

NICKO McBRAIN ON TOUR WITH SIGNATURES

For almost 28 years, Metal giants *Iron Maiden* have had to deal with the jesting of **Nicko McBrain**. They're the better for it though...and they know it. Seriously, which is not often the case with Nicko...he's the real deal...a true Rock & Roll powerhouse. Voted by Rolling Stone as one of the Best Rock Drummers Of All Time, he is one of the most influential and revered in Rock history. Shortly before joining *Maiden*, Nicko found what was to be his 'cymbal home' for life, when he signed with Paiste. Some 30 years later, 18 Maiden albums, thousands of loyal fans, a fervent golf habit AND a twin-engine pilot's license, Nicko and Paiste are still flyin' high. We recently managed to corral the larger-than-life, "Mad McBrain" into talking to us about his Signature Reflector Series cymbals and how the road is treatin' him. Actually, that's not an entirely true statement. This gracious, hilarious man is always happy to talk about his Paistes...and we're the better for it.

Rich Mangicaro: Nicko, what was your first impression when you switched to using the Signatures Reflectors? Last time you and I worked together, you were using 2002s and Rudes.

Nicko McBrain: Although I love the 2002's and love the way they sound up close within my world, the Signatures have much more cut and project much better for our live show...for our intense live volume. The guys can hear them better on stage and I feel I get more power with less energy. I love them so much that our last 2 albums have the Signatures on them. What I love about the Reflectors is that I get a great crash sound and then, the decay is a bit quicker than the normal Signatures. They speak a bit quicker, for me. I believe by the time people read this article, we'll have recorded our next album, on which I'll use the Reflectors.

RM: Has there been any feedback from your front-of-house engineer, after making the change on your kit?

NM: Oh yeah...it's amazing. Doug has been with the band longer than I have. I think he's got a frickin' wheel chair and a pension plan from the band! He's got potatoes growing out of his ears too! Seriously, I'd say 70% of my sound comes from the overhead mics. I have 14 cymbals on the kit and he gets a great sound every night. He'll say, "The ride cymbal cuts so beautifully." And he'll comment on how great he made me sound! (laughs hardily) But he loves them and says they're very balanced.

RM: Nicko, the way you have your cymbals and drums angled is unique. Anyone who's sat behind your kit, as I have, will notice that you've configured your setup to work perfectly for your physical frame. Watching you play, it seems you can play comfortably, for long

periods, get the power you need and not exert any more energy than necessary. Have you noticed any changes physically in the past few years and then had to adjust your setup?

NM: Yeah, we've brought 'em down a bit! (laughter!) Great question. I've always had really, really bad posture and I know that you always have more power when you sit up straight. I get a lot of pain in my shoulders and I tend to slouch when I play. Some years ago, we went with a rack system, so we had to adjust the drums and cymbals accordingly, but the kit really hasn't changed that much since. My technique has though and I have to consciously make myself sit up bit more. Doing a 2 hour show with the band, I've gotta know when I can sit back and reserve my energy and when I can let it go. When I feel myself tiring, I'm reminded to sit up and focus on my breathing and I'll get more control.

RM: You know, I recently had a conversation with Terry Bozzio and Neil Peart about the physical aspect of what we do and the effects of aging on drummers. We got into this whole conversation about yoga and weight training and how's it's helped us. I know you play golf a lot but do you have an exercise program that you adhere to?

NM: You'll never guess what I made an appointment for, just today? A yoga series! I can't believe you're bringing this up! My manager has been at me for a year to get into a yoga class. Here's what he said: "Nicky - you've got to get into a bloody yoga class! I've been doin' it for years and I feel great!" I asked him why and he said, "So I can get another 10 years outta ya!" So I start this week and we're talking about taking a yoga teacher on tour with us too.

RM: That's great! You'll be pleasantly surprised at the results, trust me. Nicko, final question...over the years, either at shows or at one of your drum clinics, can you recall an interesting comment or feedback from a fan, a question you received, that just sticks out in your memory?

NM: I do remember when I did my very first drum clinic in London, I was very nervous. I get much more nervous at one of those events, where I'm in front of a bunch of drummers, than I do in front of a quarter of a million people! So I did my solo...it went all right and then got up in front of the crowd, talked a bit and asked if anyone had any questions. Some *bright spark* out there asked me an embarrassing, stupid question, which I can't repeat for this article, as I'm sure we're G rated! But, I answered him, making a joke and the place fell about laughing...I fell about laughing and then I thought, I've cracked it! The nerve issue is solved. Every time I do a drum show, to break the ice, I'll tell jokes...really bad, corny jokes! And that has become part of my drum show now and I don't experience the nerves like I used to. All from that very first drum show...from that kid in the audience!