

# Manu Katché

**The drummer on many a classic rock album stays vital by avoiding the obvious, ignoring the plaudits, and always being himself.**

It's fitting that Manu Katché's latest album is called *The Scope*, because as the drummer describes, it's all about the minutiae, the little things that make music special. "When you scope something," he says, "it's like a microscope, and you go inside as far as you can. You go deep and concentrate on the details of what you played."

Katché has gone back and forth in recent years, putting out esoteric, subtle jazz records on the ECM label, and the more pop-oriented, grooving fare of *The Scope*, where you're served up a healthy dose of pocket playing along with the drummer's vocals. "I wrote the music on piano because that's my first instrument," says Katché. "Funny enough, I don't think about the drums. I'm not writing around the groove. I just find a loop that respects the pulsation of what I feel. It's not precise. So I can keep the spontaneity for when we track. I worked with a young producer, Jim Henderson, and we did some more electro [styles], with samples and technology."

In the game for over three decades, Katché began studio work locally in France, but quickly graduated to the big leagues when he was recruited to play on Peter Gabriel's 1986 smash, *So*. Katché recalls a turning point in the session. "We were working on the song 'Don't Give Up,' and it was an easy target, just hi-hat, intimate and quiet, a little groove in 3/4. Easy. And then we did 'In Your Eyes.' I was sitting behind the drums with Peter and [producer] Daniel Lanois in the control room, and I couldn't find a way to approach the song. So Peter put on headphones and listened to the track, stood near my

## Tools of the Trade

Katché endorses Yamaha drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Remo heads.



drums, and started doing this African dance, where you move your arms up and down and bend your legs. And I thought, *Wow, that is weird*—this guy, very British, dancing like an African. And he was awkward, because he couldn't really dance. [laughs]. But if Peter, who didn't know me very well—because it was only the third or fourth day in the studio—tried to help me like that, then there was a message there. With that dance, that was the feeling he wanted me to feel. And I thought that I was going to let go, that it didn't matter what would happen. If he danced like that, I should be able to play something from deep inside that I had never played before. And since then, I've applied this many times, when I've been stuck and couldn't find my way or I wasn't creative enough."

Katché would go on to perform with everyone from Sting to Jan Garbarek to Robbie Robertson, but he never forgot the lessons from those formative sessions, and what made him unique enough to keep getting the call. The drummer recalls, "Sting told [guitarist] Dominic