INSIDE THIS BOOK

INTRODUCTION

"**H**ere's a tune I want to do. It's a slow 12/8 but I don't want to do it like that. I'm not sure what I want to do with it. Go to the drums and try to come up with an approach for this tune. I'll stay here in the control room and I'll tell you when I hear something I like." That's what Irma Thomas said to me in the studio while working on her Grammy winning record *After the Rain*. Irma, the producer, two engineers, and the entire band were all waiting for me to come up with an idea. We're in a nice (read: not cheap) studio and the clock is ticking. Irma is a great singer and the Queen of New Orleans Soul. I've been listening to her since I was born, and she is one of my parents' favorite artists. You know the Rolling Stones' "Time Is On My Side"? Irma sang the original version. All that said, of course I wanted to do a good job, and I wanted Irma to be happy. So I went in and started playing some ideas I had, and I started modifying them for the tune. I changed out my bass drum, experimented with different sticks, rods, and blasticks, and I tried some different tunings on several snare drums. In a few minutes I had something Irma was happy with and we had a new direction for the tune. I was able to do this because I have a deep catalog of ideas and grooves which I can draw from and modify, even when placed in the hot seat.

Many times I have been in the studio or working on music with an artist or a group of musicians to find we are all reaching for a common goal. We are all trying to make the work we are creating turn out the best it can, and hopefully others will find it good or even great. Sometimes though, reaching our collective goal can prove challenging and may even seem unattainable. I constantly make adjustments to what I am doing at the drums to help make the music better. Sometimes I choose to make these adjustments myself, and sometimes I am asked to make certain adjustments. Sometimes these adjustments are relatively straightforward and simple, like "Could you change that snare drum?", "Could you dampen that bass drum some more?", or "Could you go to the ride for the chorus?" But sometimes these adjustments require experimentation and even a bit of guesswork. I've been asked, "Could you swing what you are doing a bit less and play straighter?", "Could you change the beat you are playing?", or "Here's a demo of a tune; I don't want to do it anything like this, but I'm not sure exactly how I want to do it. Go out there and play some stuff and I'll tell you if I like any of it."

My intention in writing this book is to present my approach to groove playing from a creative point of view. While we'll cover some history and background, I'd like to primarily focus on ways you can combine different styles and methods to come up with new grooves. We'll examine many nuances and details and through a deeper understanding of these finer points, you'll discover new ways to improve your groove. You'll learn how to fine-tune your playing and improve what it is you are doing. I'm hoping that by working with these concepts, you will eventually be able to mine your own resources and learn how to turn your grooves into musical gold.

A groove is often described as what happens when two or more people lock into each other and the music at hand in a way that transcends just playing the notes. A good groove can make a whole room full of people suddenly want to move. This is a very powerful thing to witness, and even more powerful when you are actually involved in the groove and the music moving the people.

Even though a "groove" is usually created by two or more people and a "beat" is usually created with the drums by themselves, I like the term *groove* more than *beat* and will be calling a lot of the "beats" in this book "grooves." I suppose my terminology is also a result of my hope that the beats in this book will be used to create new grooves and move new masses of people.

INTRODUCTION

While my first book, *Take It To The Street,* presented my approach to the many aspects of New Orleans drumming, this book is intended to explore my approach to funk and other types of groove drumming. This book can in many ways be seen as a continuation of *Take It To The Street*.

There are many classic grooves transcribed throughout, and while I encourage learning these as faithfully as possible, I also suggest using them as tools to create new grooves as well. By understanding what has already been done, we can better understand how to progress forward.

You may want to consider some suggestions for ways to use this book. I suggest listening to the CD by itself to further internalize the feel of a lot of these grooves.

Also, you may want to try copping the grooves by ear first. Try coming up with your own variations based on your first impressions of what you hear. Remember to *record or notate* what you play. You can always go back and learn the grooves note for note, but you can't always recapture the inspiration you get from hearing something for the first time.

ABOUT THE AUDIO

Throughout the book, you will find notation examples of grooves with numbers next to them. To listen to me play and demonstrate the grove, simply tap on the example, and playback will start.

