



# BRYAN FERRY/PALOMA FAITH CHERRISSE OSEI

Session star Cherisse Osei tells *Rhythm* why persistence pays off, all about nailing auditions and not being put off by a little blood...

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One of the brightest new stars in Britain's session scene, Cherisse balances high profile gigs with Bryan Ferry and Paloma Faith. She started playing drums in school with teacher Rob Stevens alongside her best friend, and now also a session player, Emily Dolan Davies. "We used to win talent competitions when we were 15, doing these weird drum duos," says Cherisse. "We used to go in every day, 6.30-7 in the morning, play for an hour and a half, do lessons, play at lunchtime for an hour, then play after school for an hour." All that practice paid off when Cherisse joined Mantas, the band founded by Tony Dolan from black metal pioneers Venom, although her parents required some convincing. "They saw these 40-year-old blokes, tattoos, piercings, looking evil and the logo is

666," she says. "They were like, 'Okay, we're going to have to come down and meet these people.' They met them and of course they were lovely people, these Geordies: 'Would you like a cup of tea?'"

Despite the occasional hiccup - notably a security guard refusing to let Cherisse on stage to sound-check, convinced she couldn't be in the band - Cherisse learned a lot from the experience.

"Tony Dolan was a real mentor to me," she says. "He's got a side project called Atomkraft and that was my first ever recording. He guided me through. He's brilliant." Aged 17 she dropped out of high school to join the all-girl rock group The Faders who scored two Top 20 hits before they were dropped by their label. "It just shows you how cutthroat the industry is," says Cherisse. Next she toured with Swedish pop group Calaisa before an MD called Mike

Stevens invited her to meet Mika, a young singer-songwriter who was just about to go global.

#### How much impact did the Mika gig have on your career?

"I was 19, that was my really big session gig and I was with Mika for seven years. When I joined him he hadn't released anything. All I heard was three songs and my friends were like, 'That's going to Number One, he's going to be huge.' I thought, 'Okay, maybe he is, I don't know,' and within a year we went from supporting The Feeling at Shepherd's Bush Empire to playing in Parc Des Princes, the big football stadium in Paris, our own show, 60,000 people. Everything went absolutely mental. I think the first year and a half we worked out that we went round the world eight times. I wasn't home for two and a half