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What's Your Favorite Danny Carey Track?



I'd say "Ticks and Leeches." He incorporates ghost notes into the main groove, which you don't really hear too often in Tool's music. Also, the intro is a beast, and the song's vibe is highly distinguishable from all of the other songs on *Lateralus*. It's really fun to play and can help you get more comfortable with 7/4 as well as with odd accent patterns.

Steve French

"Rosetta Stoned" is truly inspiring for its complexity, yet Carey maintains musicality and perfect interaction with Justin Chancellor's bass and Adam Jones' guitar. It's indeed a masterpiece!

André Sarmiento Ferreira

"Rosetta Stoned" from *10,000 Days*. Carey's genius, power, and attention to detail are on full display here. The five-against-three polyrhythmic groove still blows my mind, and I like how it creates tension in the song.

Anthony Dio

For me it has to be "Lateralus." That song made me want to play drums every bit as much as John Bonham or Mitch Mitchell did when I was a kid. Carey is on my drumming Mount Rushmore. I'm so thrilled for this new album, which will surely feature historical work from all involved.

Jim Rita

During the last half of "Eulogy" [*Ænima*], Carey plays a three-note 16th hi-hat grouping over a standard rock beat, and the first time I heard that I was blown away. Not only is it an interesting drum part on its own, but it grounds the vocals and guitar with a groove that you can follow. That may have been the moment I decided to learn about polyrhythms and how to apply them musically.

Andrew Bennett

B. J. Wilson

Thank you so much for your feature on B. J. Wilson [September 2019]. As a young player, B. J. was one of the drummers I admired most. His band Procol Harum was one of those groups in the '60s that had a definitive sound that was so unique and enhanced by the drummer himself. And you're right, nobody plays 6/8 like B. J. did on Joe Cocker's version of "With a Little Help from My Friends."

I was sorry to hear about how his life ended, and it reminded me of how my sobriety had saved me. Again, thank you so much for bringing B. J. Wilson to the readers of *MD*. Some will have known him, and I hope many others now do, too.

Liberty DeVitto

"Forty Six & 2" from *Ænima*. It's the first time Tool gave the drummer some on record, and Danny took it way out and back to the crushing riff. Each new section's variation built on the previous one.

Brent Frison

I'd probably choose "The Grudge" from *Lateralus*. The song starts with a bang and ends with it. Besides, all the odd time signature rhythms are beautifully incorporated with the wonderful chords and vocals. It's godly.

Rishabh Asthana

I'd say "The Grudge" because of Carey's use of all sorts of different polyrhythms, dynamics, grooves, and orchestrations. He was also being so conscious of the rest of the band. And the killer solo at the end makes this one of the most

challenging and musically engaging Tool drum parts.

Dan Caruso

"Rosetta Stoned" from *10,000 Days* has some of the most amazing yet powerful drum patterns I've ever heard. The coordination in the interlude is out of this world, which is very fitting for the track. It's definitely one of his most inspiring drum parts.

