

# A FUNKY PRIMER

For the Rock Drummer

by CHARLES DOWD

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CHARLES DOWD began playing drums at an early age. His formal training on drumset, vibes, marimba and timpani led to a bachelor's and master's degree in percussion performance under the tutelage of Anthony Cirone. During this period he played jazz drums with Don Ellis and Oscar Williams, and rock with Pablo Cruise's Cory Lerios while working as an "extra" with the San Francisco Symphony. Charles made the move to New York City to do doctoral work on classical timpani and percussion with famed New York Philharmonic timpanist, Saul Goodman, at the Juilliard School. He began recording again on drumset, this time as a regular at RCA Studios, as well as free-lance work in New York City performing both classical and jazz.

Accepting an auditioned position in Oregon, he conducts the University of Oregon Percussion Ensemble, which is dedicated to the performance of new and experimental percussion "art" music. Charles is principal timpanist/percussionist with the Eugene (Oregon) Symphony and performs regularly in the famed Hult Center for the Performing Arts. As a drumset artist, he is a Ludwig clinician, and is author of *A Funky Primer for the Rock Drummer* and *A Funky Thesaurus for the Rock Drummer*. Charles is also the author of *Velocity Warm-ups for Jazz Vibes and Marimba* and an active mallet player with his own jazz vibes quartet. He is principal timpanist of the Carillo Music Festival in California and records often. Author of *The Well-Tempered Timpanist*, his versatile playing has sparked critical acclaim.

*With special thanks to Anthony Cirone, Roger Liston, Rick Quintinal and Betty Dowd, whose combined influence and help have made this textbook possible.*

*Cover by Susan Altstadt*

"We are on the threshold of observing real growth of today's musicians who are grasping what has gone before and going forward to create tomorrow's beautiful music. This book is hopefully part of that future."

CAROL KAYE



## *Introduction*

AFRICAN AND CUBAN INFLUENCES IN THE MUSIC OF THE UNITED STATES HAVE PRODUCED A UNIQUE BLEND OF BOTH HARMONIC AND RHYTHMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWO CULTURES. THE AFRO-CUBAN INFLUENCE ON RHYTHMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS INCREASED WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME TO THE POINT WHERE CONTEMPORARY MAN IS NOW ABLE TO EXPERIENCE RHYTHMS OF A HIGHER DEGREE OF COMPLEXITY THAN EVER BEFORE. IN A SENSE, THE TIMELESS RHYTHMIC VIRTUOSOS OF AFRICA HAVE "TURNED ON" DRUMMING IN THE WESTERN WORLD. AFRICAN, CUBAN, AND INDIAN DRUMMERS HAVE FOR THE PAST CENTURIES PRODUCED SUCH COMPLEX RHYTHMIC IDEAS AS TO MAKE OUR MODERN SUCCESSFUL DRUMMERS LOOK TRITE. PERSONS MASTERING THE ART OF PLAYING THE DRUMS IN THE STYLE OF AFRICA OR INDIA USUALLY SPEND A MAJOR PORTION OF THEIR LIFETIME WITH ONE "MASTER" IN ORDER TO LEARN THE RHYTHMIC WISDOM OF THE AGES.

JAZZ DRUMMING HAS EVOLVED FROM THE UNIQUE PHENOMENON OF THE FUSION OF AFRICAN AND WESTERN MUSICAL INFLUENCES IN AND AROUND NEW ORLEANS. THE SPREADING OF THESE INFLUENCES BY THE FREED SLAVES LED TO THE JAZZ DRUMMERS OF THE BIG CITIES WHO, IN TURN, CONTRIBUTED IN THEIR OWN PERSONAL WAY TO THE STYLES WE KNOW TODAY. IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A PECULIAR INCREASED INTEREST IN AFRO-CUBAN STYLES IN POPULAR MUSIC WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE JAZZ DRUMMER.

THE ROCK DRUMMER OF TODAY WILL FIND BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF JAZZ AND LATIN STYLES TO BE A GREAT HELP IN CREATING ARTFUL RHYTHMIC STATEMENTS. THE MASTERING OF COORDINATION PROBLEMS FOUND IN TODAY'S JAZZ AND SOUL MUSIC IS A MUST IF THE ROCK DRUMMER IS TO KNOW HIS INSTRUMENT AND EXPLORE COMPLEX RHYTHMS. FROM THIS KNOWLEDGE, THE ROCK DRUMMER CAN FUSE HIS OWN STYLE, BE IT HARD ROCK, SOUL, RHYTHM AND BLUES, JAZZ-ROCK OR OTHERS.

