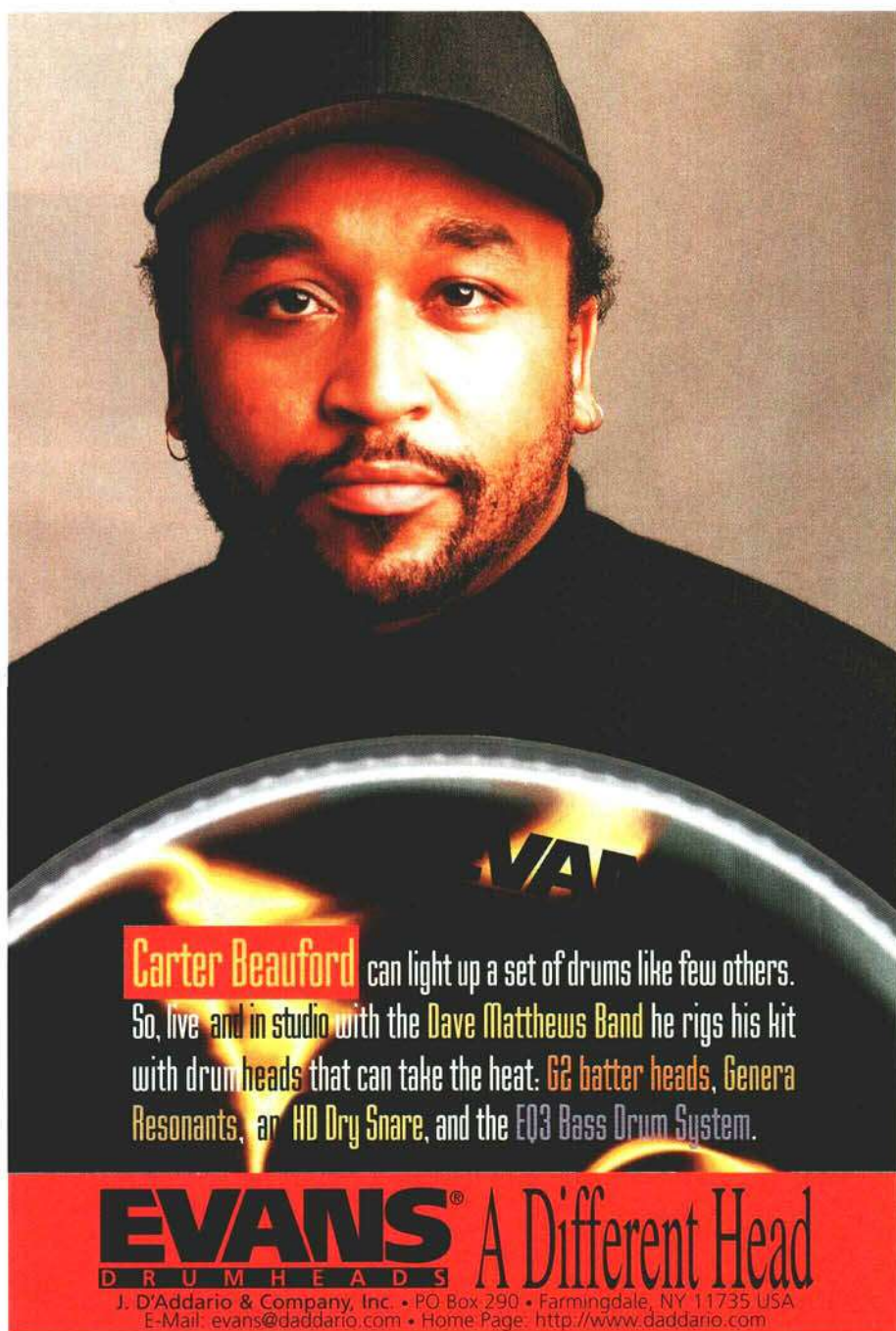
We've done a little recording and played a couple of shows, but it's still in its infancy. We're very improv-based, and it's all about textures and spaces and aural planes. We have tapes and loops running, and we're playing on top of them. Tool is kind of getting more into the electronic thing, too, and you can hear it on the new record. But ZAUM is that way to the extreme, and it really satisfies my need to explore this area of music more.

So much of the electronic music I hear is computer-controlled, and that can be a beautiful thing, too. I've always been a huge fan of Kraftwerk and Skinny Puppy. Some of those programmers are just geniuses. But I like to hear more of a human element triggering the samples and beats, pushing and pulling the tempos a bit.

I'm pretty excited about what we've started with ZAUM, but with the Tool tour coming up, I'm not going to be able to dedicate any time to it for a while. But Tool is a really special thing that's hard to describe. I think we gravitated toward each other because we think a lot alike as far as art and life go. When we first found each other, it was all about personal artistic desire, not about being a certain kind of band, and I think that has a lot to do with our success.

We didn't have any ideals about "making it" or jumping on some sort of fashion game. It's a matter of making art first, and that's never changed. We just make music for ourselves, and I think because of how genuine we are with that, people are able to get more out of it. I think we've grown a lot artistically, in terms of being able to express ourselves, and that's why I'm so proud of the new record.

We're not the kind of band that thinks too far ahead about how many more records we'll make together or things like that, but we think similarly, and we're all in such a zone right now that as long as we just keep growing and developing and inspiring ourselves, we'll continue this beautiful thing we have and see how it evolves.



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