Jake Klossing

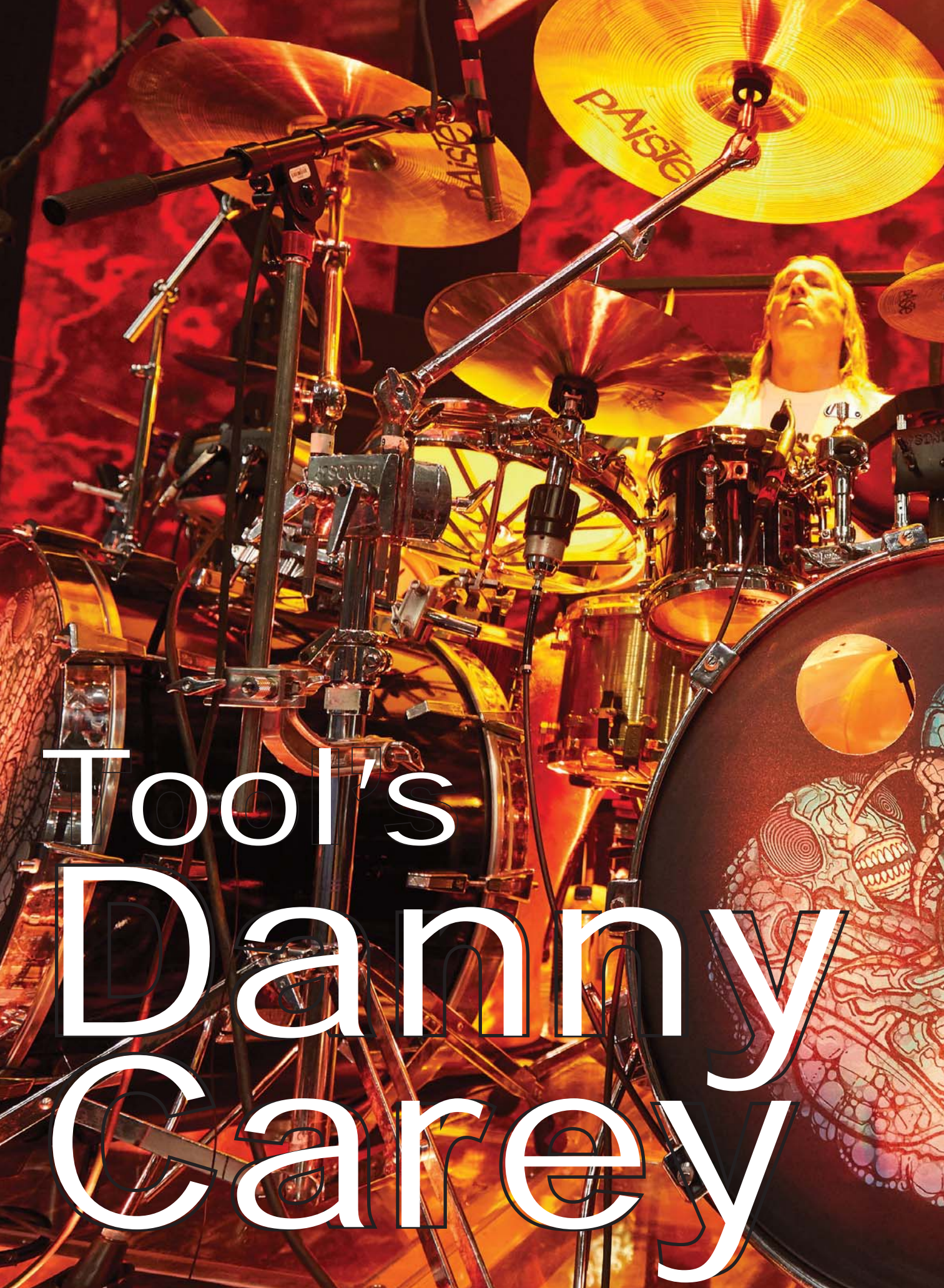
On "Parabola" from *Lateralus*, Carey's groove, sound, and energy are incredible. There's no single hit or sound that's made without purpose. Everything he plays suits the song perfectly.

Bartosz Dudek



Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and keep an eye out for next month's question.





Tool's Danny Carey



It's been thirteen years since Tool's last album, 2006's *10,000 Days*, but the faithful need wait no more, because Tool, and a never-better Danny Carey, are back.

With their new album, *Fear Inoculum*, the band continues down the road they've traveled since their early days. The super-aggressive metal riffage and angsty screaming of the band's first offerings might have become somewhat subdued as the years have gone by, but that doesn't mean the new record's sound is any less dynamic or powerful. In fact, Carey's thunderous tribal tom grooves and mind-bending odd-meter patterns have never before been played with as much conviction or sounded more complete.

Tracks like "Pneuma," "Descending," and "7empest" are filled with twist after turn, conventional song structure be damned, with Carey at the center of the storm, providing the heaviest, most massive bottom possible. Sure, there are lots of fast rolls and double bass that are common to metal-related music, but Carey and Tool have always been just a little bit different. Carey even gets his own solo percussion track, "Chocolate Chip Trip," on which he incorporates gongs and bells, among other sounds. Check out the way he rips over the track's ending seven section with fluidity and authority like only he can.

