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SPECIAL ISSUE: FOCUS ON ELECTRONICS

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February 2011

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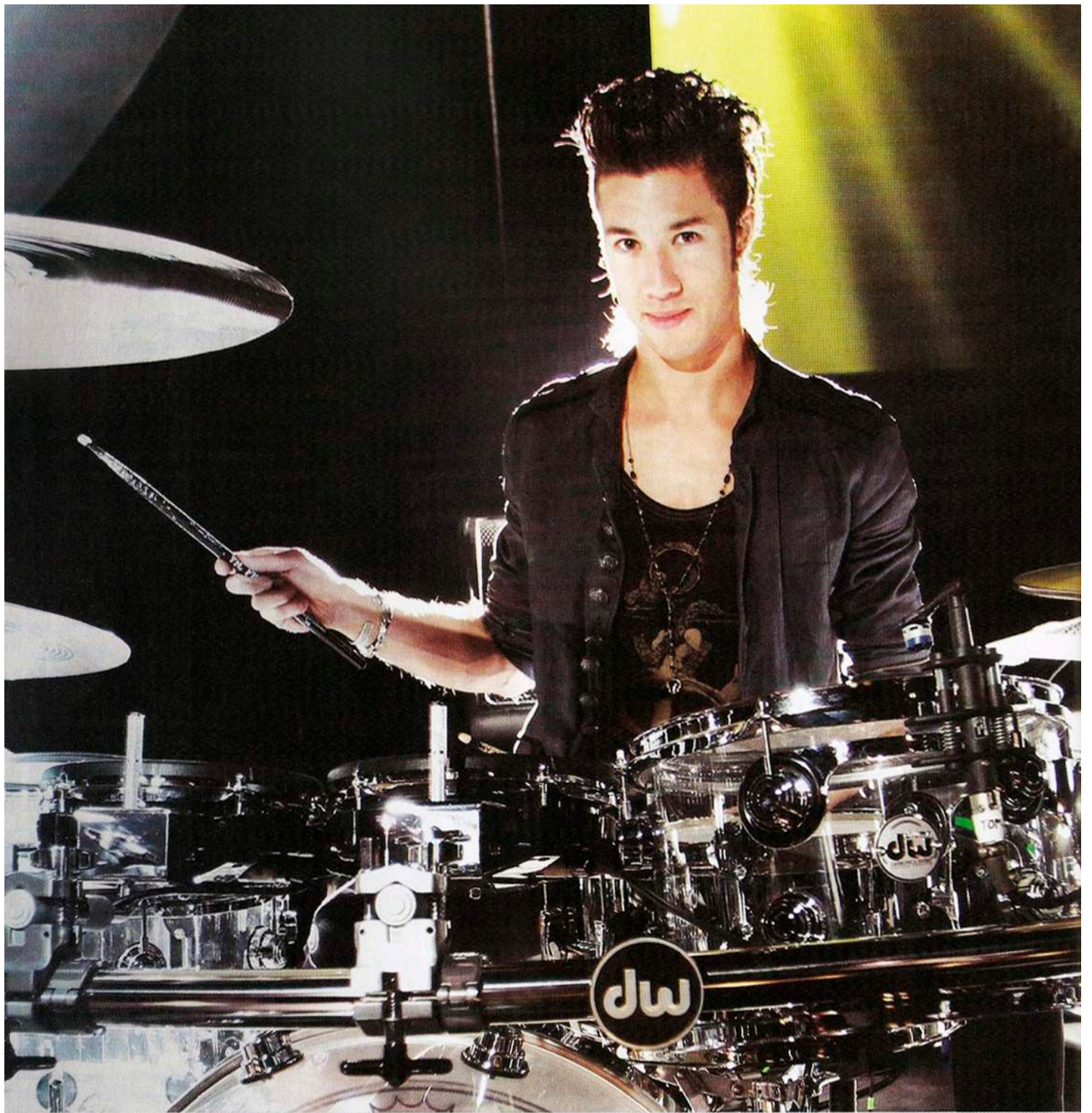


