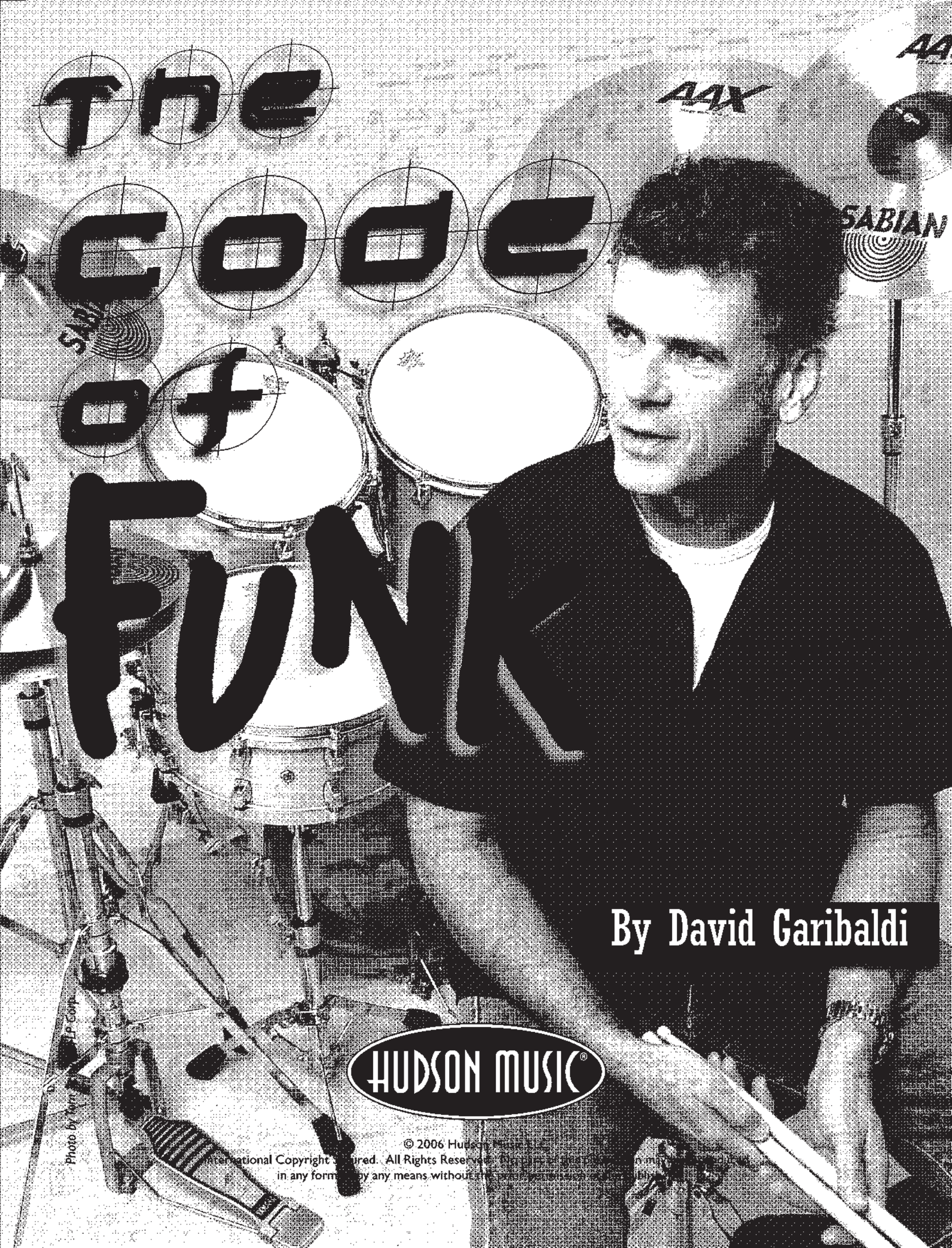

The Code of Funk

By David Garibaldi

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Introduction

Tower of Power was born in 1968, in the San Francisco Bay Area, during a period of social and musical revolution. The "What if?" mentality that transformation brings was a fundamental concept in Bay Area music-making and shaped the consciousness of the band. The music of Tower of Power is based upon tradition, but also experimentation. Everything we hear, we digest, and then we personalize.

When I was 17 years old and beginning to discover myself musically, I would listen to my favorite drummers and marvel at how unique each one sounded. I could hear a recording and know who the drummer was just by listening. This was what I liked most about my heroes.

It was at this time that I decided if I was going to be a professional musician, I wanted to have my own sound and signature just like the great drummers I admired. For better or for worse, I've been able to accomplish this.

