

CREDITS

Groove Alchemy

by Stanton Moore

Edited by Joe Bergamini

Design and Layout by Rick Gratton

Cover by Kenneth Robin

Executive Producers: Paul Siegel and Rob Wallis

Photos by Dino Perucci and Allison Murphy

Photos on pages 1, 2, and 5 by Maureen Brown

Photos on page 10 by Paul LaRaia

Photo on page 34 by Clayton Call

Music Engraving by Rick Gratton

Text Editing by Jill Flomenhoft

Additional Editing by Paul Siegel

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Additional information came from the following liner notes:

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I'd like to acknowledge the drummers whose grooves and playing I have learned from and who inspired me to write this book. If you're not familiar with these guys yet, make sure you check them out: Zigaboo Modeliste, Clyde Stubblefield, Jabo Starks, Melvin Parker, Idris Muhammad, James Black, Bernard Purdie, Al Jackson Jr., Roger Hawkins, David Garibaldi, Clayton Fillyau, Mike Clark, John Bonham, Brian Blade, Johnny Vidacovich, Herlin Riley, Shannon Powell, Russell Batiste, Herman Ernest, Levon Helm, Willie Green, Geoff Clapp, Raymond Weber, Jeffery Alexander, Adam Deitch, Kevin O'Day, Joe Russo, Carlo Nuccio, and Johnny Thomassie.

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INTRODUCTION

GROOVE ALCHEMY

“**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 DISC

The enclosed disc is an MP3/Data disc. Most newer CD & DVD players will play this disc as a normal CD. You can also insert the disc into your computer and import all the tracks into iTunes or any other music software.

All of the examples in the book are included on the disc, and the track numbers match the example numbers in the book. Letters have been added to each filename to make the disc play in order.



JAMES BROWN

A LOOK AT SOME OF THE RHYTHMIC INNOVATIONS OF THE JAMES BROWN DRUMMERS

In 1962 Clayton Fillyau recorded “I’ve Got Money.” Fillyau came up with this beat after spending some time with the drummer for New Orleans piano player Huey “Piano” Smith. Fillyau met this drummer (believed to be either Charles “Hungry” Williams or Joseph “Smokey” Johnson) while Huey Smith’s band was touring through Fillyau’s hometown of St. Petersburg, Florida. Fillyau then took some of the syncopation he was shown, distinctive of most New Orleans drumming, and blended it with some aspects of the drum cadences he learned while attending Florida A&M. He came up with this groove and put it to James Brown’s song “I’ve Got Money.”

2. “I’ve Got Money” intro 1962, drums: Clayton Fillyau, c. 162 bpm.



3. “I’ve Got Money” main groove.

Many people consider this beat to be the seed of the “James Brown beat” and the spark that ignited the flame of funk. Notice that the unusually bright tempo of this song makes this track sound very similar to the drum & bass beats that came more than 30 years later.



Also note the similarities between this groove and the groove to the New Orleans classic “Big Chief.” Even though “Big Chief” was released after “I’ve Got Money,” the beat to “Big Chief” is the stuff that New Orleans drummers had been playing for a long time. It’s highly probable that “Hungry” Williams or Smokey Johnson showed Fillyau something very close to this beat.

4. “Big Chief” Professor Longhair 1964, drums: Smokey Johnson, c. 130 bpm.

Right hand on rim or side of floor tom.



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



PLAYING IN-BETWEEN THE CRACKS

I think now is a good time to talk about the concept of playing “in-between the cracks.” A lot of the preceding beats from Zigaboo, Clyde Stubblefield, and Jabo Starks will groove much better if you have a deeper understanding of this concept.

I’ve spoken previously in *Take It To The Street* (DVD, Carl Fischer) about playing in-between the cracks, or playing with a feel that is in-between straight and swing. Now let’s look at how to apply this feel to funk and other types of grooves. Phrasing in this way can make your playing feel more organic and less mechanical. Many of the great groove players that have stood out over time grew up listening to music that swung. Earl Palmer, John Bonham, Bernard Purdie, Zigaboo Modeliste, Idris Muhammad, Clyde Stubblefield, and Jabo Starks all grew up hearing Big Band, swing, jazz, be-bop, blues, jump blues, rhythm and blues, and early rock ‘n’ roll. All of this was music that swung. So, when drummers eventually started playing straighter in rock ‘n’ roll and funk settings, a natural lope was present in their playing. Now that we have all grown up and lived through a period of time where things have been quantized and straightened out to the nth degree, we have to readdress how to achieve this lope in our playing. I think it is important to understand this way of playing in order to deepen your pocket. It is also helpful to have this feel in your arsenal should your playing situation call for it.

There are several things we can work on to develop this. First let’s play hand-to-hand (RLRL-RLRL) sixteenth notes on the hi-hat with a backbeat on 2 and 4. Start off playing straight sixteenth notes, then gradually morph towards swing. You want to feel all the areas between straight and swing. Live in the middle for a while and try to internalize the way this feels. Once you feel comfortable there, move towards the swing end of the spectrum. You can even move past swing, all the way to flams. Once you’re ready, move back through the spectrum, stopping in the in-between area for a while, then continue morphing all the way back to straight.

