

FUNKLET



welcomevelcomewilcum

NOTES

Every drummer in this book has great feel — duh. Beyond feel, they are also great composers.

Think of the drum set as a three key piano. Instead of strings, the hammers hit tubular wooden shells covered with stretched animal hides. Actually, just think of a drum set.

These beats are clever melodic phrases that translate across different timbers. You can play “Yesterday” on the oboe. You can play “Cold Sweat” on an 808. Dig?

If you are looking for more anecdotes and technical advice, check out Jim Payne’s *Give The Drummers Some!* and Stanton Moore’s *Groove Alchemy*, respectively.

Enjoy the booklet. I enjoyed making it. If you do anything creative with it, let me know.

NOTATION

Each grid line is a sixteenth note.

(one bar)

All the beats are written as two bars.

NOTATION CONTD.

The color is the velocity of the hit.

- hard
- less hard
- softer
- soft

A ● means open the hi-hat.

01 CLYDE STUBBLEFIELD

I GOT THE FEELIN'

JAMES BROWN

1968

AS A KID, I saw pictures of James Brown on stage with two drummers. That was cool, and it let me off the hook when I couldn't play the grooves from the records. I figured, "If I can get close to the original using only four limbs, that's pretty good."

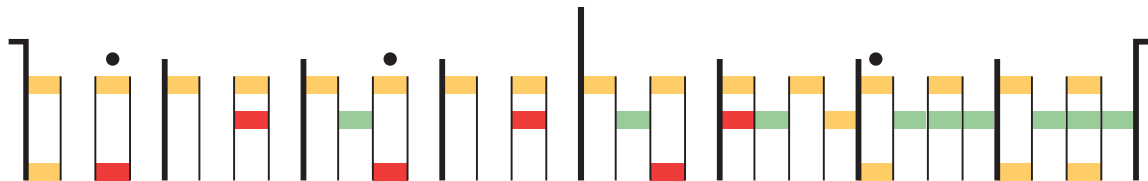
Turns out it was four limbs playing those grooves. Clyde Stubblefield's four limbs.

I wasn't the only one fooled. When "I Got the Feelin'" dropped, drummers everywhere retreated to their basements.

It's Clyde's fast left hand that makes him sound like two drummers.

His groups of three 16th notes on the snare are funky and righteously difficult.

Trying to make his grooves happen — even at slow tempos — takes time, repetition and repetition.



02 CLYDE STUBBLEFIELD

MOTHER POPCORN

JAMES BROWN

1969

MOST FUNKY FIELD TRIPS make a stop at this landmark beat.

Clyde started a new type of groove by playing quarter notes on the hi-hat. It gives the groove a jerky, all-broke-up feel.

This innovation wasn't a highly conscious decision; Clyde just went in the studio and started up a groove.

Because of the quarters on the hat, the kick and snare part sound totally fresh, even though it is similar to some past Stubblefield grooves.

It's fun to ballpark the dates of funk tracks based on hi-hat parts. Invite over some friends, order some pizza and try it sometime.



03 ZIGABOO MODELISTE

CISSY STRUT THE METERS 1969

FACT: Zigaboo used two hands on the hat when recording “Cissy Strut.”

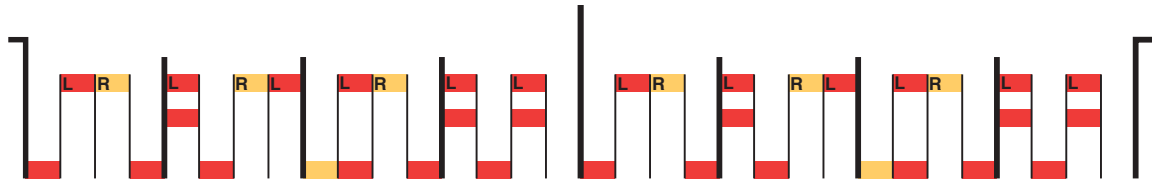
Among drummers, that factoid is becoming as ubiquitous as “‘White Christmas’ was written by a Jew!”

Still, when I first got the memo, everything got a little lighter.

It never crossed my mind Zig could be using two hands on the hat. Plus, he was breaking one of Gabriel Roth’s (Daptone Records) rules: Never use two hands on the hat unless you are actually in Ghana and it’s still 1970.

