



1. VITALS

BAND: DREDG **AGE:** 26 **HOMETOWN:** REDONDO BEACH, CALIFORNIA
INFLUENCES: CHAD SMITH, TIM ALEXANDER, IGOR CAVALERA, VINNIE PAUL, JOHN STANIER, CARTER BEAUFORD, ABE CUNNINGHAM
CURRENT RELEASE: *CATCH WITHOUT ARMS*

2. ALL GEARED UP

DRUMS: ORANGE COUNTY DRUM & PERCUSSION
CYMBALS: ZILDJIAN **HEADS:** EVANS **STICKS:** VIC FIRTH
HARDWARE: DW **KEYBOARD:** YAMAHA S90

VIBE

LIVING THE DREAM

“We like that feeling of being in awe and being blown away”

BY BILLY RAMIREZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEWART ISBELL

DINO CAMPANELLA

A bearded and barefoot bassist jumps on stage, followed by his miniscule guitarist, lanky drummer, and a lead singer with perfect teeth. The opening guitar notes cause the anxious crowd to erupt. A tug-of-war ensues between band and audience to see who can drown out the other. It appears that the drummer and his jackhammer snare hits are in the lead. He's maybe 20 seconds into the song and already soaked in sweat. This cat just hits *hard*.

Dino Campanella has been splintering wood since his eighth-grade graduation when his parents bought him his first drum set. Before that, he had tickled the ivories, albeit more delicately. “I never did [take drum lessons]. I took piano lessons for years. I practiced really hard,” Campanella says emphatically. “I was classically trained. I played everyday for at least an hour and did all these recitals when I was a kid. My mom was an amazing accordion player. She really turned me on to music, and pretty much forced me to play piano when I was a kid. They wanted me to be a concert pianist and to play with symphonies.”

Admittedly, the young, sweaty audiences that he drums for today are more than a stone's throw from

Carnegie Hall, yet Campanella's parents are quite proud of their little drummer boy (“they love it”), and can't complain about the dudes he started jamming with. He and those same guys, known more commonly as Dredg, hit the road this summer in support of their newest album, *Catch Without Arms*. Tighter and more powerful than their two previous albums, *Catch* shines due to the band's tireless search for perfection.

“We wanted to develop the songs better than we ever did. We worked hard on the songwriting, [more] than we ever did previously. If people think that the songs are more accessible, it's because we worked hard. We allotted more time in preproduction on this record and writing. We demoed every song before we actually recorded them for the record. We tried a million different arrangements. We overanalyzed everything until it drove us crazy, but we were happy in the end.”

His knowledge of piano and music theory has served Campanella well. Some songs on the album were developed around chord progressions and patterns that he developed on the keys. “I write a lot of stuff on piano, so it kind of brings another element to the writing. The piano is next to me at all times when I'm playing drums. It's definitely a big part of this record. I kind of started messing

VIBE CAMPANELLA CONTINUED

“We overanalyzed everything until it drove us crazy”

3. INSIDE TRACKS

DREDG
CATCH WITHOUT ARMS
INTERSCOPE



Like baseball nuts drooling over batting averages, we music journalists love to squint through lists of rock and roll genres, parsing *this* band over *there* and so on. Listening to *Catch Without Arms*, though, it occurs to me that there's a neglected subset – a spawn, as it were – of power pop and emo, which I hereby christen “wall o’ sound.” You can follow one thread back to Phil Spector if you like, but the defining characteristic really is that guitars, specifically, have to be the source of this sonic tsunami. In some ways, the precedent for how Dredg does it here is Big Country, the underrated Scottish combo best known for adding a bagpipe-like e-bow to the top of the guitar

assault 20 years ago. The difference is that their drummer, Mark Brzezicki, often battled through the mix with furies of tight rolls, rhythmic crescendos, and cymbal explosions, as if flailing for air in the turbulent sea. Clearly, Dino Campanella has comparable chops; his shifts from silence to wild thrashings are the main source of dynamic contrast on “The Tanbark Is Hot Lava.” Mostly, however, he sticks to basics, delineating double- and half-time sections, throwing in some deft pedal work, and otherwise blending himself into one of this season’s most powerful audio experiences.

— Robert L. Doerschuk

around and improvising – playing a melody with my left hand and playing a beat with my right hand.”

The more you get to know the members of Dredg, the more you understand that these guys mean business. In fact, Campanella studied music business at USC, guitarist Mark Engles studied combined sciences at Santa Clara University, and singer Gavin Hayes and bassist Drew Roulette studied art at Northern Arizona University and San Diego State University, respectively.