THE ADVENT OF MODERN SOCIETY HAS ELIMINATED THE PRACTICALITY OF LEARNING ANY ART "BY EAR". TIMES ARE SIMPLY MUCH TOO FAST MOVING FOR ANY DRUMMER TO STUDY TEN YEARS WITH THE DRUMMER OF HIS CHOICE. THE NOTATION OF WESTERN MUSICIANS HAS OFFERED A MECHANICAL WAY OF COMMUNICATING RHYTHM, BUT THAT TOO TAKES MUCH MORE TIME TO MASTER THAN THE AVERAGE DRUM ENTHUSIAST IS WILLING TO DEVOTE. ACQUIRING THE ART OF DRUMMING A PARTICULAR STYLE IS POSSIBLE, THEREFORE, BY LEARNING TO READ TO A LIMITED EXTENT AND LISTEN TO A LARGE EXTENT. THE ONLY OTHER NECESSARY ACTIVITY MUST BE WATCHING OTHER DRUMMERS AND PLAYING. PHILOSOPHIES OF OTHER DRUMMERS ARE ALSO AN AID IN REALIZING PERSONAL POTENTIAL IN CREATING ARTFUL DRUMMING.

THIS BOOK DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO TEACH THE READING OF DRUM NOTATION. IT ATTEMPTS NEITHER TO NOTATE NUMEROUS PSEUDO-FANCY SOUL RHYTHMS NOR TO ENFORCE A CERTAIN STYLE OF HOLDING THE STICKS OR OF PLAYING THE DRUMS. THIS BOOK SIMPLY OFFERS A COURSE OF INSTRUCTION TO THE LIMITED READER THAT HAS PROVEN TO BE SUCCESSFUL TIME AND AGAIN, BASED ON A STYLE OF ROCK DRUMMING. PURSUED PROPERLY, THIS METHOD OFFERS: A DRASTIC INCREASE IN THE SPEED AND ENDURANCE OF A DRUMMER'S HANDS AND FEET; A KNOWLEDGE OF ROCK-ORIENTED RHYTHMS; BASIC INDEPENDENCE OF THE HANDS AND FEET; AND THE MASTERING OF SOUL AND JAZZ-ROCK BEATS OF FAMOUS TWENTIETH CENTURY DRUMMERS.

THE USER OF THIS PRIMER MUST REMEMBER THAT GOOD THINGS COME WITH TIME AND A DISCIPLINED STUDY OF SOUL DRUMS AND SOUL MUSIC IS THE

ONLY KEY TO SUCCESSFUL DRUMMING IN THIS STYLE. ALL PRELIMINARY EXERCISES MUST BE EXECUTED SLOWLY AND GRADUALLY INCREASED IN SPEED UNTIL THE DESIRED TEMPO IS REACHED. ALL EXERCISES AND BEATS MUST BE PRACTICED OVER AND OVER AGAIN UNTIL MASTERED . . . SPORADIC PLAYING THROUGH THIS BOOK WILL ONLY RESULT IN MEDIOCRE PLAYING. DISCIPLINE IS REQUIRED IF ONE IS TO PERFECT ARTFUL DRUMMING THAT STANDS APART IN A CROWD OF DRUMMERS.

### *How to use this book*

FOR BEST RESULTS, THIS BOOK SHOULD BE PLAYED THROUGH IN THE DESIGNATED ORDER PRESCRIBED. THE SECTIONS OF THIS PRIMER ARE STRUCTURED SO AS TO PROVIDE A CONTINUOUS CHALLENGE TO THE DRUMMER'S COORDINATION WHILE BUILDING SKILLS IN RHYTHMIC PERCEPTION. THE AUTHOR SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES FOR EFFICIENT USE OF THIS BOOK:

- 1) READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS
- 2) MASTER SECTION 1
- 3) MASTER SECTION 2
- 4) MASTER SECTION 3A KEEPING STEADY TIME. (SUGGESTED TEMPI:  
♩ = 86, ♩ = 140)
- 5) MASTER SECTION 3B. THIS IS LEFT HAND INDEPENDENT STUDY WITH NO BASS DRUM WRITTEN. AFTER MASTERING, INSERT ORIGINAL BASS RHYTHMS AND PUT THEM AGAINST THE LEFT HAND RHYTHMS. THERE ARE OVER 3,200 POSSIBILITIES JUST BASED ON THE RHYTHMS IN SECTION 3A.
- 6) MASTER SECTION 3C AS WRITTEN
- 7) MASTER SECTION 4
- 8) MASTER SECTION 5



## *To the Teacher*

THIS BOOK OFFERS VARIOUS STICKING EXERCISES IN SECTION 1 THAT SHOULD BE SPREAD OVER A PERIOD OF ABOUT SIX WEEKS OF DAILY PRACTICE OF FIFTEEN MINUTES. MOST PRACTICE TIME CAN BE CONDENSED IF THE STUDENT PRACTICES CONTINUOUSLY IN A RELAXED FASHION. IT IS NOT UNCOMMON THAT A BEGINNING DRUMMER SHOULD SPEND AT LEAST ONE HALF HOUR OR MORE ON THESE EXERCISES EACH DAY.