After I got remotely schooled by Stanton Moore’s book, the groove felt better.

That said, it’s still fun to play with one hand.



04 JAMES GADSON

LET A WOMAN BE A WOMAN, LET A MAN BE A MAN

DYKE & THE BLAZERS

1969

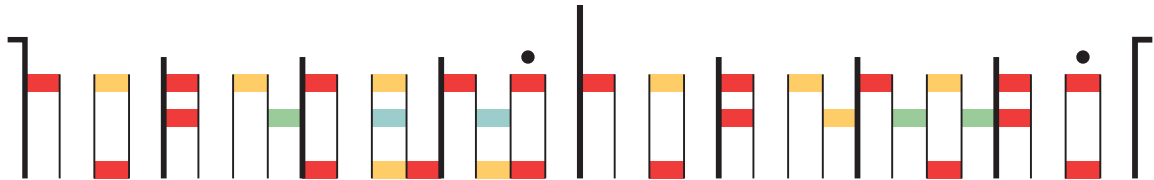
THIS CUT IS the Usain Bolt of funk. Evolutionarily speaking, it shouldn't have been possible for another twenty years.

These cats were getting so funky more than forty years ago, and here we are thinking we're so fresh because we record to tape.

Dyke & the Blazers was a perfect storm. It was the hottest players in L.A. unleashing their pent-up syncopation during underground sessions.

You see, Dyke & the Blazers was the same rhythm section as the Watts 103rd St.

Rhythm Band, but Charles Watts was a controlling dude and wouldn't really let the musicians do their thing. So when they would do "scab" dates (non-union) with Dyke — and had creative freedom — things got indulgently funky.



05 JABO STARKS

GET UP (I FEEL LIKE BEING A) SEX MACHINE

JAMES BROWN

1970

“I HAD NEVER played with a bass player who was that funky,” Jabo said about Bootsy Collins.

James Brown’s “old band” quit after James refused to meet their demand for better treatment. Jabo stuck around though.

James sent his jet to Cincinnati to pick up his “new band” that included a teenage Bootsy and his brother, Catfish (guitar).

The new band was doing a new thing with James’ sound. Even the old material

sounded fresh. So James took an idea that had been around (“Sex Machine”) and put it down with his new backing band.

Jabo swings this beat like mad.

Note: the original was sped up a half step.



06 JAMES GADSON

EXPRESS YOURSELF

CHARLES WRIGHT AND THE WATTS 103RD STREET

RHYTHM BAND

1970

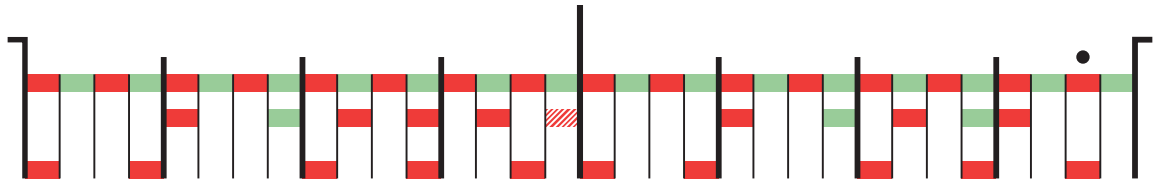
MELVIN DUNLAP'S BASS LINE is what you hum after listening to this tune, but Gadson's groove is so funky and deceptively complex.

This particular pattern comes at the top of the tune before the vocals come in.

Gadson was experimenting with 16th-note grooves and the syncopated left hand.

This phrase requires some tricky coordination, like cracking the snare while playing a soft note on the hat. The drum break really flips the beat around too.

"Frankly, I like to groove," said James.



07 BERNARD PURDIE

O-O-H CHILD FIVE STAIRSTEPS 1970

WHEN PURDIE WASN'T feeling a track, he let it show.

“O-o-h Child” wasn't clicking. They were trying everything — all the engineering tricks. Then Purdie took over.

Purdie explains: “In the last twenty minutes of the session, Vince (Stan Vincent, writer) gave me my head. Bam! Fifteen minutes later, we have ‘O-o-h Child.’ My way.”

“O-o-h Child” is Purdie's magnum opus.