The Tower of Power drum chair has given me the freedom to play any way I choose, and as a result, I've found my voice. This autonomy has allowed me to build a place for myself where I can use many of my musical interests.

At this writing, I've been a working musician for 41 years. I have no plans to "retire"—my story is still being written. My belief is that there's much more to accomplish, and even though I've been at this for many years, I have the feeling that many of my best days are still in front of me.

This book is one I've wanted to do for a long time, and gives me the opportunity to play and teach. As a player, my goal is to perform at the highest level I can, each time I sit down at my drums. As a teacher, my goal is to inspire imagination and creativity and to pass on what I've learned.

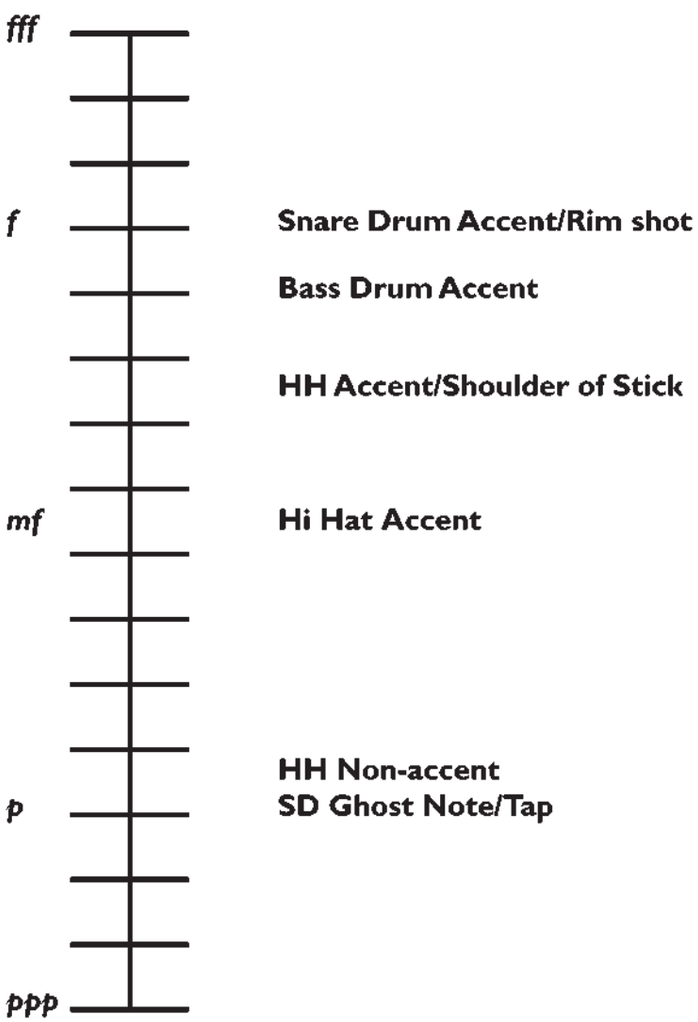
My best advice: Make every effort to find your voice and develop it. Be yourself; at best, this is all you can do. The greats are great because they've found a way to be themselves. Work hard; the only time success comes before work, is in the dictionary. Stay motivated; this is the most important component to a long and satisfying music life.

—John David Garibaldi,
On the tour bus, somewhere
between Los Angeles and Phoenix,
Sunday, June 26, 2005

Techniques and Tips

Development of the Two Sound Levels with the Hands

The HH, SD and BD are the three basic drum set components used in the funk drumming style. Understanding how these voices interact is an important key to building a powerful vocabulary. This graph illustrates the dynamic distances among these three voices.



Graph by Roland Henkel.

These levels are always controlled by the overall dynamic level of the music being played. In a normal playing situation, the rimshot may or may not be forte (*f*). This is determined by the situation. The graph illustrates the differences in the two levels and is not meant to be interpreted literally. Most recordings will reflect what is seen in this graph.