It’s important to do this with a metronome so that you don’t move the time, just the phrasing. Also note that the right hand will be playing straight eighth notes while the left hand is doing the morphing.

Start off with this groove.

73. c. 88 bpm

R L R L



The musical notation is on a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains four groups of eighth notes: each group has a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, with an 'x' above the dotted eighth and a dot above the sixteenth. The second measure contains four groups of eighth notes: each group has a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, with an 'x' above the dotted eighth and a dot above the sixteenth. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

This illustration may help you visualize what you are trying to accomplish.



The musical notation is on a single staff and consists of a continuous sequence of eighth notes, illustrating the concept of morphing between straight and swing feels.

GETTING CREATIVE

Now let's incorporate the two-bass-drum cinquillo and upbeat sixteenth-note patterns into one massive, rolling, Clyde Stubblefield-inspired Power "Big Chief" groove!

200.



FEEL AND TONE JUXTAPOSITION

Now we can try a creative technique I like to call "feel juxtaposition." This concept entails infusing a pre-existing groove with a different feel to come up with something new. You can change the tempo, or change the feel of something to force you to look at it in a different light.

Consider the way the drum breaks to the Winstons' "Amen Brother" and James Brown's "Soul Pride" were sped up to create a new genre...drum & bass.

I personally like to slow things down and put a New Orleans lilt to it. Let's re-examine example 153, which is a combination of Jabo's groove to "Sex Machine" and Clyde's groove to "I Got The Feelin'." Imagine what this groove (these notes) would sound like slowed down a bit and played by Zigaboo Modeliste. Keep in mind that Zigaboo doesn't usually play ghost notes as dramatically as Jabo and Clyde.

201. Similar to 153 but juxtaposing a New Orleans (or Zigaboo) feel on to it.



Let's revisit the groove to the previous song. This time it has a different feel.

202. "Pot Licker... Slight Return" **FULL MIX**

Now let's try some tone juxtaposition. Move the right foot to the 26-inch bass drum, switch out the snare drum, and imagine the same groove as played by John Bonham. Hopefully you can begin to see some of the possibilities for creating new things to play.

203. **AUDIO ONLY** Same notation as 201, but juxtaposed with Bonham-esque tones.

GETTING CREATIVE

Let's continue by utilizing a combination of styles and feel juxtaposition. Let's try mixing Zig with Clyde. Here are a few more variations. Play these with a "New Orleans lilt" that is in-between straight and swing, á la Zigaboo.

204.



Musical notation for exercise 204. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The melody is a series of eighth notes with accents (>) and some notes marked with an 'x' to indicate a specific feel or articulation. The rhythm is a mix of straight eighth notes and eighth notes with a slight swing feel.

205.



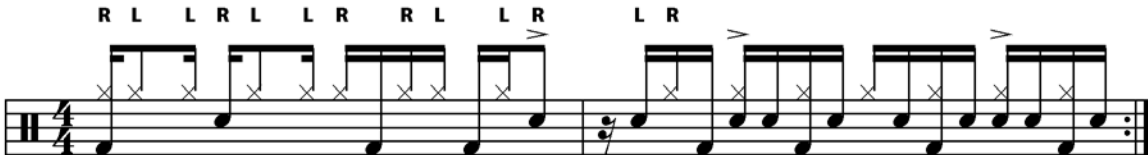
Musical notation for exercise 205. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, the rhythmic pattern is indicated as R L L R R L L R R L R. The notation shows eighth notes with accents (>) and some notes marked with an 'x'.

206.



Musical notation for exercise 206. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, the rhythmic pattern is indicated as R L L R R L L R R L R. The notation shows eighth notes with accents (>) and some notes marked with an 'x'.

207.



Musical notation for exercise 207. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, the rhythmic pattern is indicated as R L L R L L R R L L R L R. The notation shows eighth notes with accents (>) and some notes marked with an 'x'.

208. Let's take some of the Zig-inspired rhythmic ideas we were playing with both hands on the hi-hat and move them to the bell of the ride with the right hand.



Musical notation for exercise 208. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, the rhythmic pattern is indicated as R R R L R R R R R L L. The notation shows eighth notes with accents (>) and some notes marked with an 'x'.

209.



Musical notation for exercise 209. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, the rhythmic pattern is indicated as R R R L R R R R R L R R. The notation shows eighth notes with accents (>) and some notes marked with an 'x'.

ROOT CELLAR

602. MINUS DRUMS

$\text{♩} = 91$ Intro

Similar Groove -

A Repeat 3x

Similar Comp Bass Line B C Similar Groove

Fill - Fill -

Comp Ens. Hits: A B A

1x - Guitar Solo
2x - Organ Solo

C Play 8x Play 4x Play 4x

Comp Ens. Hits: A Comp Ens. Hits:

Drum Break A

Play 4x Play 16x

Similar -

Fill - Repeat 3x Fill last x