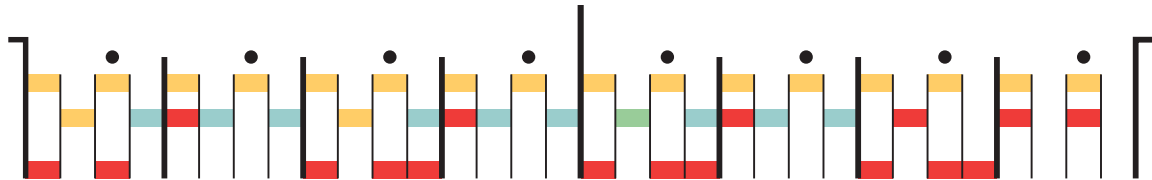
My high school jazz teacher would tell me to “drive the bus.” Purdie is driving

the bus, getting directions over the phone, and sniping that lollypop-sucking kid in the mirror.

Purdie heightens each key change without hitting harder.

He always manages to take it higher, to the point of cracking every beat on the snare near the end of the tune.

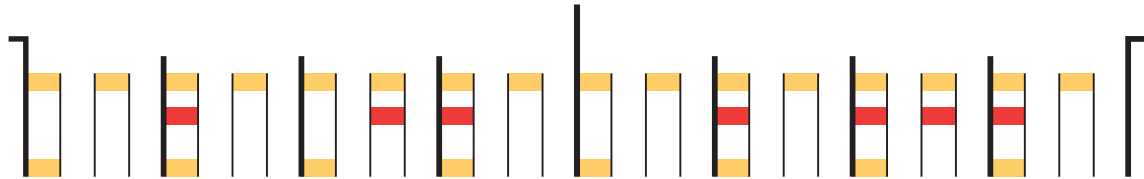
The phrase below comes in at the first key change. It has that disco hi-hat with a busy snare and kick part. It's a good starting point for getting into this song.



08 ROGER HAWKINS

RESPECT YOURSELF
THE STAPLE SINGERS
1971

THE SIMPLEST GROOVE in the book. It's also the baddest.



ROCK STEADY
ARETHA FRANKLIN
1971

JERRY WEXLER RECOUNTS: "It was also in Miami that, on a humid night that has stayed with me forever, Aretha set down a 'Rock Steady' that will keep rocking as long as electricity wires sound."

This groove was the hardest to transcribe. The hands are classic Purdie, but the kick drum was hard to pick out of the mix and didn't sound like a foot.

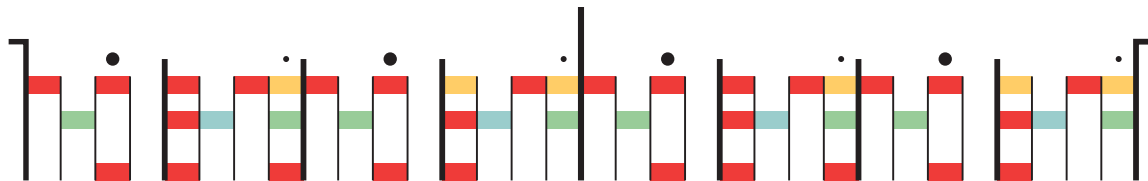
As fate would have it, when I was trying to decipher the kick part, my roommate hipped me to the *What It Is!* compilation (rare funk from Warner-distributed labels). On it was an alternate mix of "Rock Steady." The alt-mix was

of the same take, and the kick drum was mixed much clearer.

My suspicion was right! The original mix blends Purdie's kick with a percussionist hitting a second bass drum with a stick.

The tune was actually tracked pretty crisply (as you hear on alt-mix), but the tune called for some roughness when it got to mixing.

Dr. John played percussion and Donny Hathaway played keys. No wonder Wexler remembered it.



10 ZIGABOO MODELISTE

CHUG CHUG CHUG-A-LUG (PUSH AND SHOVE)

THE METERS

1972

EVERY YEAR at the Passover Seder, Jews ask, “What makes Zigaboo’s drumming different from all other drumming?”

Even amongst New Orleans drummers, Zigaboo brings something different.

