

# UMPHREY'S MCGEE BIOGRAPHY 2009

A mantis is an insect with an exceptional range of vision.

"Mantis" is the Greek word for prophet.

And *Mantis* is the epic new album by Midwestern monsters of improvised rock, Umphrey's McGee.

Consisting of Brendan Bayliss (guitar, vocals), Jake Cinninger (guitar, synthesizers, vocals), Joel Cummins (keyboards, vocals), Andy Farag (percussion), Kris Myers (drums, vocals), and Ryan Stasik (bass), Umphrey's McGee enters its second decade together with their most progressive, melodic and artistically cohesive album to date.

And that date is Inauguration Day, January 20, 2009, when *Mantis* casts another Windy City family into the limelight.

A long-time-coming labor of love as well as an inspiring affirmation of musical brotherhood, *Mantis* is Umphrey's first fully fleshed-out studio statement since 2006's *Safety in Numbers*, which was followed by 2007's odds-and-sods collection *The Bottom Half* and the double live album *Live at Murat*. So when Brendan Bayliss sings, "We believe there's something here worth dying for," to kick off *Mantis*'s majestic twelve-minute title track, you should take him at his word.

*Mantis* is the first Umphrey's album to consist entirely of material never previously performed on the road, where the band rules the improv-rock circuit and plays more than 100 shows each year. Although the band already plays numerous songs they have yet to record, sometimes you just have to hold back in order to deliver a bigger bang. Mystique, thy name is *Mantis*.

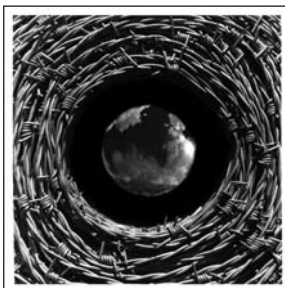
Umphrey's recorded their eighth album in an unusually relaxed fashion over the course of some twenty months in Manny Sanchez's I.V. Lab Studios in Chicago (Steve Albini's Electrical Audio was also used). "It really helps to have a great friend who loves the band and who runs one of the best studios in town," says Cinninger. "Manny has been a god-send." The band's longtime sound caresser, Kevin Browning, meticulously edited and mixed the material on *Mantis*; the result is Umphrey's finest produced album to date.

Virtuosos and connoisseurs of The Riff, Umphrey's has concocted a visual grammar of hand signals and body language to toss musical ideas back and forth during the experimental "Jimmy Stewart" improvisations that punctuate their three-hour shows. *Mantis* likewise began at riff level, when many of the band members presented each other with CDs containing hundreds of riffs they'd composed over the past dozen years. The best of these were painstakingly displaced, modulated, and shifted about like Lego blocks, growing from rough drafts into the elegant and emotionally fulfilling tracks on *Mantis*.

"But isn't Umphrey's basically a jam band?" you ask. Not on this album. "We didn't want to overload the record with 80 minutes of music," Cinninger says. "We wanted to make it

feel a certain way, so we trimmed away a lot of the fat." The result is a concise 54-minute tour de force, where the soulful guitar of Cinninger and intriguing lyrics of Bayliss blend with Cummins' jazz-funk pianistics, Myers' volcanic swing, Stasik's flowing bass, and Farag's bright percussive color – making *Mantis* a virtual roadmap of rock's outer limits.

Even Cinninger's usually predominant guitar lashings sound all the more remarkable for their tactical precision. "There were a few key guitar moments where I really opened up and wanted to make a statement," he says. "I wanted the solos to feel natural, like on old Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin records, when guitar solos were special moments that sounded very live and off the cuff."



*Mantis*'s delivery system is as innovative as the record itself. Pre-orders promise an unprecedented level of downloadable bonus content – including demos, live tracks, alternate takes, and fly-on-the-wall studio visits – that increase

in quantity depending on how many pre-orders are received, putting the overall success of the pre-order in the hands of the fans. The more orders that come in, the more the fans will get. *Mantis* will also use innovative PUSH(TM) technology by Digital Insert to continue delivering exclusive bonus material throughout 2009 via a site that can only be accessed with a physical or digital copy of the album. ([www.umphreys.com/mantis/](http://www.umphreys.com/mantis/)).

Founded in 1997 in the shadows of the Golden Dome of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, Umphrey's McGee soon made Chicago home base, and set their sights on becoming one of the premier live acts in today's touring circuit. Over the course of the last ten years, the band has performed at festivals such as Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza, and continues to sell out shows in the nation's premier venues coast to coast. They have toured Europe multiple times and performed at Japan's Fuji Rock Festival in 2006. As their sound evolves with every passing show, the live concerts sold on their expansive music archive site UMLive.net continue to be in high demand by their hungry fan base. The second decade of Umphrey's McGee is fueled with *Mantis* in the tank, and the band shows no signs of letting up.

Umphrey's McGee will of course be performing music from *Mantis* throughout the year and long into the future.

So catch the buzz.

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