And for those who feared that the band would succumb to modern pressures and update their sound to be more palatable, rest easy. Tool has never been interested in brevity, with most of the new album's proper songs coming in at over ten minutes in length. For fans who've waited years for new material, this is a welcome detail, and it allows drummers that much more opportunity to hear Carey do his idiosyncratic thing, including the unique approach he has used in the past where he plays rock-pattern backbeats with the snares off.

But while Tool has been in no rush to release albums, they have kept relatively active with live performances. And Carey himself has stayed busy recording with assorted groups and showing up to play with friends around L.A.

There's Carey on the rock/fusion group Volto! record *Incitare* from 2013, and on 2018's *Legend of the Seagullmen* with Brent Hinds from Mastodon. And if you want to hear Carey tackle some swing and jazz fusion standards, check out the upcoming album by the Webb All Stars.

But it's with Tool where Carey's bread is buttered, and as the band prepares to tour in support of *Fear Inoculum*, the drummer is focused on expanding his tonal palette, and, as he mentions below, his vocabulary. With new synth toys and his Mandala triggering system used to conjure up tabla sounds and any other color he likes, Carey has a world of rhythm, melody, and harmony at his disposal. He'll need it, as Tool's involved music and intense live show are brought to the welcoming masses.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Travis Shinn



MD: Is the band dynamic different now as opposed to when you guys started?

Danny: The roles in the band really haven't changed much at all since we first met. It's been pretty consistent. We all have our job to do, and we have enough respect for each other to let one another do it. So no one's going to come to me and tell me what to play on the drums, and I'm not going to go to Adam or Maynard or Justin and tell them what to play. There's a lot of mutual respect going on, and we're able to meet where we meet and not question it that much and trust that the result is going to sound like Tool. That's the beauty of the band. It gives it the power of everybody believing in all

their parts, and that way it has the biggest emotional impact that we can achieve.

MD: In previous interviews you've mentioned that you would jam together and let the tape roll and go back to revisit the magic parts. Is that still the same?

Danny: Yeah, it's a very organic process like that. It starts with jams, and the jam can start with my drum beat, or with one of Adam's or Justin's riffs, and then we build upon that. You get inspiration along the way, and sometimes when it doesn't come immediately, we always keep tape rolling, and we go back and find those jewels. We listen a lot when we're not in the room together, so it's an ongoing process. We

rehearse three to four hours a day, Monday through Thursday, and we spend a lot of time listening outside the rehearsal space to keep things building and moving along.

MD: When listening outside the space, what kind of feedback are you giving and getting?

Danny: We don't really discuss it much outside of the room. We wait until the next day, and we go back in and talk about parts. We're pretty much on our own until we're in the room together, and that's where the melting pot occurs. We all need our space to kind of let things sink in on their own, and then when we're together, we share.

MD: When you're changing parts, if you



want to extend a section or change a rhythmic feel, is it “best idea wins,” or is Adam’s tune his own and you have to walk gingerly about what you want to contribute to it?

Danny: Well, good riffs are good riffs, and good beats or whatever. Usually those are the building blocks. The parts that we come up with on top of them are all our own. Very seldom are we playing in unison. The resulting sound, as you hear on the new record, there’s not much of us playing the same thing at the same time. We find parts that are complementary. There’s more of a counterpoint situation, so it leaves it open for us to express ourselves with each other.



MD: Now that it’s been such a long time since your last album, and technology advances so quickly, was the process of recording *Fear Inoculum* any different?

Danny: Not really for us. I mean, Pro Tools has gotten better and this and that, but I [still] record all my drum tracks to 2" tape. It’s an old-school way of doing it, and I don’t think any computer can beat that at this point. I get in the best room I can find, and this time we did it in the D room at A&M, which is now called Henson Recording Studios. The magic is to take care of the room and treat it so you can take advantage of it and use the best microphones and get the best performance possible. And I get that when I record to 2" tape with great pre-amps. We’ll dump it all to Pro Tools, but to capture drums at their best, analog is still the way to go at this point.