JAMES BROWN

Now, for fun let's blend these two grooves together.

5. "Big Chief," "I've Got Money" combo.

Try to play this in the range of 100-162 bpm.

Fillyau's innovations lit a fire in the James Brown camp. Not one to be outdone, James Brown (who liked to play drums on his own songs from time to time) came up with this groove to "Limbo Jimbo" in 1962.

6. "Limbo Jimbo" 1962, drums: James Brown, c. 112 bpm.

Nat Kendrick then came up with the following groove for "Soul Food, Parts 1 & 2" in 1963. Notice some similarities in the accent structure of this beat to "Limbo Jimbo"? This beat foreshadows many beats to come with its displaced backbeats, active grace notes, and buzzes.

7. "Soul Food, Parts 1 & 2" 1963, drums: Nat Kendrick, c. 123 bpm.
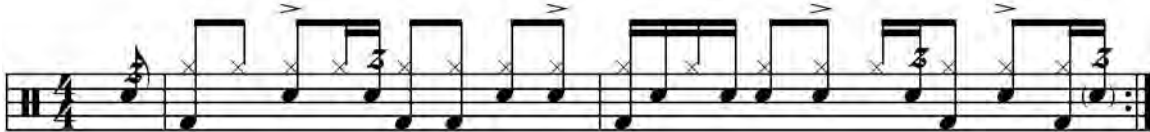
In 1963 Clayton Fillyau played this beat for a live version of Brown's "Signed, Sealed and Delivered." Notice the similarities in the accent structure of this groove and Clyde Stubblefield's groove to "I Got the Feelin'."

8. "Signed, Sealed and Delivered" 1963, drums: Clayton Fillyau, c. 158 bpm
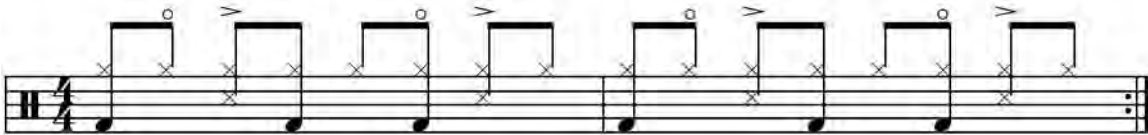
JAMES BROWN

In 1964, Melvin Parker recorded "Out Of Sight," and in 1965 he recorded "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" and "I Got You (I Feel Good)." He introduced a clean, stripped-down style that utilized the cross-stick (or rim click) technique on the snare and, with "Brand New Bag" and "I Feel Good", the recurring open hi-hat on the & of 1 and the & of 3. This opening of the hi-hat on the &'s of 1 and 3 creates a "shoop" that sets up the backbeat for a crisp snap. This development has appeared many times since (especially in the drumming of Jabo Starks), and continues to appear in great grooves to this day.
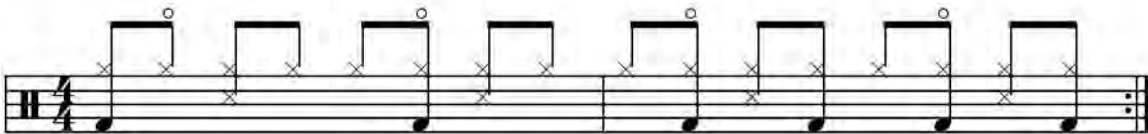
9. "Out Of Sight" 1964, drums: Melvin Parker, c. 130 bpm.
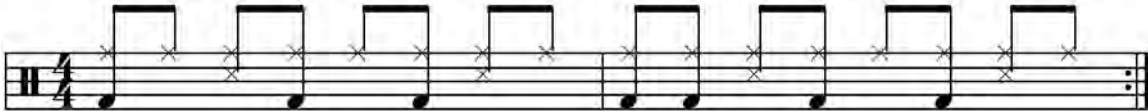
10. "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" 1965, drums: Melvin Parker, c. 127 bpm.

