

Edwin McCain

More Than M e | | o w

Edwin McCain may be best known for his 1997 smash "I'll Be," but his fans are quick to point out there's more to the South Carolina singer/songwriter than such delicate ballads. McCain's latest Lava/Atlantic release proves their point: *Messenger* is an eclectic collection that leaps from immaculately crafted acoustic numbers to full-bore rock anthems.

McCain's acoustic rhythm style is as powerful and dynamic as his songwriting. He's no soft-touch strummer. "I bang the guitar hard," he chuckles.

McCain's six-string sidekick used to be a Yamaha APX6. "I played it for five years on the road, and it was absolutely the most indestructible thing ever," he says. But Edwin recently presented that guitar as a tribute gift to his South Carolina pals, Hootie & the Blowfish, and it now hangs in their office.

McCain's latest Yamaha acoustic is a CJ32, a jumbo-sized model built to withstand a powerful attack. "A lot of guitars get overwhelmed when you play them aggressively and their intonation gets kind of weird," notes Edwin. "But the Yamaha definitely holds its tuning and always maintains a nice midrange. It's such a sturdy, well-made, beautiful guitar." Until recently the CJ32 was available only as a high-end custom order. But thanks in part to McCain's enthusiasm, Yamaha will launch a handcrafted production model at Winter NAMM 2001.

Onstage, McCain usually combines the output of the guitar's built-in piezo electric pickup with a miked sound. The direct signal goes through a preamp and gets a touch of compression and reverb before reaching the mixing board. But McCain says he sometimes dispenses with electronics altogether: "I've played a couple of small theaters where I've used no amplification at all, just me and the CJ32 and it's been great. It's a challenge, but it's such a great, natural way of communicating music to people."

McCain has yet to try the CJ32 in the studio. "I didn't get it 'till after we finished *Messenger*, so you're not hearing it there," he explains. "But I'm definitely going to mic it up for the next album."

That's the plan, anyway. But first he must pry the guitar away from his musician dad, Watt McCain. "I loaned it to him, and he's just freaked out over it," laughs Edwin. "He plays it every week in church. Now I don't know if I'm ever going to get it back."



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Edwin with the new Yamaha CJ32



APX6
An early McCain favorite

CJ32

The CJ32, previously only available in Japan from the custom shop, has garnered the undivided attention of numerous acoustic artists. Its larger body provides incredible acoustic sound and projection. The new CJ32, the latest addition from Yamaha Music Craft in Hamamatsu, Japan, will arrive at Winter NAMM 2001 and will feature a flamed sycamore back and sides and be the first Yamaha acoustic to feature a maple neck. Also watch for the acoustic electric CJX32.

Shania Twain's

Groove Regulator

They call him "the groove regulator."

After a decade in Nashville, JD Blair's flawless time and seemingly effortless feel have earned the drummer an eclectic list of credits that includes work with everyone from master tunesmith Lyle Lovett to free-form bass freak Victor Wooten. Now he's holding down his highest profile gig yet as touring drummer for pop-country goddess Shania Twain.

Blair himself seems to have little patience for stylistic labels. "I dig pretty much everything," he says. "Jazz, funk, salsa, classical, old country, new country, new-new country." He says the Twain audition was a stress-free situation: "I got called in at the last minute, I had nothing

to lose and all the cats were quite helpful in making a brutha feel comfy. I've been passed on so many times that I didn't really expect anything. I just looked at it as a chance to get out of the 'ville and see some new mugs."

What's the biggest challenge of the Shania gig? "There is no challenge," laughs Blair. "It's just mega-fun. All I gotta do is smack them drums and groove. The most satisfying thing is knowing that the pocket is in the house and the peeps are going to have a funky good time!"

With Twain, Blair favors a thin-shelled Maple Yamaha Custom Absolute kit. "Maple makes me smile," he says. "It's a warm thing, tone-wise." For Wooten work, JD uses a custom kit that Yamaha built to his eccentric specifications. It consists of an 18"x18" bass drum, a 12"x8" snare with a wooden hoop on top and 30 snares below and a 10"x4.5" sopranino snare with wooden hoops top and bottom.

"My kits slam in and out of the studio," says Blair. "Yamaha flat-out knows what they're doing. Great time and care are put into the making of the Yamaha gear. If Yamaha made it, I know it's good for the earhole."



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JD Blair