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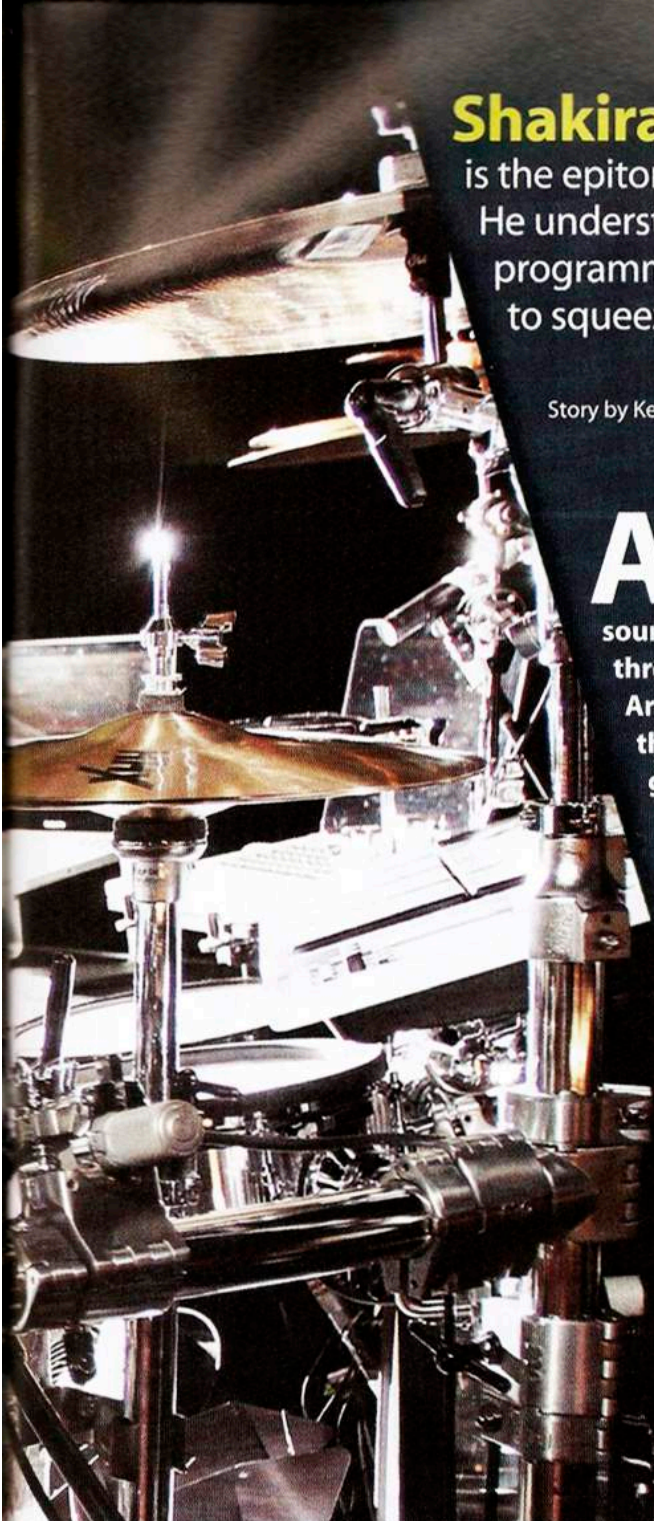






# BRENDAN





## Shakira's longtime drummer

is the epitome of the super-contemporary musician: He understands all the intricacies of electronic programming, *and* he has the chops and groove to squeeze the most out of it.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Rahav

**A**s the drummer for the record-breaking Colombian superstar Shakira since the late '90s, Brendan Buckley possesses an intelligence and a massive groove that shine on all manner of sources. When Shakira shakes her booty to some major cumbia throwdown, Buckley backs her with cajon, doumbek, and Argentine bombo legüero. When she's revisiting the Latin rock that made her famous, Buckley goes au naturel, pounding a big, groovy beat on his DW kit. But it's when la señorita demands it all that Buckley truly raises his game. By incorporating Roland V-Drums and Octapad and various triggers and computer brains into his acoustic kit, Buckley can match the power of any programmer or DJ with a flick of the wrist, igniting a variety of sounds, loops, and effects.

Besides appearing on nearly every Shakira album since 1998's *Dónde Están Los Ladrones?*, Buckley has recorded with DMX, Lauryn Hill, Gloria Estefan, and Julio Iglesias Jr., among many others. Truly a twenty-first-century drummer, Brendan successfully blurs the line between electronic and acoustic sounds and feels, mirroring contemporary music's growing connection to all things electro, virtual, and computer controlled. Here, the drummer details the tools and approaches he uses to bring to life the myriad cutting-edge sounds found on some of the most effective pop music of the modern age.