1 Back in the Day

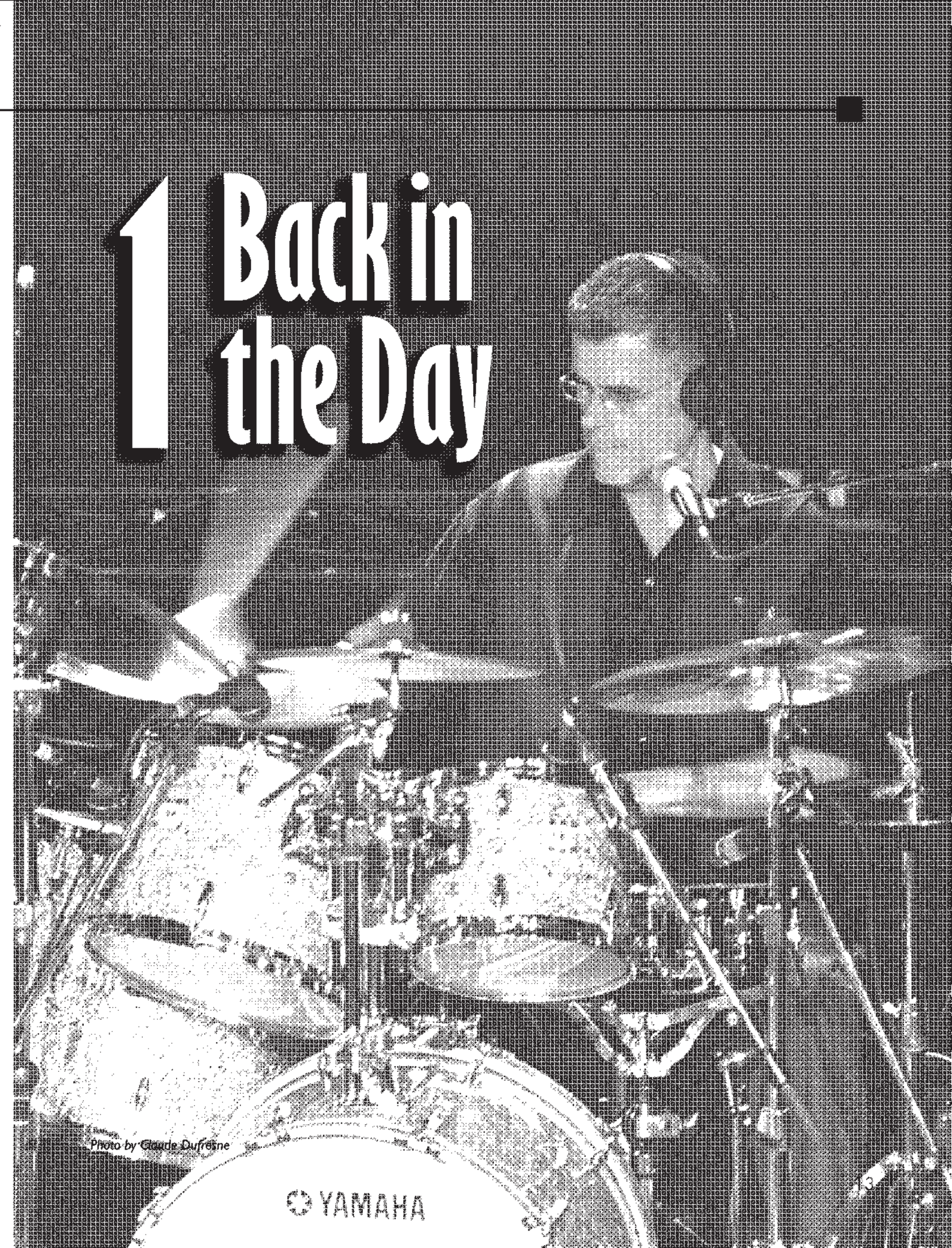


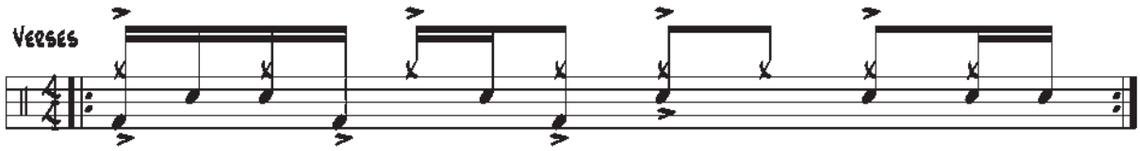
Photo by Claude Dufresne

Back in the Day

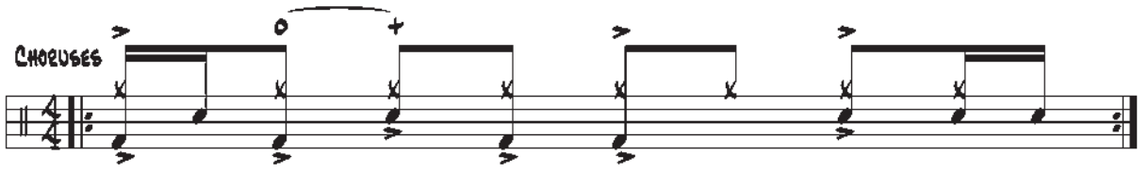
Skip Mesquite, Steve Mesquite

This composition revolves around two basic grooves:

