



Photo: Robert

Matthews On Beauford: So Much To Say

"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 overplay 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]

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