



Singapore Drumfest 2008

Held over the weekend of September 13 and 14, Singapore Drumfest 2008 returned for a second year much to the delight of drummers and musicians in the region. This year though, the format of the event went through a facelift in order to better cater to non-drummers – be it musicians or just simply music lovers.

Other than drum masterclasses, the Main Event also featured classes for guitarists and vocalists, making the weekend a true haven for musicians. On top of that, the new Concert in the Park segment is exactly what you would expect from the name – a purely entertaining concert that anyone and everyone can enjoy.

Day One

Main Event

Kick-starting the event was Chinese drumming icon, and one of Asia's most renowned drummers – Mr. Q (a.k.a. Chen Pai-Chou) from Taiwan. The 34-year-old veteran impressed the crowd right from the start with a solo incorporating amazing double pedal work. Though often known for his work in the Chinese Pop music industry, Mr. Q showed off his versatility and creativity as a musician in his set; playing to styles such as Drums 'n' Bass and showcasing some of his own compositions as an example of the techniques that he uses. He also took some time out to share with the audience his experiences on tour with some of the biggest Asian artists such as Jay Chou, and Power Station – the biggest band in Taiwanese music history.

Next up, Teddy Campbell from the USA brought along his American Idol All-Star band for a truly entertaining masterclass session. Other than a drummer, Teddy is also known for his work as a music director, having worked with acts like Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and 98 Degrees. To start off his set, Teddy played to a few gospel tunes and talked about linear pattern, which he then expanded on by showing an example of single strokes being played in a linear pattern. The drummer extraordinaire then talked about the importance of sight-reading for a professional musician, since it is virtually impossible to memorize every single song that he is required to play. Also, he expounded on the gospel pop style and how his styles evolved from there. Of course, demonstration was on hand and with the help of his band, Teddy got the crowd grooving to his addictive tunes and earned a standing ovation at the end of the set.

The third and final drum masterclass of Day One featured Arthur Kam from Malaysia, winner of Modern Drummer's 2008 Undiscovered Drummer (18 & Under category) competition. The 17-year-old is the first Asian to win a prestigious worldwide drum competition, and his talent was obvious for anyone to see. The youngster played with flair and showed off his Gospel influenced grooves, winning the crowd over with his incredible technique. For one of such a young age, Arthur was also very versatile; playing to several Latin and progressive rock tunes as well.

As mentioned, other music masterclasses were available for musicians keen to hone their skills. Day One's line-up included Guitar and Recording masterclasses by City Music which covered the technical aspects of the instruments and latest technology in the industry, a vocal Masterclass with American Idol's live backing vocalist, Sy Smith, and a Rock Guitar Masterclass featuring Rafael Moreira, Rockstar INXS & Supernova's house band leader and guitarist.

Concert in the Park Day 1

The evening would prove to be every bit as exciting as the happenings of the afternoon, as Strikeforce - Singapore's largest percussion team – provided the perfect start to Day One's Concert in the Park segment. The vibrant young percussionists brought their contagious energy outdoors, and their "under-the-stars" performance got the crowd dancing and grooving along to every minute of it. Far from being the conventional percussion team, the Strikeforce showcased their creativity in the form of highly original sequences and choreography and technologically-advanced drumming gadgets. Their self-created water-and-light drums in the finale was a feast for the eyes, and as the visually-captivating set drew to a close, the audience voiced their approvals with loud cheers of "encore".

The second act brought the audience back indoors as Rafael Moreira and his band, Acid Guitar, took stage. The crowd-pleasing trio of Rafael, bassist Corey McCormick and drummer Nate Morton had more up their sleeves than the Singapore crowd had expected, dishing out an eclectic instrumental blend of Rock, Jazz and Brazilian music with vocal lines complimenting each song's melodies and soulful, shredding guitar solos. The broad spectrum of musical styles on display was greatly appreciated by all musicians in the crowd, while non-musicians could relish in the refreshingly unique tunes that the band was playing.

Moving back to percussion, the next act featured Mamady Keita from Guinea, a.k.a. "Djembefola" (the man who makes a Djembe speaks). His nickname speaks for itself, as the awe-inspiring Djembe solos made those in the audience shake their heads in disbelief. Together with his wife, Monette Marino-Keita and Singapore's local Djembe group, Lila Drums, Mamady educated the crowd on World African percussion. There was no better teacher on the Djembe than Mamady, who opened his own school of percussion called Tam Tam Mandingue (Drums of the Manding) in Belgium, with branches located in over a dozen locations all over the world.