Ex. 1-The verses:



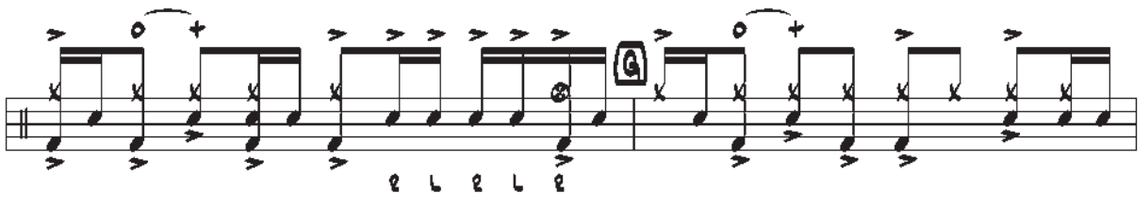
Ex. 2-The choruses:



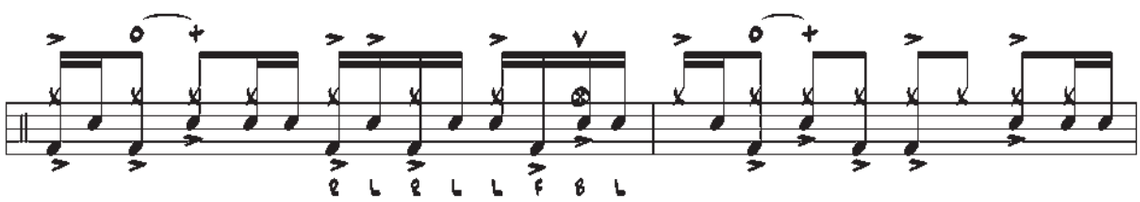
With the exception of the twists and turns of the arrangement, I stayed with these basic parts throughout the song—a very simple approach with very little improvisation until the choruses at the end.

There is an ensemble figure at measure 81, which is an eighth note on the "and" of beat 4. Beginning with measure 89, this figure occurs every four measures and is interpreted three ways:

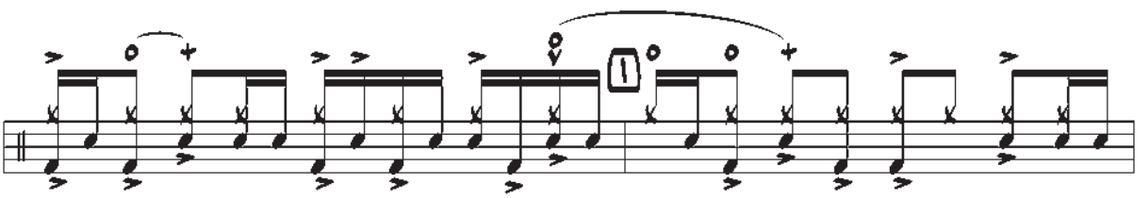
Ex. 3-Preceded, or set up, by a fill:



Ex. 4-As part of the groove (with two variations): Variation 1:

