

THE FUNKY BEAT

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INTRODUCTION

This book was originally going to be the companion text to *Tower of Groove, Pts. 1 and 2*. As I began to look at what was done in the videos, I came to the realization that more material had to be added in order to more fully explain what was going on. A video, like any other performance, is a singular event, and there is a lot of background that is drawn upon to make that particular performance what it is. Because of that, I felt that additional concepts and exercises would help drummers understand my videos more fully, which would then better equip them to take this material beyond the pages of this book. I also wanted to show how broad this subject is, and that beyond basic ability, invention is a key ingredient in having your own voice on the instrument. The title, *The Funky Beat*, expresses the essence and tradition of this unique drumming style. Included in this book are the drum charts and grooves from the songs performed in the *Tower of Groove* videos, an explanation of the many techniques that are used, plus *additional* conceptual and practical exercises that explain *how* I put it all together and, more importantly, *where* it all came from. Many drummers ask questions such as “where do I begin if I want to learn about this drumming style?” or “how do I develop the sound level concept?” or “how is funk related to other drumming styles?” These are things that I asked myself at one time; only through patience and perseverance did I get the answers. The goal here is to shed as much light as possible on these and other topics and to “de-mystify” this entire area of drumming. Overall, my books and videos showcase the type of playing that I love the most, which comes from the tradition of drumset beats and that drumset beats become signature elements in songs. A basic theme that runs throughout all of this material, whether written or performed, involves the application of sound levels to the hands and feet. In my book *Future Sounds* (©1989 Alfred Publishing), a detailed description of the sound level concept is given with the purpose being to illustrate that idea through a series of exercises. This text will illustrate how the sound level concept and other ideas are used in the musical setting of the *Tower of Groove* videos and how *The Funky Beat* is connected to many areas of music far beyond the context of this book.

SOUND LEVELS

With the exception of jazz-based time playing which for the most part is generated by the ride cymbal and the left foot, the three most widely used component parts of the drumset are the hi-hat, the snare drum, and the bass drum. These voices are the basic drumset components that are used for time playing in all rock styles and many world beat styles. All of the examples in this book are worked from these three basic voices, and then, of course, toms, cymbals, bells, blocks and other drumset sounds are added. The control of sound levels is a crucial part of modern drumset playing and should be at the top of the list amongst concepts to develop that are foundational and essential. The effect that this creates, once developed, is quite musical. Very soft unaccented notes on the snare drum create another tonality within the hi-hat/snare drum combination that sounds like an additional hi-hat pitch. In studying this technique, one discovers that it is a fairly recent addition to modern drumset playing and, the pioneers were many of the great drummers of the James Brown bands of the 60's and early 70's. Certainly it's not a technique that I've invented, and realistically every drummer who plays modern music uses this technique to some extent. In looking at the video tapes (*Tower of Groove, Pts 1 & 2* and *Talking Drums*) you'll notice more variation in the stick heights than I describe in my book *Future Sounds*. That's because in a real playing situation, as you are reacting to the dynamics of the music, there will be many stick heights. I say two basic levels because this gives you a place to start from and return to all the time . . . a “home base,” technically. A consistent approach technically is very important and will serve you for a lifetime.

THE VOCABULARY OF THE FUNKY BEAT

As I gave all of this some thought I felt it necessary to include some exercises that address the issue of basic vocabulary. Every musical style has things about it that separate it from other styles which can be called vocabulary. As in any language, this basic vocabulary is used and then shaped by the user to communicate his or her musical thoughts. Part of this involves knowing the history of the funky groove and the players who were responsible for bringing it to us. The funk style that's very popular here in the 90's had its beginnings in the 60's and early 70's, and the innovative drummers of the James Brown bands (along with a few others!) were responsible for a lot of it. Important drummers of that era whose work is well documented include: Clayton Filyau, Jabo Starks, Clyde Stubblefield, Melvin Parker (James Brown), Zig Modeliste (The Meters), Gregg Errico (Sly & The Family Stone) and Bernard Purdie (Aretha Franklin, Mongo Santamaria and countless others) and James Gadsen with Charles Wright & The Watts 103rd St. Rhythm Band. The Watts 103rd did a historic recording in 1970 or '71 with a singer named Arlester Christian . . . this was called "Dyke & The Blazers" . . . unbelievable, ahead-of-its-time Funk drumming. Rick Marotta was the first drummer that I heard playing only the "and" of every beat on the hi-hat in his grooves. This was at Keystone Korner in San Francisco in 1971. Around that same time period Rick played his "and" hi-hat funk on a recording by Howard Tate called "She's A Burglar" . . . one of my favorite recordings of all time. A very important drummer whose work is not well documented is Pete DePoe. You say "who"? Pete DePoe was the drummer with a group from Los Angeles called REDBONE. Redbone had several records out on the Epic label in the 70's, and some hit songs as well. Their first record was a double album and on it was a song called "Prehistoric Rhythm" . . . the lyric was ". . . the prehistoric rhythm with the king kong beat . . ." This beat was called "The King Kong" and was a rhythm played on the hi-hat or the bell of the cymbal over the top of Funk grooves. This rhythm is also the same as one of the many *cuá* rhythms in the Puerto Rican style called bomba. Some friends of mine in Los Angeles told me about the "King Kong" in late 1970 or early 1971 and upon hearing it I was so impressed that I decided to learn how to do it, but in my way. This "King Kong Beat" is very Latin sounding and moved me toward listening to more Latin music and attempting to have an element of that in my playing. All of the grooves that I began to come up with were inspired to a large degree by Pete DePoe's King Kong Beat, the layered sticking concept which came from listening to Bernard Purdie, The Meters, James Brown, Gregg Errico, the improvisation of Jazz and anything else I could get my hands on. Then came the process of fusing all of these elements in an all-out effort to be myself . . . a process which continues to this day. So, just as with any language, the vocabulary of the funky groove continues to evolve. Contained in this study are some (certainly not all) coordination concepts that I've personalized for myself over the years. These rhythmic "cells" are part of the basic vocabulary that I use as building blocks when creating grooves. This "data base" is constantly being added to as I grow musically. However, there are certain elements to it that are essential and are what I consider to be core concepts. These "core" elements are: "favorite" rhythms, layered and, or linear stickings, accent control, permutation, voice substitutions, polymeters, polyrhythms and some rudiments. Also included in this mix is a basic understanding of how the rhythms of the Caribbean, Brazil, Africa and New Orleans fit together and even some concepts based on Indian music. Throughout the years I've personalized all of these ideas to fit my playing style and continue to learn how to apply these things in many ways. The deeper I get into studying and playing, the more useful and valuable a personalized drumming vocabulary becomes. All of these measures can be broken up into smaller components that can then be used to create other grooves. All the parts are interchangeable.

4-N MATTER

BY P. HORVATH/N. STACHEL

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§§

ADD BASS, KYBDS., 4X'S/8 BARS, AT **D.S.** 2X'S/4 BARS
...AT **D.S.S.** 4X'S/8 BARS

MELODY...TAKE 2ND ENDING AT **D.S.**
TAKE BOTH ENDINGS AT **D.S.S.**
PLAY 4

FILL - - - - **A**

BLACK NINE

BY R. OBIEDO/D. GARIBALDI

A **PLAY 6**

B MELODY...3X'S/12 BARS (PLAY FIG. W/ SD 2ND TIME THRU B)

1. ...REPEAT TO A...

2.

3. 3. 3. 3.

C DRUMSET/PERC SOLO...8X'S/8 BARS FUNK GROOVE/ADD BASS, KYBDS., GUITAR **PLAY 3 FILL**

D %

FILL ⊕