MD: On “Pneuma,” there’s so much going on, with odd times, some four-on-the-floor action that’s almost dancy, and then something that sounds like tabla, and then a tribal tom part followed by some pummeling double bass. Do you remember composing that or tracking it?

Danny: That one started with Justin’s bass riff, and I’m always trying to find the heaviest groove possible to make it have an illusion of, like you said, being dancy. Or being in 4/4—whatever it takes to find the heaviest pulse I can out of it. So I always try to accentuate that. When it opened up into that part you’re talking about, the tabla, that’s actually an old Wavedrum, the one that looks like a toilet seat. [laughs] And that’s the tabla sound that’s in that thing. And I thought it would open up the song more if I used that as the ride cymbal, so I moved my right hand off my ride and onto that thing.

MD: On “Invincible,” there’s an intro in seven with a percussive quarter-note overdub, and then the introduction of some high-pitched toms continuing through the groove.

Danny: The whole groove of that is in seven, but I used that Wavedrum again. I’m not sure what the starting point was on the Wavedrum, I just manipulated that sound quite a bit. So I put that on, where it’s hitting every third 16th over the top of it, so it’s like three over seven the whole time. The whole tune was based on a three-against-seven idea. That way it meets up every third time, but not really on the 8s of sevens that the tune is based in. But it has a nice flow over the top of it, and it keeps the energy moving forward. It makes it kinetic, I think, and keeps people interested. When we played it live on this last tour, when I came in with the little kalimba thing at the very beginning

of it in that three, people started clapping to that, and I thought, *Wow, that’s kind of neat; I just got people to clap three over seven.* [laughs] It’s a good feeling.

MD: Why can’t you just write some AC/DC–style drum parts for yourself so you could relax once in a while?

Danny: [laughs] That’d be nice. I wish I could. We tried to make these songs shorter, but they all ended up being like ten minutes long on average.

MD: “Chocolate Chip Trip” is your solo interlude. There are gongs and bells, an electronic groove in seven, and then a big solo over the seven. How’d you piece that together?

Danny: We were tracking another song, and we had a break in between, and some of the guys were eating. I’d been doing something similar to that live, and I got a good sequence dialed up. It took me an hour or so

“Increasing my vocabulary is what I’m all about. I just want to be able to hold more conversations on a higher level on my instrument.”

to fine-tune it, and I thought, *This is cool.* The other guys were still gone, but I was ready to play, so I just turned it on, and it was one take, live. The bell-y things at the beginning, I dialed those in with four different faders on my synthesizer, and once I got that groove established, I sat down and played to the seven groove over the top of it. And that was it. It was a spur-of-the-moment improv.

It was kind of my ode to Billy Cobham.

I really love the *Spectrum* record from back in the old days, and he did an intro like that on maybe the ARP 2600—I'm not sure. But I've always loved Billy's playing, it really inspired me. So I put my little twist on it and went that way with it. And I think it came out pretty good. It was nice because when you're mixing a record, everybody gets their space. You have to carve out frequencies for each other to make it work. And I got the best drum sound on the whole record on that track, because I didn't have to make room for anybody else. I could just make my shit sound huge, and our engineer Joe Barresi did a great job on it. I'm really happy with the drum mix on that.

MD: What's the state of your electronics these days? In 2001, after *Lateralus*, you expressed frustration with the limitations of the current electronics for drums. It's twenty years later. Has stuff come a long way?

Danny: They've come a long way, but they still have their shortcomings. You

**"Very seldom
are we playing
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There's more of
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for us to express
ourselves with
each other."**

have to accept them for the instrument they are. They're not going to be a real drum, and I don't need [them to be] real drums. My Sonor kit sounds amazing. I believe there are no samples that will sound better than my kit.

I use [electronics] to sample all kinds of other experimental sources and also traditional sources, like African djembes and congas and weird percussion instruments, so I don't have to carry all this stuff around. I can sample those as best I can on my Pro Tools rig, and then I throw them into Native Instruments Battery, and then the Mandala pads I use are the best triggering interface that I could possibly get.