A rough progression of New Orleans drumming: Earl Palmer, Charlie Williams, John Boudreaux, Smokey Johnson, Zigaboo Modeliste. When presented with this evolution, Allen Toussaint made two points:

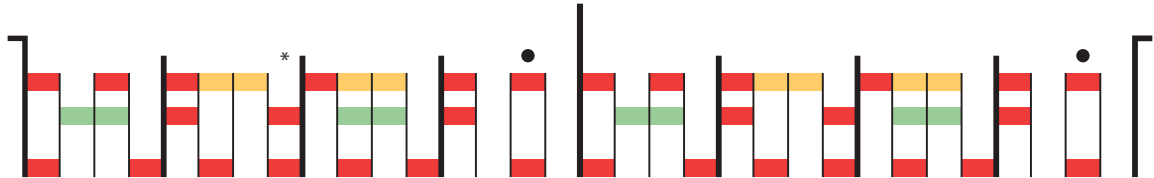
a) Earl Palmer is a marvelous place to start.

b) The most unique — and the biggest jump in it — I would say is Zigaboo.

You’ll see an asterisk above a hit in the transcription below. It might be the funkier hit in the book, compositionally speaking.

That hit won’t happen unless you practice a little. It is not a naturally occurring hit, and it might feel uncomfortable at first.

But dig, that single hit — cracking the snare and kicking the bass — makes this groove different from all other grooves.



11 JAMES GADSON

USE ME

BILL WITHERS

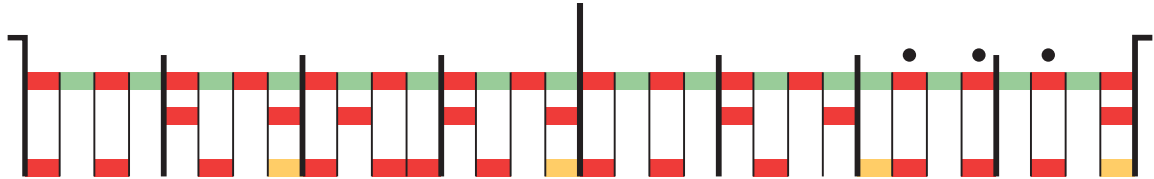
1972

GROOVING IS A SPIRITUAL thing for James Gadson.

On this track, the band grooved for about ten minutes straight. After that, Bill Withers put down his vocal part and the engineer manufactured a breakdown by soloing vocals and drums for certain sections.

If you listen closely, you can hear the bass bleeding into the drum mics during the breakdowns.

I dig this work-flow. When the album version starts, the musicians have already been deep in the groove for a few minutes.



12 BERNARD PURDIE

SYNTHETIC SUBSTITUTION

MELVIN BLISS

1973

THE SCENE: I'm in my basement with a cassette recording I dubbed off the "Big Nine at 9" on Jammin 92.3FM. It's 1997, and I'm trying to play the intro to Hanson's "MMMbop."

I give up, embarrassed that I can't keep up with a drummer my age (10) and who, furthermore, looks like a girl.

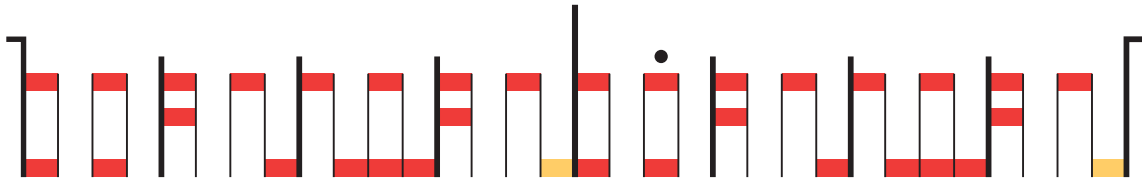
There were two truths that I was unaware of at the time: a) the intro was a Bernard Purdie sample and b) I also looked like a girl.

"MMMbop" was produced by the Dust Borthers — hip-hop producers at heart.

The Dust Brothers were familiar with classic drum breaks like Melvin Bliss' "Synthetic Substitution" and threw it in during the intro before Abe Laboriel Jr. layered huge drums over the rest of the track.

The original "Synthetic Substitution" was a quickly cut B-side that doesn't make much sense. Purdie's fast-footed drum intro has kept the track relevant as one of the most sampled beats.

He swings his foot a little after the first phrase.