# BUCKLEY

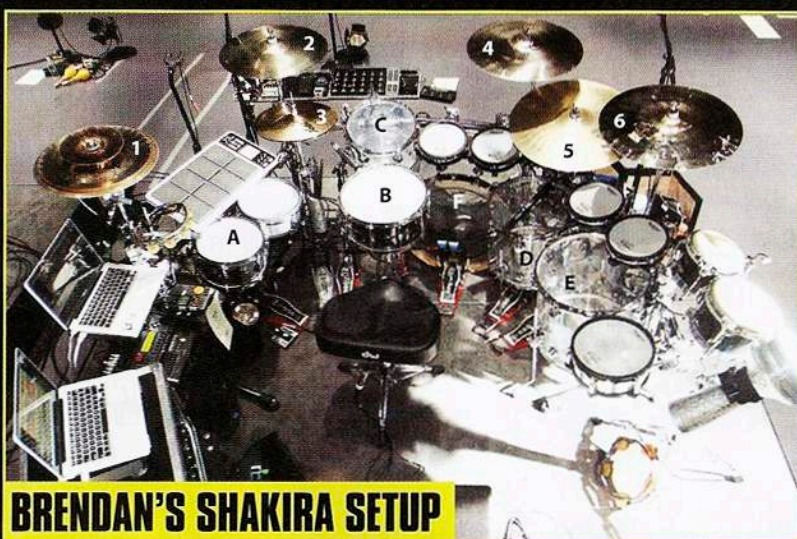




**MD:** Shakira's single "She Wolf" recalls the programmed sounds of Daft Punk or Mouse On Mars. Can you break down the process of sampling the recorded track and applying it to your Roland V-Drums?

**Brendan:** First, I get the Pro Tools sessions from the recording engineer and isolate all the programmed drum machine parts. With "She Wolf" I started by grabbing the numerous kick drums, sampling them, cutting them up, and naming them: verse bass drum, chorus bass drum.... Then I did the same with the snare drums: pre-chorus snare, bridge snare. I did that with every drum and cymbal so I could keep track of where they go in the song arrangement.

Next, I put them into my software sampler, Battery 3, on my Apple MacBook Pro. When I create kits in my laptop, I like to name them after each song. So for "She Wolf," I sampled each drum part, the kicks, claps, sound effects, and reverse cymbal



## BRENDAN'S SHAKIRA SETUP

### Drums:

- A. 6x10 Pacific Blackout snare
- B. 6 1/2x14 Pacific Ace snare
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 12x14 floor tom
- E. 14x16 floor tom
- F. 16x22 bass drum

**Hardware:** DW Super Rack, 5000 series pedals, and 9000 series stands

### Cymbals:

- 1. 17" AAX Studio crash, 16" AAX Chinese, and 8" B8 Pro splash (stacked)
- 2. 18" AA El Sabor crash (brilliant finish)
- 3. 14" HHX Groove Hats
- 4. 19" Vault crash (brilliant finish)
- 5. 21" HHX Raw Bell Dry ride
- 6. 19" HHX X-Treme crash (brilliant finish)

Buckley often places an 8" HH splash and a 14" El Rayo on his snares for special effects, and he uses a 40" Chinese gong.

**Electronics:** Roland Octapad SPD-30, TD-20SX V-Drums kit, KD-7 kick trigger, DB-90 metronome, and Edirol R-09 portable digi-

tal recorder; Apple 13" MacBook Pro laptops and Logic Pro 9 software; Native Instruments Battery 3; Digidesign Pro Tools LE 8; Bias Peak LE 6; Furman PL-Plus C power conditioner; MOTU UltraLite-mk3 audio interfaces; Glyph GT 050Q hard drives; Radial SW8 Auto-Switcher; MIDI Solutions channel splitter; Future Sonics in-ear monitors

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5AB wood-tip sticks, SGWB Steve Gadd wire brushes, T1 timpani mallets, and TW12 Tala Wands

**Percussion:** LP Matador bongos, cajon, and mounted brass Cyclops tambourine; Remo 9" doumbek and 9" riq; Argentine bombo legüero

**Heads:** Remo coated Ambassador snare batters, clear Emperor tom batters and clear Ambassador bottoms, and clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and clear Ambassador front head

**Accessories:** PureSound snare wires and Speedball beaters



swells, and put them into a one-page drumset on my software sampler and named it "She Wolf Drumset." Then I plugged the laptop into my Roland V-Drums electronic drumset and assigned the sounds to different trigger pads. I put the kick sound on one pedal, the snare on a pad, etc.