[Developer] Vince De Franco has improved incredibly upon the pads since the first Mandalas. Mine have come a long way, and they feel much more responsive, like a real drum, but they still have all the zone intelligence that I can apply in high-tech ways, such as panning and filters if need be. A lot of times I pretty much vary the pitch from the center to the edge, like a real drum,

Carey's Setup

Drums: Sonor (except where noted)

- 8x14 snare*
- 8x8 tom
- 14" Remo Rototom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 18x24 bass drum
- 18x22 bass drum
- Mandala custom zone dynamic trigger pads
- Korg Wavedrum (original 1994 version)
- Roland HandSonic

*Alternate snares: 8x14 Paiste Spirit of 2002 bronze, 8x14 VK bronze, 8x14 Dunnett titanium eight-lug in purple

Hardware: Sonor heavy-duty cymbal, tom, gong, and snare stands; Roc-N-Soc throne; Pearl Redline Eliminator remote hi-hat and bass drum pedals

Sticks: Vic Firth Danny Carey signature model (wood tip), T1 General timpani mallets

Heads: Evans Coated Power Center reverse snare batter and Hazy 300 snare side, G2 Clear tom batters and G1 Clear resonants, EQ3 Clear bass drum batter side and EQ3 "Inked by Evans" with custom art and 3" air vent front, G1 Coated on Rototom

Cymbals: Paiste (except where noted)

- 14" Sound Edge hi-hats
- 7.5" 2002 cup chime #2
- 8" Signature bell
- 6" 2002 Accent
- 8" 3000 bell
- 8" Signature Dark Energy splash (inverted) top/10" Signature Dark Energy splash bottom
- 22" 2002 Novo China
- 18" Signature Full crash
- 18" Signature Power crash
- 20" Signature Power crash
- 22" Danny Carey Signature "Monad" Purple Dry Heavy ride
- 22" Signature Thin China
- 18" Noiseworks Dark Buzz China bottom/15" trash top
- 38" and 60" Symphonic gongs
- 8" Hammerax square accent
- 6" Hammerax bell

Electronics: Custom Mandala brain, Native Instruments Battery software running sampling and triggering on Apple computer, Electro-Acoustic Research (E.A.R.) custom Eurorack modular synth, Drum Tech F.A.T. KAT trigger pedals

Accessories: Heil mics, PureSound by D'Addario snare wires





like a real conga. But there's always room for improvement, and I'm working with Vince all the time, so it's an ongoing process.

MD: Besides the Mandala pads, what's changed regarding your live shows and gear? Has anything evolved in a way you didn't expect? Or by this point in your career, is it, "If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it?"

Danny: It's kind of like an "If it ain't broke" scenario. I just try to increase my vocabulary more than increasing what I'm playing on. The textures that I can use on my electronic pads are limitless, so that's an ever-evolving thing. In every song, I try to come up with new textures to complement that in the best way possible. But my basic drumkit still has a couple of rack toms. Right now it's an 8" Ebony tom, and then I have a 14" Rototom for the other rack. And then 14" and 16" floor toms, and 22" and 24" kick drums. And that main core of my kit hasn't changed for a long time, other than maybe some sizes or depths of toms. And I'm comfortable with that. All the little accentual things around the kit are also





an ever-evolving thing, but they don't change too drastically. My cymbal setup is pretty consistent, other than changing some thicknesses here and there, or changing a ride out or using thinner crashes if it's a lighter tune. Whatever the tune desires. It's more about playing for the song

now than drum solos or something like that.

MD: And you have a new kit you're excited about?

Danny: I'm excited about this new kit Sonor is making. And [longtime Tool artist collaborator] Alex Grey is painting the drums for me, which is really cool.