13 HERMAN “ROSCOE” ERNEST III

LADY MARMALADE

LABELLE

1974

I THOUGHT THIS was Zigaboo because someone said The Meters played rhythm on it.

Close. Three of the four Meters did play, but the drummer was Herman the German.

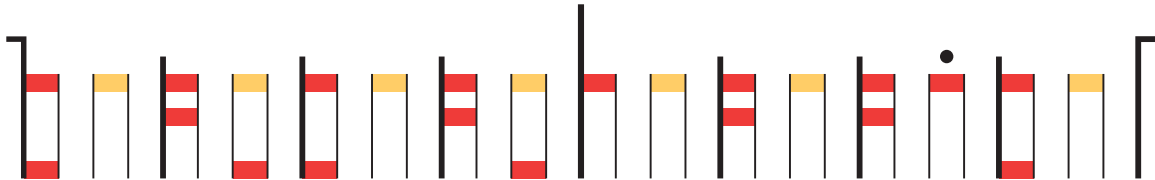
Allen Toussaint (producer) liked having Herman on pop sessions. Dwight Richards explains, “He gave them a groove that appealed to the masses instead of that purely New Orleans funk thing you could only understand if you drink our water.”

This groove is a beautiful collaboration between Herman and Toussaint.

It started like many influential beats — a session stuck in the mud. Toussaint told the band to take a break and met with Herman. Toussaint asked, “How can we make this song dance?” Herman played a little lick on his legs with that double snare and Toussaint knew there was some magic.

The band started playing and Toussaint told Herman to add in a kick. “Answer your snare drum,” he said.

There was a new energy in the room. People knew something was going down. “One more thing, Herman. Throw in a hi-hat before you answer your snare.”



14 BERNARD PURDIE

THE FEZ
STEELY DAN
1976

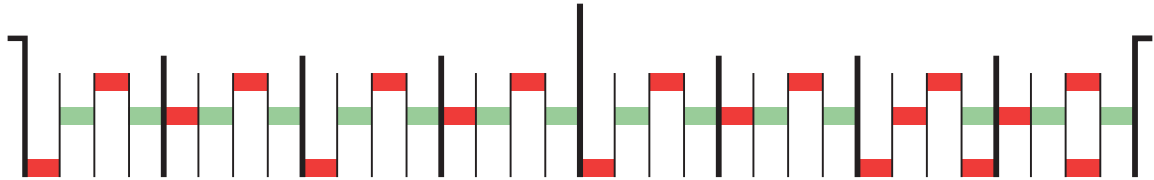
I COULD WRITE a lengthy essay on the seemingly parallel rise of linear funk grooves and cryptic condom-usage lyrics in the mid-seventies. But that's a whole other Kickstarter.

Steely Dan sessions were quite stressful for the musicians. Many of the drummers mention the absurd level of perfection Fagan and Becker expected. However, years later, we are left with some timeless, classy performances.

Purdie says he overdubbed the drum parts on this album. He was brought in

for his sound, so he gave them his sound.

Nailing this snare part will really help with other Purdie grooves. Also, invite a friend to play shaker.



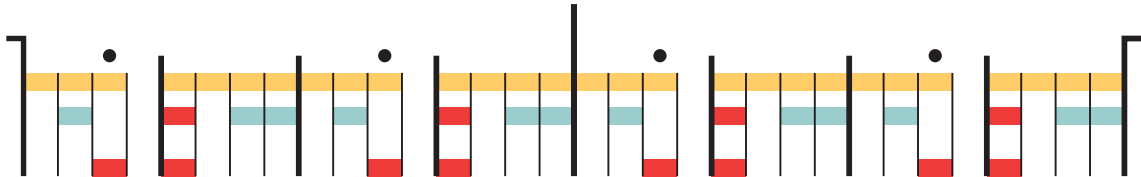
15 BERNARD PURDIE

HAITIAN DIVORCE

STEELY DAN

1976

WHEN PURDIE DECIDES to simply, no one is safe.