From there I started practicing the song with that setup and fine-tuning the dynamics to make sure the levels sounded realistic to my ears. If you're a drummer and you're used to an acoustic kick and snare drum being at a certain volume, you'll want to make the electronic drums sound that way too, so they feel exciting to play live. At that point the band can go from a rock approach to an electronic approach because I have both options available. I have all the sounds pumping out of the PA in the rehearsal room at a high volume, so [the band] doesn't even notice when I'm switching back and forth between acoustic and electronic kits.

**MD:** In one Shakira video you play an Octapad within your acoustic setup.

## RECORDINGS

**Volumen Cero** I Can See The Brite Spot /// **Fulano De Tal** Individual /// **Michael Miller** I Made You Up /// **Pedestrian** Ghostly Life /// **Beto Cuevas** Miedo Escénico /// **Shakira** Laundry Service, Dónde Están Los Ladrones?, MTV Unplugged, Oral Fixation Tour (DVD), Live And Off The Record (DVD)

## FAVORITES

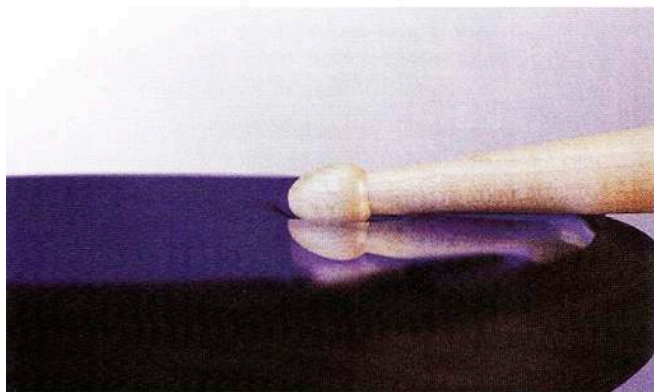
**The Cure** The Head On The Door (Boris Williams) /// **The Police** Ghost In The Machine (Stewart Copeland) /// **Michael Landau** Live 2000 (Toss Panos) /// **Led Zeppelin** Led Zeppelin II (John Bonham) /// **Pat Metheny** Trio 99-00 (Bill Stewart) /// **Nine Inch Nails** The Fragile (Jerome Dillon, Bill Rieflin) /// **Brian Blade Fellowship** Perceptual (Brian Blade) /// **Tori Amos** Scarlet's Walk (Matt Chamberlain) /// **Chick Corea** Friends (Steve Gadd) /// **Shawn Colvin** A Few Small Repairs (Shawn Pelton)

**Brendan:** I've integrated small trigger pads throughout my five-piece acoustic drumset. I have two Roland pads next to my rack tom, two above my floor toms, one to the left of my hi-hat. However, there are some songs with multiple snare drum samples, claps, and booms, and if I'm running out of pads I'll use a Roland Octapad just above the mini snare to the left of my hi-hat. That gives me eight more trigger pads within a very small space. If I'm playing a groove and I need to hit a rimclick, a tambourine, a boom, a

slap, and a bunch of different snare samples, they're all there in one spot. The Octapad is a compact way to cover a lot of sounds.

**MD:** Why do you use V-Drums, as opposed to another e-kit?

**Brendan:** The Roland KD-140 V-Kick feels great, which is a weird thing to say, but it's true. The thud feels like a real acoustic bass drum. Their electronic hi-hat responds like a real hi-hat, and it gets all those in-between notes. And I really like the libraries inside their sound modules and the



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## BRENDAN BUCKLEY

way you can manipulate them. If you select a snare drum, it will ask what type of shell you want, be it wood or metal, what depth, what diameter, what kind of head.... The parameters seem endless.

