

Michael Baker

New Sounds

FROM OLD TRADITIONS



Michael Baker is joking when he calls himself "the last of the dinosaurs," but Whitney Houston's longtime drummer is definitely attuned to the traditions of an earlier time.

Baker says his real education started after he graduated from the North Texas State University jazz program, when he took a gig with jazz trumpet titan Clark Terry. "It was like being in the jazz army," recalls Michael. "Clark made me look at the real basics, like keeping time, corralling the beat, and pulling a big band together." Baker went on to drum with such jazz legends as Jimmy Smith, Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, Kenny Burrell and Joe Zawinul before turning to pop work.

Baker absorbed additional old-school influences as the drummer for the song-and-dance revue "Sophisticated Ladies." A former ballet dancer himself, Baker learned volumes from accompanying such African-American dance legends as Gregory Hines and Harold Nicholas. "They executed everything a little ahead of the beat," notes Michael. "That way, by the time the audience perceived the motion, the beat had arrived. Nothing was right on the beat, but it felt like it was right in time from the audience's perspective."

"Such flexibility of placement is the defining trait of a great studio drummer," insists Baker. "You have to be able to play each drum like a separate instrument. Maybe the bass drum will feel ahead of the beat, the snare drum will lay way back and the hi-hat will be right in the middle. People like Jim Keltner

and Steve Gadd are masters in that ability to make each drum sound like a different voice."

There's a touch of the traditional in Baker's choice of gear as well. He prefers a Yamaha Beech Custom kit with old-style wooden hoops. "For me, the Beech kit doesn't have such an identifiable sound as the Maple kits. I like the fact that the tone isn't so instantly recognizable. I use three different Yamaha snares. I like the 5 1/2"-deep Manu Katché snare, because it sounds great in so many situations and never interferes with the tone of my 22" bass drum. My Ndugu [Chancler] snare is similar, it's lacquered-steel, with a real tight sound. The Steve Gadd snare is great for dramatic, slower ballads; it's deep, but transparent enough not to be overbearing. I use all Yamaha drums and hardware. I think their systems are perfect."



Beech Custom
in Y2K brown

contents

**SheDaisy: How Kristyn Osborn
Makes Her Songwriting Garden Grow 2**

**Carlos' Keys:
Chester Thompson of Santana 4**

**Drum Machina:
Smashing Pumpkins' Jimmy Chamberlin 5**

**Alan Parsons'
Latest Project 6**

**Orgy:
New Lows In Synth Guitar 7**

**Nashville's
Best-Kept Songwriting Secret 8**

**Manu Katche:
Drumming Beyond Time 10**

**Patrick Leonard's
Digital Desk Set 11**

**Edwin McCain:
More Than Mellow 12**

**Will the Real
Clifford Carter Please Stand Up? 13**

**Michael W. Smith:
New Sounds for New Times 14**

**Melissa Manchester:
The Power of Proactive Arrangement 16**

**JD Blair:
Shania Twain's Groove Regulator 17**

**James Newton Howard:
Soundtrack Superstar 18**

**Van Halen's
Michael Anthony to Unveil Signature Bass 19**

**Beth Nielsen Chapman:
Making Music & Mud Pies 20**

**Slam-G's
Finds Beauty in Bubblegum 21**

**Yamaha's 01V Mixer:
Running Rings for Rosie 22**

**Savage Garden's
Ben Carey Runs the Triathlon of Tone 23**

**Daryl Simmons:
Platinum Inspiration 24**

**New from the Yamaha Dream Factory:
Ty Tabor and Frank Gambale Signature Models 25**

**Janis Ian:
on God and the FBI 26**

**Steve Hornbeak:
Celebrating a Change of Faith 27**

**Michael Baker:
New Sounds from Old Traditions 28**

**There's a Yamaha
PSR Keyboard in the Tower of Power Inside Rear Cover**

YAMAHA
all access
2 0 0 0