SECTION 2 CONSISTS OF RHYTHMS COMMONLY RELATED TO ROCK AND IS TO BE USED ONLY ON THE SNARE DRUM USING ALTERNATE STICKING. KEEPING TIME WITH ONE OR BOTH FEET IS HELPFUL IN THESE EXERCISES. THE RHYTHMS ARE CAREFULLY DESIGNED SO THAT LESSONS OF FIVE STROKE ROLLS, NINE STROKE ROLLS, FLAMS AND SYNCOPATION MAY BE TAUGHT BY SIMPLY WRITING IN THE DESIRED TIES, ROLLS, OR FLAMS ON YOUR OWN.

## *To the Student*

MANY DRUMMERS HAVE OPPOSITE OPINIONS ABOUT THE SOUND THEY WANT FROM THEIR DRUMS AND HOW TO GET IT. ALTHOUGH THIS BOOK SIMPLY REFLECTS MY OPINIONS, IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED AMONG MOST GREAT DRUMMERS OF TODAY THAT ONE VERY IMPORTANT ASPECT OF PLAYING GOOD DRUMS IS RELAXATION. THE WRISTS, FEET, ARMS, BODY AND MIND MUST BE FLEXIBLE AND THE DRUMMER MUST SEEK TO OBTAIN TOTAL RELAXATION AND CONTROL WHILE PLAYING. RELAXED REPETITION OF THE STICKING EXERCISES WHILE WORKING FOR SPEED AND ENDURANCE WILL HELP GENERAL RELAXATION. BREATHING ALSO HELPS THE DRUMMER PLAY, AND DEEPLY ENHALING AND EXHALING WITH A PHRASE WILL ALSO HELP RELAXATION.

TUNING THE DRUMS IS A VERY TIME-CONSUMING, BUT REWARDING ACTIVITY THAT MUST BE LEARNED FROM THE DRUMMER OF ONE'S CHOICE. ALWAYS REMEMBER TO TUNE TOM TOMS, SNARE, AND BASS AS ONE WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE HEARD IN THE AUDIENCE . . . NOT AS THEY SOUND AT THE SET. THIS MEANS LET SOMEONE PLAY ON YOUR DRUMS WHILE YOU WALK BACK AND LISTEN. GENERALLY LET SOME OF THE NATURAL "RING" OF THE DRUMS COME THROUGH . . . A DEAD SOUND SOUNDS TOO DEAD IN THE AUDIENCE AND DOESN'T PROJECT AS WELL. TUNE WITH CONTRAST WITHIN THE SAME TONE COLOR AND KEEP THE KIND OF MUSIC ONE IS TO PLAY IN MIND. DIFFERENT MUSIC REQUIRES DIFFERENT SOUNDING DRUMS.

TUNING CYMBALS IS ANOTHER MATTER OF EXPERIMENTATION AND CHOICE. MASKING TAPE MAY BE PLACED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS UNDER A CYMBAL TO PRODUCE ANY NUMBER OF SOUNDS.

## *On Technique*

THE AUTHOR FINDS CERTAIN RULES HELP HIM PLAY BETTER. 1) PLAY "OFF" THE DRUM. THIS MEANS ALLOWING THE STICKS AND BASS PEDAL TO "NATURALLY" FLY OFF THE HEAD UTILIZING THE NATURAL REBOUND OF THE STICKS. THEN BY FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH A GRACEFUL WRIST STROKE OR

PEDAL STROKE THE SOUND OF THE DRUM IS "PULLED OUT" OF THE DRUM.  
2) FOR HARD ROCK, ALWAYS PLAY THE DRUM IN THE CENTER OF THE HEAD.  
THIS GIVES A FUNKIER SOUND AND DECREASES THE CHANCES OF BREAKING THE  
HEAD OR DRUM STICKS. 3) GRIP STICKS FIRMLY AT THE FULCRUM ONLY.  
DON'T PLAY UNTIL THE HANDS BLEED . . . STUDY THE TECHNIQUES OF PRO-  
FESSIONAL DRUMMERS.

TECHNIQUE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FIVE MINUTE SOLO OR A  
FIFTEEN MINUTE SOLO. RELAXATION IS A KEY FACTOR IN GETTING AROUND  
THE DRUMS SMOOTHLY. TECHNIQUE TAKES MONTHS TO MASTER DEPENDING ON  
WHICH TECHNIQUE ONE IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE . . . CHOOSE A GOOD ONE AND  
STICK WITH IT.

$\text{♩} = 86$  $\text{♩} = 120$ 

## SECTION 2

R L R L etc.

Musical score for Section 2, measures 1 through 14. The score is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 86$  and  $\text{♩} = 120$ . The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The measures are numbered 1 through 14 on the left side of the staff. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The measures are numbered 1 through 14 on the left side of the staff.



This musical score is for guitar, spanning measures 19 to 36. It is organized into two columns of measures, with each measure represented by a single staff. The notation is minimalist, using 'x' marks to indicate fretted notes and horizontal lines to represent chords. Measure numbers are placed at the beginning of each staff. The score is divided into two systems of four staves each, with a double bar line separating the two systems. The notation is as follows:

Measure	Notes (approximate)
19	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
20	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
21	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
22	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
23	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
24	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
25	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
26	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
27	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
28	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
29	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
30	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
31	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
32	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
33	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
34	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
35	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th
36	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th