I designed all the shells and spoke with all my drum hero guys and picked their brains to come up with how to do them. And I came up with the best thing that could happen. I love the sound of the original Sonor Signature drums so much, but I did use a different hardwood on the inside of

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Danny Carey

it. And these have ebony, which is really hard to come by. But I sandwiched it with different layers of beechwood because I always liked the low end I got out of my old Sonor Phonic Plus kit. It had that resonant, low-end power, and that's what I like to get out of my toms. The higher toms I made thicker, so they have an intense attack, and an intense fundamental frequency that'll cut through Marshall stacks. As the drums get bigger, the shells get thinner. For the lower floor toms, I used reinforcement hoops to add even more low end and made the shells more resonant so they still have the punch and the power—like old Ludwig drums and other drums from the 1960s were made with the reinforcement hoops. And I did that with the kick drums, too. And man, it works. These drums sound amazing. I can't wait to get out there and beat the hell out of them.

And Alex is in touch with some of the greatest shamans in the world, so he contacted one of his friends in Borneo, a medicine man for a head-hunting tribe. And we're going to do a ritual, as heavy as possible, to christen the drums and give them life. That way we'll be guaranteed to tear everyone's head off.

MD: And you're still using those tapered sticks that are easier to grip?

Danny: I swear by those. Besides being easier to hang on to, it transfers the weight a little bit further out in front on the stick. So ergonomically, it feels really good. If you're playing heavier music, it's the way to go.

MD: Have you experienced any drumming-related health issues from playing heavy music for so long?

Danny: Knock on wood, I've been so lucky. But I'm really meticulous about my warm-up before I play, when I know I'm going into a somewhat athletic experience. I hit hard. And I usually go through three snare drum heads a night. But I warm up for at least a half hour every time before I go on, doing old rudimental exercises that I've done for years, so I'm good to go on the first tune. And I've never had any carpal tunnel problems or tendinitis or anything. Any time I haven't warmed up and I just sit down and go in and try to rip, man, I feel it.

MD: What's your warm-up routine?

Danny: I have a little practice snare pad, and I just go through old rudimental solos and sticking patterns. And I'll put on music I like and jam over it. And right before I go onstage, I jump rope for a minute or so, and that works my feet up enough.

MD: Talk about playing backbeats without the snares on. You've been doing this for a

while, and it has a distinctive effect. What's your reasoning behind it? You just like the sound of it?

Danny: I think it's more complementary that way. Some of the Tool stuff gets pretty intricate, and you don't need to be bombastic about it. It also gives you space. If the verses are chugging along, you don't need to be so out in front and on top of everything. You can maybe carry more of a conversation. And then when it hits the chorus, I can switch them on, and the snares pop in and cut through. It leaves you somewhere to go compositionally, and I try to go with that idea more than anything else. But I do like the sound of it. And the snares I use are pretty heavy-duty bronze drums that are 8" deep. And the way I hit it, it still has a nice cut to it. I don't feel like I need to get the sizzle of snares on top of that unless the song calls for it.

MD: When you throw those snares on in "7empest," it has a big effect. It definitely goes somewhere.

Danny: Yeah, it's a powerful tune. It's actually in twenty-one, but it's three sevens, so I can play in three, or I can play in seven, or I can mix it up with different time signatures over the top of it. It's interesting to experiment with. I love playing that song. And it evolves live all the time.

MD: It has a King Crimson-esque quality to it.

Danny: The intro is King Crimson-sounding for sure, the counterpoint. Adam came up with that little riff, and to make the counterpoint I played the same thing but just half time. So it meets up every other time. Then he goes half time and I go to double time. And then we join together, and that's kind of the way the intro worked out. It has a nice flow to it, and depending on the stereo you're listening to it on, it kind of jerks your head in different directions. [laughs]

MD: You've been involved with some side projects over the years, including the Danny Carey Trio.

Danny: I love playing with [guitarist] Jamie Kime. We play together in the Doug Webb band and several other projects.

MD: The Doug Webb band is a swinging thing?

Danny: Doug and [keyboardist] Mitch Forman have played straight-ahead stuff and fusion forever. When I go to that gig, I never know what's going to happen. Doug calls tunes out of his ass. A lot of times he'll say, "Don't worry about it, it's swinging. Here's the tempo—one, two, three, four..." [laughs] But there are a lot of standards I know, like Herbie Hancock tunes or Tony Williams

Danny Carey

tunes. Freddie Hubbard. Some of it swings, some of it doesn't. The reason I do it is to try to grow and increase my vocabulary. I dig playing with those cats. A couple of the heaviest I know.