An entertaining three-way drum battle followed next, with Drum Challenge Asia Under-19 champion, Er Chow Kiat, and the talented Arthur Kam taking stage again beside Teddy Campbell. The American led the session, starting off with a slow and steady groove, and was joined by the two young drummers in what resembled a gospel shed. Teddy started trading solo and displayed his creativity, playing the solos over the bar line many a times. Arthur was not to be outdone, playing his trades with incredibly fast chops and patterns around the kit, while Chow Kiat, the Singaporean representative, filled his solos with plenty of single strokes combination and displayed outstanding showmanship, entertaining the audience with flashy stick tricks. As with the way it started, Teddy signalled an end to the session after the three musicians jammed out to a few more catchy grooves. It was definitely an inspiring moment for all in the audience, and they would definitely be heartened to see how Singapore Drumfest is able to create

opportunities and platforms for local young musicians to learn and take stage with the world's best musicians, breaking new grounds for the local and regional music industry.

Next, Teddy was joined on stage with his American Idol All-Star band Cornell Thigpen on Keys, David Wood on Guitars and Eric Ingram on Bass. The crowd was in for an instrumental treat as the band dished out tune after tune, showcasing their musicality. To complete the set, the band was joined by the fabulous singer from American Idol, Sy Smith, who added an impressive vocal dimension to the performance. The sultry songstress belted out several RnB tunes from her solo album and was a hit with the audience. Having made acquaintance with Sezairi, lead singer of Juxtapose, Singapore Band Challenge 18 & Above champion, Sy invited him on stage to share vocal duties. Sezairi was unfazed by the occasion and won the crowd's cheers with his hearty vocals.

The final act of Day One was definitely one worth waiting for. The DrumJockey, consisting of "World Fastest Drummer" Johnny Rabb (he earned the title by play 1,071 single strokes in 60 seconds) and percussionist Chris Patterson, brought a unique combination of electronic music with Drum 'n' Bass, House, Jungle and Acid Jazz styles, controlling samples of their original music and remix on the fly. Their original techniques and grooves in this DJ oriented show was unlike anything the crowd have seen or heard before, and Chris in particular mesmerised all in the audience with his expertise on the Steel Pan drum. The appreciative crowd stayed way past midnight just to hear the explosive duo finish their segment.

Day Two

Main Event

Renowned local drummer Brandon Khoo was first to take stage on Day Two. The Progressive Metal/Metal/Rock/Pop drummer is known for his hard-hitting style, fancy double-bass work and flamboyant showmanship. All of that was not amiss in his informative clinic, as Brandon gave helpful tips to aspiring drummers on how to improve on their playing. He showed simple examples of how to keep time with his left leg while playing without compromising the sound of the high hats. Brandon is no stranger to gigging and sessioning, having played with big names like Kiko Loureiro, from the Brazilian Progressive Rock Metal Band ANGRA, Heaven & Earth, and one of America's top Blues guitarist, Eugene Hideaway Bridges, just to name a few.

The star-studded Rockstar Band, consisting of drummer Nate Morton, guitarist Rafael Moreira, and bassist Corey McCormick, was next on the line-up. Nate was no stranger to Singapore, returning for a second year and promising a whole new dimension to his performance with the help of his band. By request, all three musicians performed a solo, and wowed the crowd with their spontaneity and creativity. The eager crowd threw questions at the band, and the friendly trio readily answered as much as time allowed. Nate mentioned that he preferred to memorise a song as compared to sight-reading as it allowed more room for improvisation; rather than focusing on reading charts, he can pay more attention to the dynamics of the band. Rafael and Corey shared on their musical background and journey towards professional musicianship, giving helpful advice to aspiring musicians on what it takes to be a successful musician.

For many of the artistes at Singapore Drumfest, this was their first time on the sunny island. The DrumJockey duo of Johnny Rabb and Chris Patterson was no different, and they were especially excited to be driving around what was to be the street circuit of the first ever Formula One Singapore night race. Of course, they were also excited to be bringing their style of music to the other side of the world. In a masterclass setup, Johnny and Chris focused more on teaching, as compared to the DJ set they performed the previous night for the main event. Johnny, the master of the Free Hand technique, played to Drum 'n' Bass tunes and showed how he was able to incorporate the impressive use of this technique into the song. He was then joined by Chris and the pair gave a demonstration of how to do a live sampling. As an example, they used a loop of a Chris Brown song and created something and played to it.