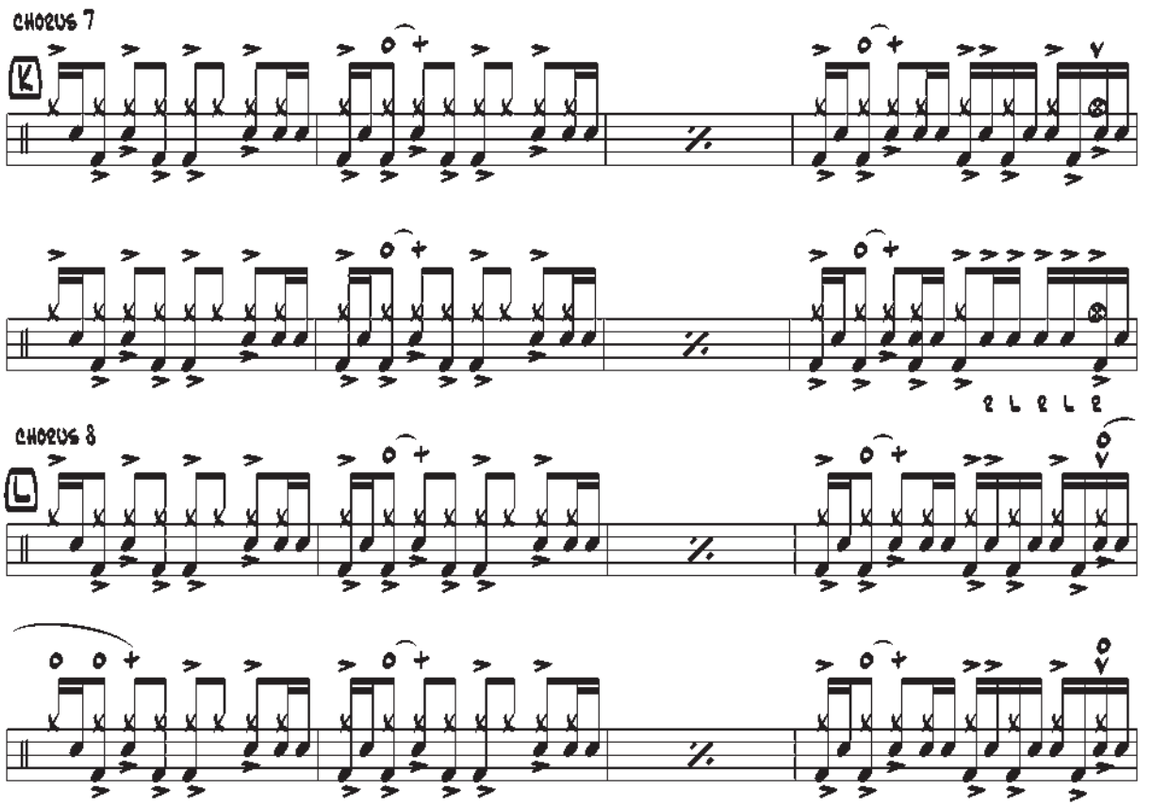


Ex. 5-Variation 2



The concept here is to suspend the sound across the bar line, following the length of the figure, while keeping the momentum of the groove going forward. The initial figure (meas. 81) is played with crash cymbal and bass drum. After that (meas. 93 to end), either a snare drum with crash cymbal, or snare drum with open hi-hat is used.

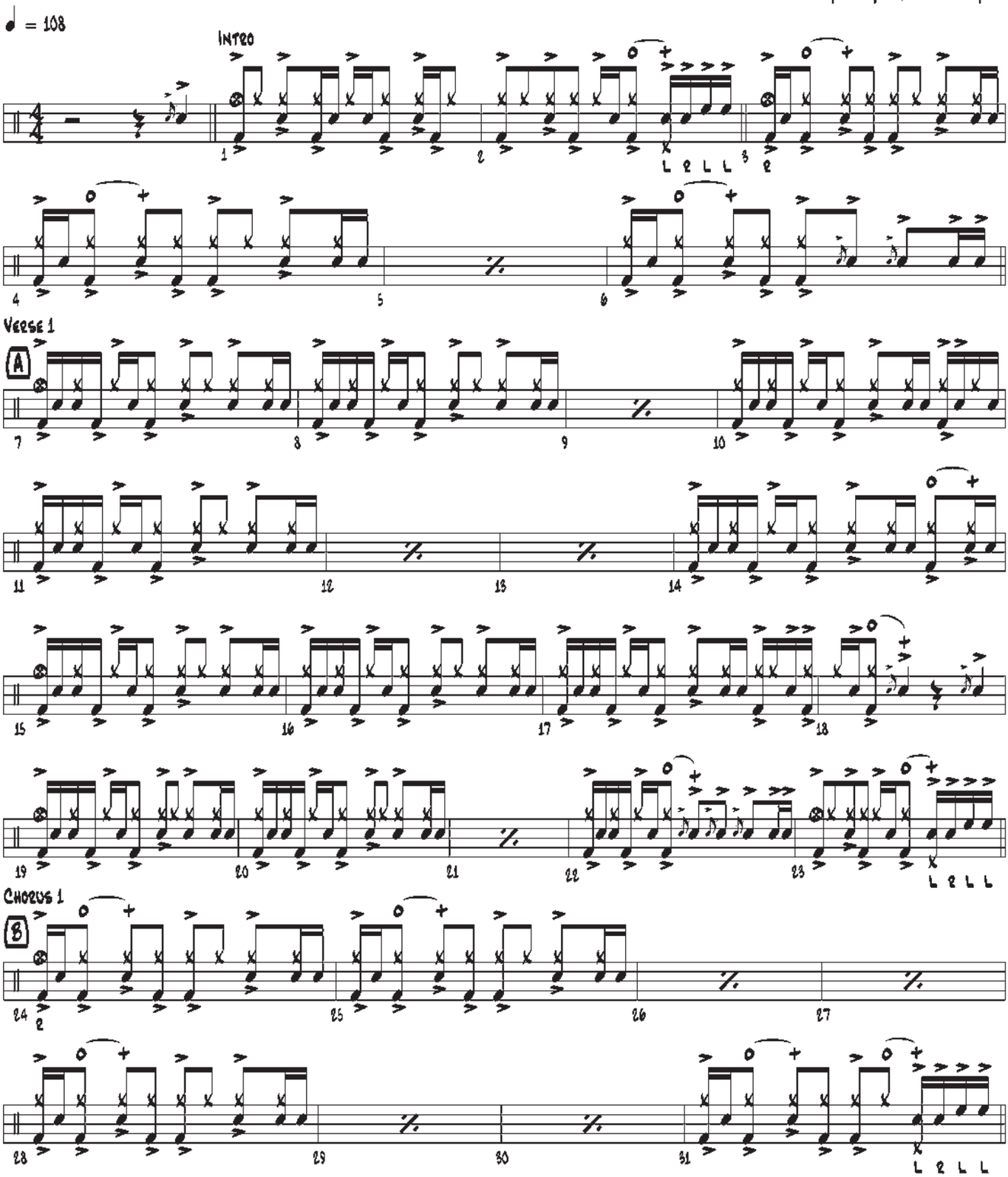
Ex. 6-Choruses 7 and 8 include all three interpretations.