**MD:** What software do you use in the MacBook to store and assign samples to the Roland pads?

**Brendan:** After I get the Pro Tools sessions, I isolate the drum and percussion tracks and import them into Bias Peak, a two-track editing program that allows me to chop up and edit the parts and name them clearly. I put together a folder of all the edited drum sounds and load them into the software sampler, Battery 3. That program has just one page, with a tic-tac-toe design of rectangles. You just drag the drum sounds into the empty boxes. You can click on the screen with your mouse and hear the sounds as if you're playing the rubber pads of a drum machine. Then I plug the laptop into my V-Drums set and assign the individual squares to trigger pads. You just route them.

**MD:** How do you apply a particular sample to a specific part of the arrangement?

**Brendan:** When you play the V-Drums, what you're really hearing is all the sounds that are stored in that black box attached to the kit. With my current setup, I'm actually bypassing the library in that box and using my own custom sounds stored in Battery 3 on my laptop.

**MD:** Is there a virtual mixer in the laptop, or is that where Logic or Pro Tools comes in?

**Brendan:** The mixer is inside Battery 3. It lets you customize all the sounds. If you think the snare drum is too loud, that's where you would lower the volume or make other adjustments. You can EQ it if there's too much low or high end, or you can add effects, like delays for that reggae rimshot. You can do anything you would do with a regular mixer.

**MD:** How do you create loops to play live?

**Brendan:** In the studio, Shakira might want to try a song three different ways—say, an acoustic rock vibe, an electronic programming approach, and unplugged with brushes or bongos. The engineer and I will work up different versions. Maybe I'll record the acoustic drums first, then pull out my laptop, open up Logic Pro, and look for kick samples, snare drums, and percussion sounds that I find interesting. Then I'll program different patterns and add them to the main Pro Tools session. Finally, I'll do a version playing soft brushes and hand percussion. That gives me three different approaches. When Shakira comes back, we play her A, B, and C. I consider it my job to cover all the possibilities regarding drums and percussion.

**MD:** How do you replicate these loops live?

**Brendan:** Normally I resample all the sounds I've used, put them into Battery 3, and replay the electronic drum parts. Or, if there are acoustic and electronic drums happening simultaneously, I'll put the loops inside a sequencing program like Digital Performer. I'll make a session, find the correct bpm, line up all the loops, pick a starting point, and push play; the click brings me in, and I start playing

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## BRENDAN BUCKLEY

acoustic drums over the loops. As long as I have the click and the loops in my in-ear monitors, I can lock with them.

**MD:** What do you do if disaster strikes the electronics?

**Brendan:** My tech and I are pretty nerdy with triple checking, and we have backup plans for everything. On the previous Shakira tour, with an older setup, I remember two shows in a row where the gear quit at the same spot. During the song "La Tortura," everything just froze. Now I basically have two of everything on stage—almost a duplicate setup—and a button that switches between the two setups. If for some reason the A system shuts down, I push a button and it engages the B system. I have a MIDI splitter that comes out of the Octapad and Roland TD-20, which sends a pair of MIDI cables into the MOTU UltraLites, two devices that allow the Roland gear to talk to the two MacBooks.

**MD:** What's the most difficult electronic

track to play with Shakira?

**Brendan:** Probably "La Tortura," because of the number of rhythms I have to play. In that song there's so much odd programming that I have to replicate live. The coordination is strange. I had to come up with a way to play where I'm playing the bass drum with my right foot and then playing it with my left hand on a pad, and I'm playing the snare drum with my right hand and then my left hand. That was a challenge, but once I got it, it became fun to play.

Another one is "Intuición." There are two different bass drum sounds, so my right foot is hitting different pedals on the floor, jumping back and forth. I play these '80s synth tom fills that are far off to my left side, and I switch to the real snare and hi-hats for the choruses. I'm twisting at the waist 180 degrees and doing yoga splits with my legs. [laughs] I tried to simplify it, but that turned out to be the only way to

catch everything.

**MD:** What advice can you give to drummers just getting started in the world of electronics?

**Brendan:** If you want to experiment with sounds and triggering, I recommend something affordable, like the Roland SPD-S. It samples and has an internal sound library; it will get you used to the idea of having electronics integrated into your acoustic kit. If you want to get into programming or production, get a laptop, but I don't think you necessarily need that for live performance. You really have to do some serious maintenance to make sure it works properly. So I'd recommend a metronome and a drum machine or a simple sampling device. Roland's HandSonic pad is good too. But you can start with an SPD-S. I still use it when I don't want to bring all my gear. It does so much, and sometimes it's all I need.



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