

>UP CLOSE DANNY SERAPHINE: CTA

By Rich Mangicaro
Photos by Rick Malkin



DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK LEGENDARY DRUMMER DANNY SERAPHINE RETURNS TO THE SPOTLIGHT. >>>

Danny Seraphine was put on this earth to play drums. He'll tell you it's what he does best. And as many of us know, he's been incredibly successful at it. As a founding member of the multi-platinum, Grammy-winning band Chicago, Danny has carved his place in music history as one of music's most influential drummers. Any of us who play drums have, at one time in our lives, spent time learning the grooves for such enormous hits as "25 Or 6 To 4", "Make Me Smile" (that drum solo at the end!), "Beginnings", "Saturday In The Park"...the list goes on and on. How many of us have played in cover bands, playing these songs...playing his parts. All of us! Being one of the few bands in history to fuse Jazz and Rock the way they did, Danny's playing provided a new level of drumming in popular music and to this day, continues to inspire generations.

In this issue's Up Close, we wanted to know what Danny's up to lately. We found some exciting things to check out, to listen to and to look forward to.

Rich Mangicaro: Danny, your band California Transit Authority-C.T.A. is great. Tell us about this project. You formed the band in 2006, right?

Danny Seraphine: Yes. Peter Fish, a friend and keyboardist/composer told me that he wanted to play in a band with me. At that time, I was jamming with Gregg Bissonette, who introduced me to guitarist Marc Bonilla. We had met with Don Lombardi, DW's Founder and he suggested we put a band together to play for photographer Lissa Wales' benefit concert in Arizona. So we did some rehearsing in LA, brought in Ed Roth on keyboards and Mick Mahan on bass and it sounded really good. When we got to Arizona, we still needed a singer and Larry Braggs, who flew in with David Garibaldi and Tower Of Power, volunteered. Well, Larry brought it to a whole other level and, in front of my eyes, I'm seeing this band blossom. It was like Chicago on steroids...like the original C.T.A. I realized then that this was the band I'd been waiting for. After our 3 songs, the ovation was pretty overwhelming and I looked at Peter and said, "Hey, we got somethin' here."

RM: How was the experience when you guys played Modern Drummer's festival? I saw the video of it, which was fantastic.

DS: Thank you. Man, that was a really great thing. The reception from the crowd was so warm and enthusiastic. I was humbled by it and you know, it had been a long time since I've played those songs in front of a large crowd, so it was really great to feel the appreciation from everyone. It was an emotional night for me.

RM: I know Rick Van Horn is a huge fan of your playing, so I'm sure it was a dream-come-true for him to do the introductions!

DS: Rick was great...everyone at the magazine was.

RM: Was it sort of a launching pad show for you and the band?

DS: We began playing shows around the country, yes. However, we still haven't found representation for the band yet. You would think with these members and what they each bring to the table, we'd have some interest, but we're still trying to find that match. I think it's a bit political that we don't have an agent yet.

RM: That and what's happened to our industry in the past 8 years. That's what is so wonderful the drum community - we're all here to support each other and I've experienced this love and support, no matter what level of player, no matter what region of the world. Drummers just like to hang and share ideas. What DW and DrumChannel.com are doing is just that - extending this exchange and support, worldwide.

DS: I executive-produced a movie called "Lonely Street" and produced the soundtrack. The story is about an older Elvis, played by Robert Patrick, who fakes his own death because he hated what he had become...and then plans his own comeback. The film is available to rent now and the soundtrack will be available soon...I'm just finishing it up. I've also produced a couple of Broadway plays and I'm doing a series of clinics now, which all my companies are graciously behind. I love doing them and meeting other drummers. Regarding the band, C.T.A. we'll be in the studio soon to do our next record, which I'm really excited about. We're planning on doing mostly original material and a few Chicago tunes. There are a few Chicago songs I co-wrote that, although not quite as well known as the bigger hits, were really cool tunes and will be fun for us to do in this band, our own way. I've also thought about doing some big-band arrangements of the tunes...I'd love to do that. Otherwise, we have some shows this month back east and in San Diego.

RM: Thank you Danny. It's been an honor and I'm looking forward to seeing the band soon! 