11. "I Got You (I Feel Good)" 1965, drums: Melvin Parker, c. 147 bpm.

In 1966 James Brown was so glad to finally have wooed Jabo Starks away from Bobby "Blue" Bland that he recorded a tune with Jabo and named it after his new drummer. Notice the similarities to Fillyau's beat on "I've Got Money"?

12. "Jabo" 1966, drums: John "Jabo" Starks, c. 128 bpm.

BACKBEATS

551.

552.

You can also bring the right hand down to the stick to get the cross stick flam that we just examined. Let's add in some open hi-hat notes as well.

553.

554.

555.

BACKBEATS

Now to give you an example of some of the various sounds you can get with cross sticks, check out this short solo featuring some of what is possible with cross sticks.

556. AUDIO ONLY

Now let's examine some different muffling techniques that can yield some interesting results.

One of the most popular techniques is to put a wallet on the snare…

557. AUDIO ONLY

You could also try a pack of cigarettes, a hockey puck, or a Moongel damper pad as well.

My personal preference is gaff or duct tape with one, two, or three ribbons folded into it. The ribbon creates more mass in a small amount of surface area and is very effective for touring. You can set it and forget it and it doesn't come off while playing or fall off when you pack or move the drum.

558. AUDIO ONLY

For a more subtle technique, some people use a Band Aid on top or underneath the batter head. You could also tape tissue paper to the head with duct or gaff tape to muffle the drum even further.

You could use a Remo O-ring. Steve Gadd has used these to great effect for years.

559. AUDIO ONLY

One thing I've found very useful is to place my pandeiro upside down on top of the batter head. This gives an instant Al Jackson vibe. It helps if the snare is tuned lower for this as well.

560. AUDIO ONLY

If you don't have a pandeiro, you can get a very similar effect with a 12-inch drum head turned upside down on the batter head. This is also easier to play as you don't have to get inside the shell of the pandeiro, which is like dealing with a very high rim that doesn't sound good when you hit it accidentally.

561. AUDIO ONLY

You could also use three sheets of paper lightly taped to the batter head for a similar vibe. This works well because you can still play cross sticks.

For a thuddier sound, you could place a T-shirt or a towel over the batter head.

562. AUDIO ONLY

Now we can start to add additional sounds to the backbeat for different colors and textures. Let's start by adding a tambourine to the backbeat. I usually mount the tambourine to the left of my hi-hat so I can play backbeats with my right while playing the tambourine with my left.

563. AUDIO ONLY

With the mounted tambourine on my left, I can also play other syncopated ideas on the tambourine with my left hand, while I continue to rock the steady groove with my right.

These grooves are similar to some of the grooves in the cross stick section. They also sound great with the left hand on the pandeiro.
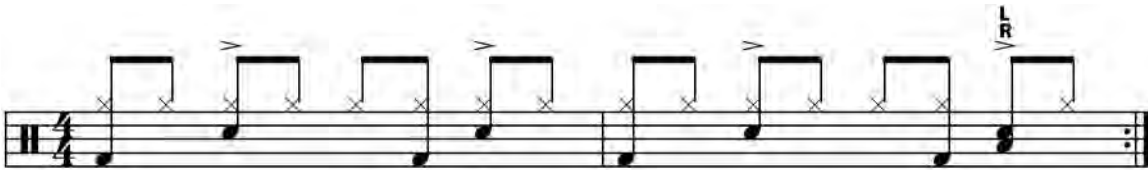
564.

BACKBEATS

565.

566.

Another effective tactic is to play the floor tom or rack tom on the backbeat á la Al Jackson. I've read that Earl Palmer was actually the first to do this. He was asked by Phil Spector to play the backbeat on the tom along with the snare to fatten it up. You could play it on different backbeats with in a two measure phrase.

567.

568.

Check out Al Jackson's groove to the intro and choruses of "Still In Love With You." Note that the snare and rack tom are tuned lower and muffled quite a bit.

569. *"I'm Still In Love With You"* Al Green 1972, drums: Al Jackson Jr., c. 97 bpm.