Minus Drums Mix 1

Back in the Day

Skip Mesquite, Steve Mesquite



"Back In the Day" Mesquite/Mesquite
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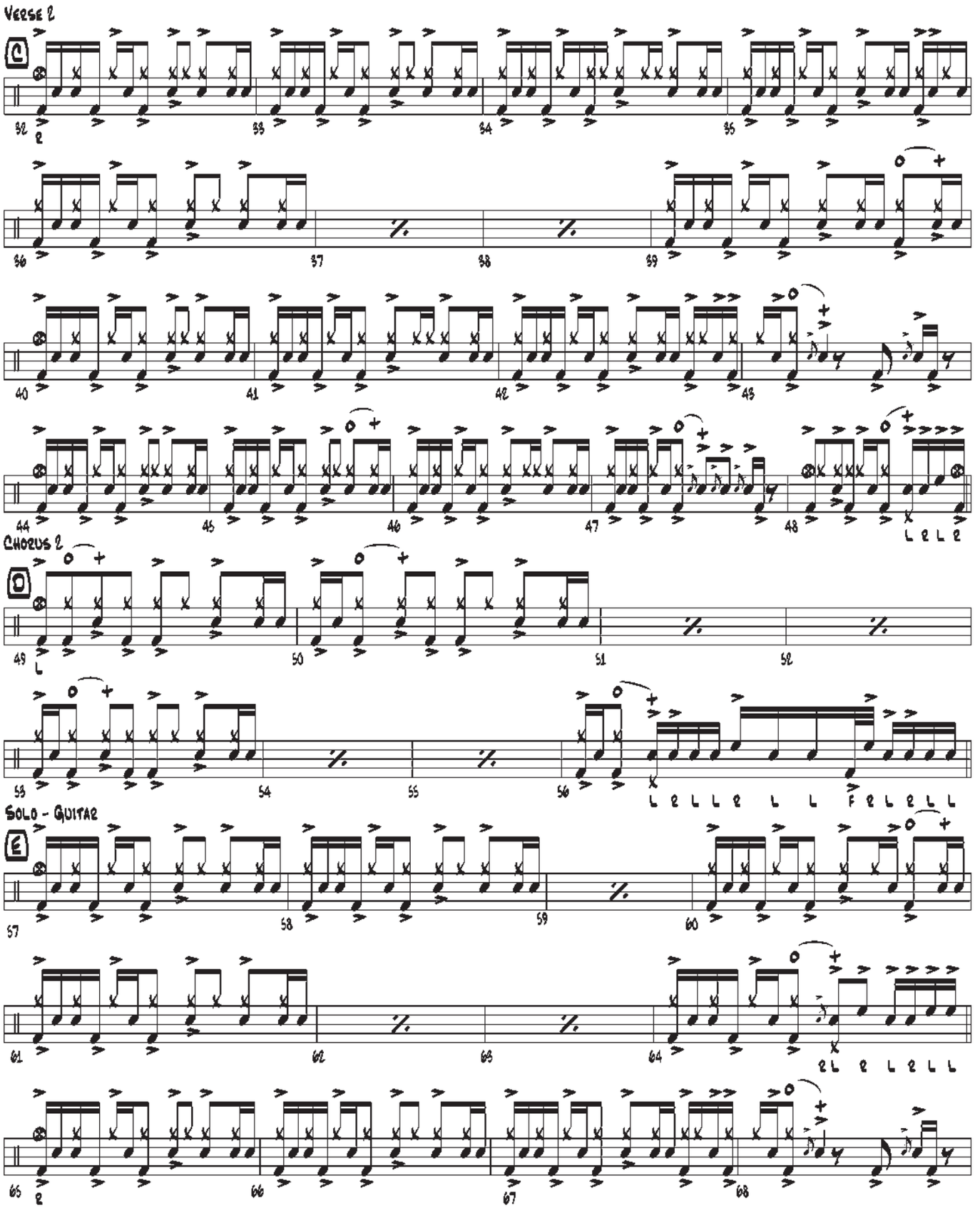
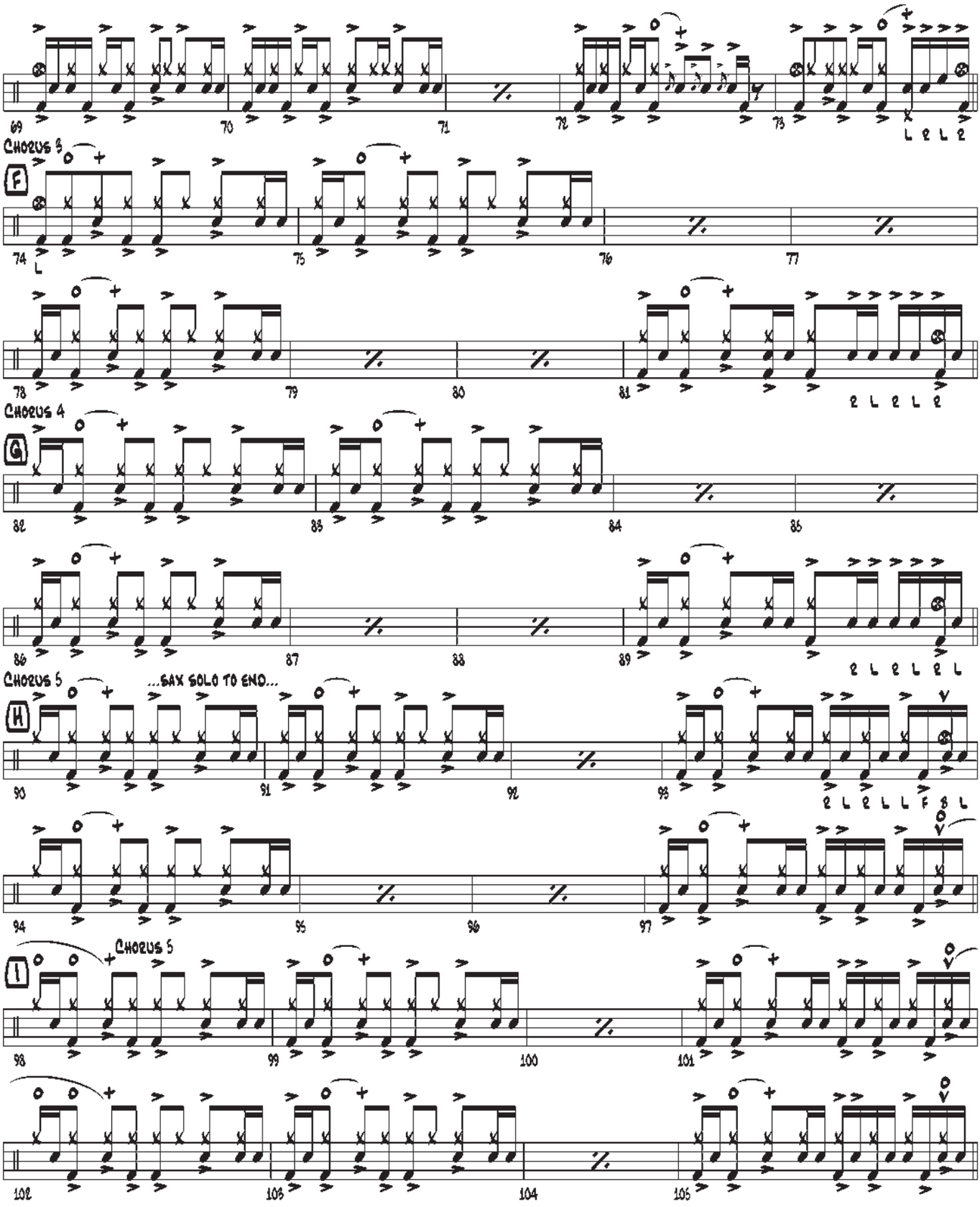
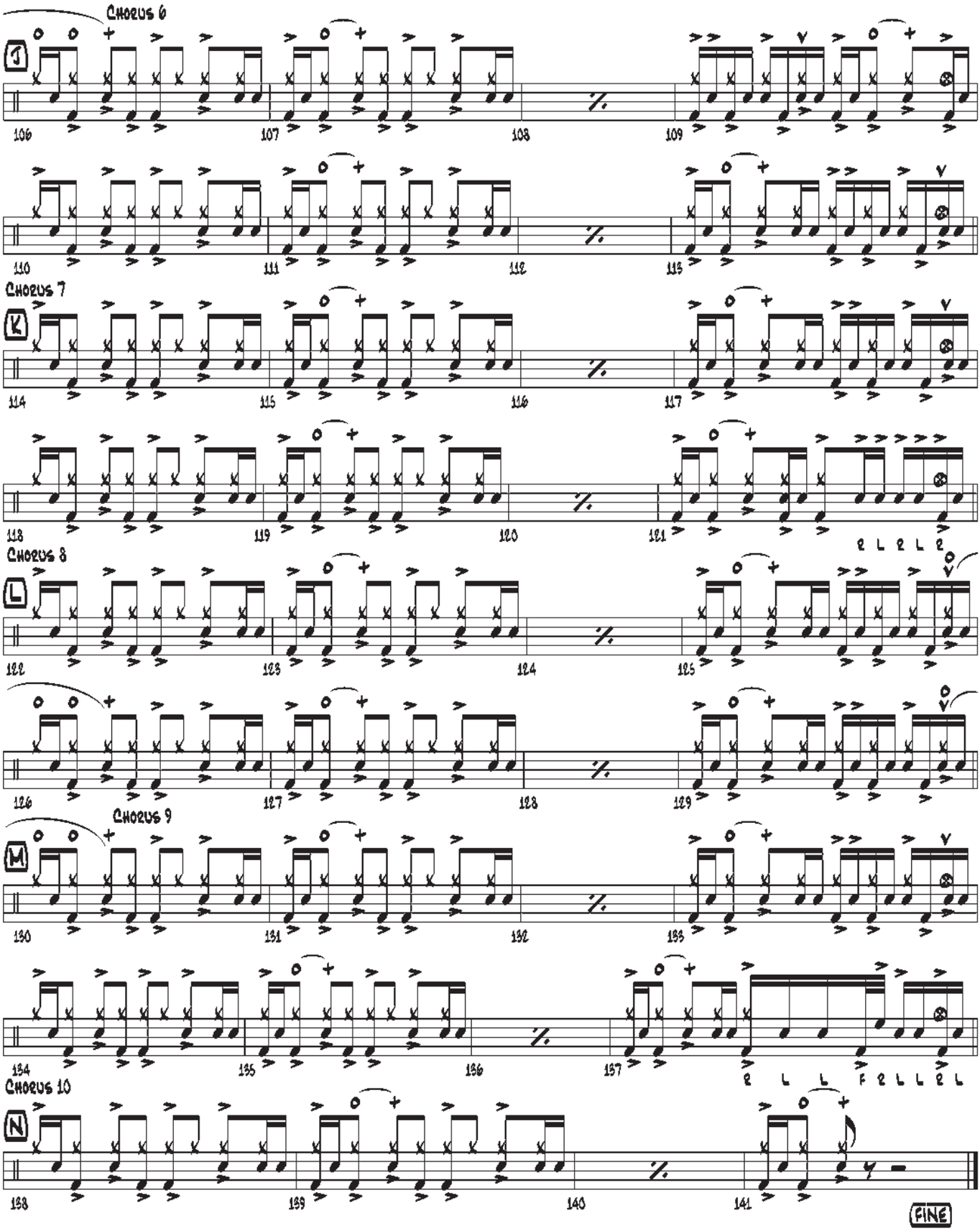

Verse 2
Chorus 2
Solo - Guitar


69
70
71
72
73
L R L R
Chorus 3
F
74
L
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
R L R L R
Chorus 4
G
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
R L R L R L
Chorus 5
...SAX SOLO TO END...
H
90
91
92
93
R L R L L F S L
94
95
96
97
Chorus 5
I
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105


Chorus 6
J
106
107
108
109
110
111
112
113
Chorus 7
K
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
Chorus 8
L
122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
Chorus 9
M
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
Chorus 10
N
138
139
140
141
FINE