Last but definitely not least on the Main Event line-up was Progressive Fusion drummer Virgil Donati. Renowned for his fast and technical drumming skills, Virgil has worked with some of the biggest names in the music industry, such as Steve Vai, Planet X and Mick Jagger. For a start, the maestro played to a tune by Planet X, and then proceeded to play an amazing 30-minute solo that blew the crowd away. Virgil played a couple of paradiddle/double paradiddle around his limbs to show his independence skills, and mesmerised all with his execution of imaginative rhythmic phrasing, rolling around on his 2 aerial toms, mind-bending tom and cymbal play, dizzying display of double bass work and jaw-dropping riffs and stick-flips. The crowd gave him a well-deserved standing ovation and there was no shortage of fans queuing up for an autograph from the drumming legend.

Day Two provided a variety of Masterclasses for everyone, including a World of Drums Special Percussion class by Mohamed Noor, one of the best percussionists in Asia, a vocal Masterclass from Rockstar Supernova's Storm Large and a Guitar Masterclass with Davis Guitars, featuring Masashi Kimura from local band Saw Loser and Nothing to Declare.

Concert in the Park Day 2

Just as how it was on Day One, the Concert started outside of the auditorium; with renowned local percussion team Wicked Aura Batucada starting the groove for the night out in the Foyer. The group brought the Samba to Drumfest, bringing all in the crowd to their feet, dancing and grooving to the Brazilian heartbeat. The band is no stranger to large occasions, and is the only Asian band to be featured in the Top 20 of BBC's 2007 search for 'The Next Big Thing', the broadcaster's global search for the music of the future.

Next up, Singapore Band Challenge 2008's 18 & Above Winner, Juxtapose, took stage to entertain the crowd with their funky blend of Soul and Acid Jazz tunes. The Band Challenge is organised by Singapore Drumfest to provide young aspiring musicians a platform to showcase their talents and to pit their skills against other bands, and Juxtapose, was a crowd-pleaser with their great on-stage personalities. The band gave an impressive set, displaying tight musicianship within the band, and their tunes had great dynamics which was much appreciated by the crowd.

After the Percussion Masterclass earlier in the day, Mohamed Noor returned with Singapore's premiere World Music band, Tribal Tide. The percussion extraordinaire, who plays more than 25 percussion instruments from around the world, is very active in

promoting percussions in Singapore and around the region. The crowd was treated to a variety of music styles by Tribal Tide, ranging from Funk, Drum 'n' Bass, to Latin. Mohd Noor also performed an awe-inspiring solo on the Cajon 'Box' Drum that earned cheers and applause from everyone in the audience.

After the over-whelming response from the Masterclass, the crowd could not wait to hear more from the Australia-born Virgil Donati. The occasion and expectation did not daunt him, seeing as playing on stage was a regular occurrence from him since the tender age of 3! No words can possibly describe the level of drumming that Virgil displayed. Having taken double bass drumming to an out-of-this-world standard, the experience of watching him play live can only be seen before you can believe it.

The crowd's favourite trio of Rafael, Nate and Corey returned for a concert performance as Magnetico, promising an electrifying performance with a name as theirs. The incredibly charismatic and charming trio knew exactly how to engage their audience, showing off great showmanship, and was every bit as magnetic as their name implied. Rafael decorated Magnetico's Rock tunes with some classic guitar solos, and the charming Brazilian took on vocal duties for the first half of the set before bringing on Rockstar Supernova's Storm Large, turning the heat up in the auditorium.

Just like her name, Storm is an instant rock icon, and was a big hit on the show, with her commanding on-stage personality and charming persona. The six-foot-tall saucy singer was the climax of the concert; her sizzling moves and powerful vocals brought the entire crowd to their feet. Performing original hits like *Ladylike*, *Under You*, even covers like Cheap Trick's *Surrender*, Storm proved capable of bringing her flavour to any song, leaving many mesmerised by her performance and guys in the shouting proposals at the gorgeous star.

Bringing a close to Singapore Drumfest 2008 was Sonofa, winner of Singapore Band Challenge MTV Cutting Edge award. This ensemble of young musicians lived up to the reputation, bringing a refreshing edge to music in their performance. With a mix of dance and club elements with instruments such as the didgeridoo, keyboards, percussions, drums and bass, the band delivered a mind blowing, explosive live experience that spelt the perfect ending for the event. Their music has attracted a sizeable fan base, and the enthusiastic crowd turned the auditorium into a dance floor, grooving to the music of the promising young band.

It was yet another fulfilling year for Singapore Drumfest. With such a wide variety of music available in the two-day event and various educational masterclasses for all musicians alike, the event promises to be the anchor for all musicians in the region in the years to come.