16 NARADA MICHAEL WALDEN

COME DANCING

JEFF BECK

1976

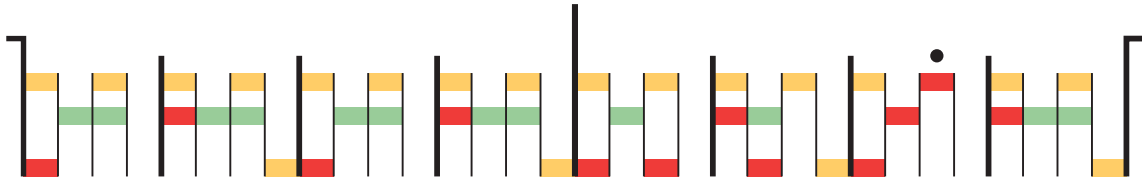
NARADA WROTE this tune. Wilbur Bascomb's bass playing will break your neck.

(If you want to hear Wilbur and Purdie lock up, check out *Hair: Original Soundtrack Recording* — the soundtrack from the movie version of *Hair*.)

This particular pattern only happens during the drum intro.

Graphically, it's one of the more symmetrical patterns. However, when playing it, rather than thinking about the symmetry or the clever dialog between kick and snare, you should imagine an overweight Daffy Duck grumbling his way into a strip club.

This imagery has helped a lot of my students nail the swing of this groove.



18 BERNARD PURDIE

THE MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION WITH BERNARD "PRETTY" PURDIE IN JAPAN 2000 2000

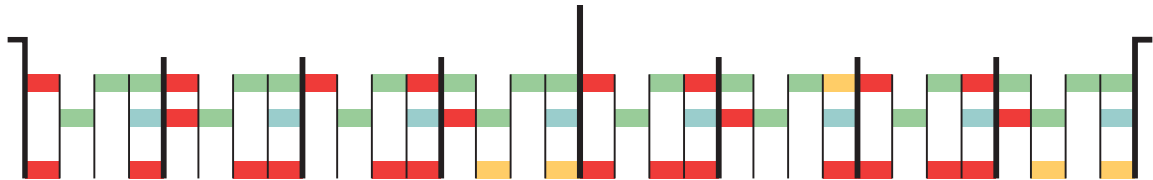
THIS BEAT COMES from one of Purdie's Japanese instructional VHS tapes.

To see the clip, YouTube "Purdie."

The top line of the pattern is played on cowbell.

This beat is used in a Science Olympiad challenge. Participants are given thirty minutes to create something not funky using the transcription below.

No one has succeeded.



19 JAMES GADSON

SKIP SPENCE “BOOKS OF MOSES”

BECK'S RECORD CLUB

2010

THE FORMULA:

fantastic drumming + creative audio engineering = fantastic drumming with creative audio engineering

“Holy shit, that’s heavy,” says Jamie Lidell during the first two bars of this groove.

Google “beck books of moses” to find the original video.

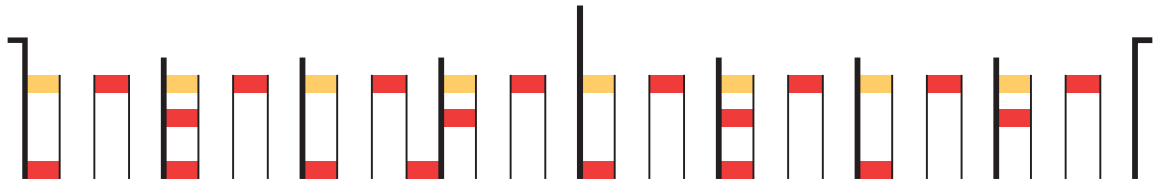
Dig how similar the first and second bars are. The only difference is one bass

drum hit. By taking away a hit, Gadson gives the beat some serious propulsion.

Try playing the second bar first. It changes the feeling.

The engineer is also adding to the groove by side-chaining the room mic to the quarter-note. Meaning, if you had your hand on the volume knob for the room mic, you would turn it down on the beat and swell it up until the next beat.

“That is the easiest thing ever to play to,” Lidell says right after cutting.



20 THE UNKNOWN DRUMMER

WELCOME TO THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS.

I was listening to a friend's remix and heard a funky drum break. I asked if he knew where the break was from, and he said it was part of a library of loops he had bought. He sent me the one-bar cut.

I Shazamed it. I played it for some funky friends. No one had any leads.

Between poor crediting (common during the sixties and seventies) and nameless loop libraries, it has become difficult to identify who played some of the funkier beats.

We shall call this beat by its file name: *Strt Bts DC Gogo 100*.