As educated as they are, though, the band members aren't *all* business. “There’s something about how a great piece of art makes you feel,” Campanella says. “We enjoy that feeling of being in awe and being blown away. We like to write music that touches you at that same level. It starts with anything. It starts with a guitar

figure, or a piano figure, or a bass line, or a drumbeat, or a vocal melody. It’s like a seed to the song.”

Such egalitarianism is a byproduct of growing together. Over more than a decade, they have developed a chemistry that makes their tightly woven songs flow effortlessly. “It would be definitely different if we had not grown up together, of course,” Campanella says. “The chemistry is so solid because we know each other so well. There’s a connection that’s so deep. It’s just not four guys jamming. It’s four guys talking, making conversation, and totally understanding each other. It’s great.”

And they definitely have a formula that works, although the music is hard to categorize. Think U2 meets Pink Floyd, and New Order drops by every now and then. Or something like that. “We are

truly ourselves,” Campanella proclaims. “Bands that are true to themselves are the most interesting. As long as you sound confident in what you’re doing, I think people react to that. We don’t sound like any other band – and that’s one thing I’m most proud of. You can hear influences in anything nowadays, but you can’t say that we sound like a derivative of anything out there. I think that’s one of the hardest things to accomplish. It took us a long time to get here. We started off sounding not so unique, but we developed our own style.”

The Dredg dudes can be proud of the fact that they hammered together their own bandwagon rather than jumping on someone else’s. But it’s a lot easier for record company execs to market a band that apes this month’s flavor rather than one that covets unexplored territories. ➔

4. “THE TANBARK IS HOT LAVA” Transcription by Anthony Geluso

This part really popped out, largely because of the tight unison rhythm, which, surprisingly, dropped a beat every other measure. So you have this 4/4, 3/4 thing happening throughout the section. The tasty thirty-second-note bass drum licks and toms add a little impact to the part.

♩=88

VIPE CAMPANELLA CONTINUED

"There's never been a lot of promotion for the band," Campanella says, without a hint of regret. "It's totally word-of-mouth, and totally grassroots. We've done a lot of touring, but all these fans are here because they enjoy the music and not because it's the hot thing on TV or on the radio. That's flattering because that shows we're doing something people really like and not because we're fashion-whores or something like that. It's all about music. I'll be scared if this thing were on MTV all of a sudden. I don't care about having more money. I see these people that come to five or six shows on this tour and driving ten hours to come see us. That's incredible."

Dredg fans aren't alone. Campanella and his mates do more than their share of driving, and the hard-hitting drummer has turned to yoga to soothe his body from the effects of touring and his intense drumming style. Tendonitis had plagued him on previous tours, and while yoga has made him pain-free, Campanella would gladly destroy his body every night to hear the roar of Dredg's devoted fans. Normally an overused and nearly meaningless cliché, it really is about the fans.

"They're so motivational," Campanella says. "You come out here and you play to people and they tell you what the music does for them. That's when we go, 'We are lucky to be doing this.' I'm so happy I can help someone and make somebody happy indirectly or directly when they come to the show. Being able to inspire young musicians who are learning how to play is one of the greatest feelings ever. There's no better feeling than to help someone like that. I was that kid when I was 14, I went to all the shows. I would sneak out of the house on a school night and go to a late show and see my favorite bands. Now when I meet those kids it's like I'm meeting myself. It's amazing. I love it."

The new album is destined to reposition the band. The single, "Bug Eyes," has been spun on the radio, and its video has received some tube time. For good reason, Campanella is excited and confident that the album will help the band experience hard-earned exposure. "I feel people will be coming to see us maybe more than [they have been]. I believe our fan base will grow. I never expect an album to be huge because that's bad karma and bad luck, but the opportunity to be playing to people every night is a dream

come true," he gleefully elucidates.

Maybe someday Dredg will start raking in the awards and Campanella will win scads of reader polls. It can happen, but right now he's happy just being able to see a bunch of kids rock out in a sweaty club every night. "It's what I love more than anything. I hate being off-tour. I'm the happiest when I'm performing every night. Being able to be out here playing for people and continue to stay on tour and being sufficient is my dream. I'm living my dream being able to do this. I try not

to get caught up on what's going to happen later. As long as it feels that it's growing steadily, which it does, it feels really good. Being able to play for your fans is just great because they're just there for you and they're appreciative, especially for a band like us that needs more than 30 minutes sometimes to show all the elements. My dream for this record is that it keeps us going. I want to make another one. I'll make ten more!"

That's a lot of albums. Dredg fans all over are rejoicing. ■

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