MD: Is *Volto!* done? There was an album released in 2013.

Danny: Well, [guitarist] John Ziegler had some health issues. But he's battling back and taking on students, and his fingers are getting back in shape. We'll be resurrecting *Volto!* as soon as possible. In the meantime, we may do a few gigs because he and Jamie were really tight. So maybe a few *Volto!* gigs with Jamie playing guitar instead of John. But I can't wait till John can do it again because he was the main composer in that band.

MD: And you were recently on the *Legend of the Seagullmen* release. Was that a one-off?

Danny: I don't know. I just knocked out two drum tracks for new tunes before I left to go on a Tool tour, and I think [guitarist] Jimmy Hayward is composing more. We're planning on doing some more stuff. It's a lot of fun, and it's great to be able to play with Brent Hinds and all the crazy characters involved. We always have good people to jam with, and it's a good outlet for all of us.

MD: And with the Danny Carey Trio, on YouTube videos it looked like you were having fun jamming on Sabbath's "Hand of Doom" and Crimson's "One More Red Nightmare." It's more grooving than we're used to from you.

Danny: That's the music I grew up on, so you can't go wrong there. It's always fun to play those tunes. Pete Griffin is a great bass player, too, so I'll play anything with that guy at any time. He and Jamie played with

Zappa Plays Zappa all those years together. So they're like peas in a pod. They can play pretty much anything technically that they want to. They're a pleasure to play with. They help increase my vocabulary, and like I said, that's what I'm all about. I just want to be able to hold more conversations on a higher level on my instrument, and they help me a lot in that way.

MD: You mentioned long ago that you were working out of Gary Chester's book *The New Breed*. You've been at this a while. Are there any methodologies that you've recently used to increase your vocabulary?

Danny: The tabla thing has helped me quite a bit, and I still try to hang out with [tabla teacher] Aloke Dutta as much as I can. I've been working on playing odd times or just different times over other time signatures and having the balls to go with it and let them meet up where they'll meet up and keep track of that in my head...it's more of a metric discipline, I suppose. I've been working on that a lot. It's helped give me more things to say. At certain times, vocalists, without even knowing it, start singing in three or four or whatever. So if I can do that with one of my limbs while keeping the groove going, it helps the song take off. And that might help transition into the chorus. That's the drummer's job, to set up the next part that's coming, in a creative way. That's what I try to do all the time when I'm working on songs with my bandmates.

MD: You did something like that on "Eulogy" from 1996's *Ænima*, where the hi-hats are mimicking the vocal rhythm.

Danny: Totally. That was one of the first times I ever really kind of got that together. That was a lucky thing in a way. It made

sense in the song at the time. And I thought it worked really well, so I've been trying to develop that aspect of my playing at a higher level. I don't know if it's working or not. We'll see. [laughs]

MD: Besides art and books and basketball, what else inspires your creativity? Dance? Film? Some music that would surprise fans?

Danny: I'm still trying to listen to a lot of stuff. There's a lot of music to discover. I've been listening to more electronic experimental stuff lately because I've really been into the synthesizer world over the last couple of years. [Go to dannycarey.com / shop and check out his self-published book on synths, *Remember the Future*.] That's one thing that has changed in my setup onstage: I have two synths, and I can noodle around and make some textural things happen that way. It's really inspiring to me to hear where creative people can go electronically. And I'm not really talking about dance music. It's more on the academic side of creative synthesizer music, more compositional and classical, experimental-based.

MD: Besides touring behind the new Tool album, what's in your near future?

Danny: I'm going to try to do an album with Jamie and Pete Griffin, because I really enjoy doing that. And I'll start working on an album that's based on the idea of "Chocolate Chip Trip," with a synthesizer, maybe have it more melodic and have actual tunes. I had a lot of fun doing that. I've been increasing my synthesizer arsenal to a crazy level, so I've got lots of directions I can go with it. I'm looking forward to experimenting and traveling off into that world.



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