

THE MOST LEGENDARY DRUM BREAKS OF ALL TIME

THAT moment...

That moment when everything else cuts-out and the drummer does their thing.

Not a solo. Not a flashy fill. But the GROOVE.

And more often than not the groove as we've heard it in the rest of the track,
but now in the **SPOTLIGHT**.

And these moments have become some the most iconic in music history, providing fuel for sampling culture and the **hip hop**, *drum'n'bass* and *electronic music* that emerged from this practice.

LET'S DIVE IN.

#1 - THE AMEN BREAK

Ok yeah, it's obvious but with good reason...

Original track: 'Amen Brother' (1969) - The Winstons

1:26 - https://youtu.be/GxZuq57_bYM?t=86

Drummer: Gregory Coleman

Sampled on: 'Straight Outta Compton' - NWA

'Futurama Theme Song' - Christopher Tyng

'Demon's Theme' - LTJ Bukem



PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) Those ghost notes aren't SUPER ghosted on the original, just make sure to bring out the backbeats.
- 2) Sprinkle in some gentle, lilting swing for even more authenticity.
- 3) When playing at higher tempos, tune up those drums (esp. snare!) to replicate the pitch change when sampled faster for d'n'b.
- 4) Try adding pedal hihats on every $\frac{1}{2}$ note, or even every off-beat $\frac{1}{4}$ note for an extra challenge.

! INSPIRATION!

- > Jojo and the language of drum'n'bass: <https://youtu.be/gpAx9J4lM4Q>
- >> Nailing that sound: <https://youtu.be/yHfrwmpY0oY>



credit: ca.kef.com

#2 - WHEN THE LEVEE (DRUM) BREAKS

Drum breaks don't have to come in the middle of songs...

Original track: 'When The Levee Breaks' (1971) - Led Zeppelin (cover)

0:00 - <https://youtu.be/uwiTs60VoTM>

Drummer: John Bonham

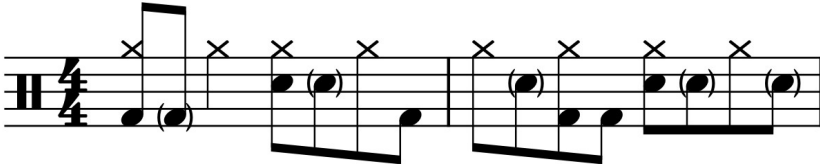
Sampled on: 'Rhymin and Stealin' - Beastie Boys

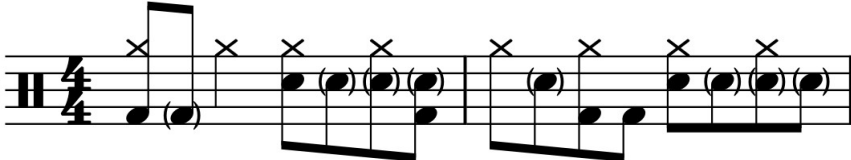
'Army of Me' - Björk

'Return to Innocence' - Enigma

$\text{♩} = 143$

original: 

echo effect: 

advance echo: 

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) The big debate: what did Bonzo actually play, and what was an echo effect and/or natural reverb in the room? Well, fairly conclusive the room and delay effect added a signature lilt, but drummers tend to naturally replicate this sound using ghost notes.
- 2) Feeling a minim pulse at around 71bpm may help recreate that wonderfully laidback feel.
- 3) Don't be afraid to lay into the kit for that big sound.

¡INSPIRATION!

> Rick Beato cuts through the noise:

<https://youtu.be/XZYDDX1DHdu>

>> A Drumeo special:

<https://youtu.be/703eNA26KNM>



credit: moderndrummer.com

#3 - FUNKY DRUMMER

"I wanna give the drummer some of this funky solo we got here...

...you don't have to do no soloing brother, JUST KEEP WHAT YOU GOT.

Don't turn it loose, cause it's a mother"

Original track: 'Funky Drummer' (*full version*, 1970) - James Brown

5:21 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoQ4AtsFWVM>

Drummer: Clyde Stubblefield

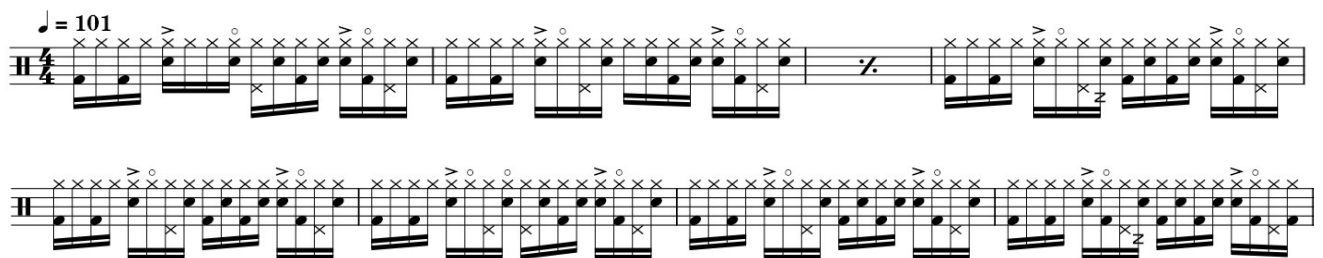
Sampled on: 'Rebel Without a Pause' - Public Enemy

'Beats to the Rhyme' - Run DMC (0:45 you'll hear JB's voice too!)

'Heaven' - Emeli Sandé

'Powerpuff Girls Theme' - James L. Venable (*LOL but wow it's fast!*)

'Wishing on a Star' - Fresh 4 feat. Lizz E



PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) Fast but delicate hihat with a subtle "shank-tip" lilt, so get out that moeller/push-pull!
- 2) Those left hand "pull-outs" on the backbeat will need special attention to make sure ghost note and accent are clearly defined.
- 3) As Stanton Moore astutely points out, drummers such as Stubblefield and Purdie would pump their left heel, which with a little adjustment starts to allow for hihat barks or "shoops" to emerge.

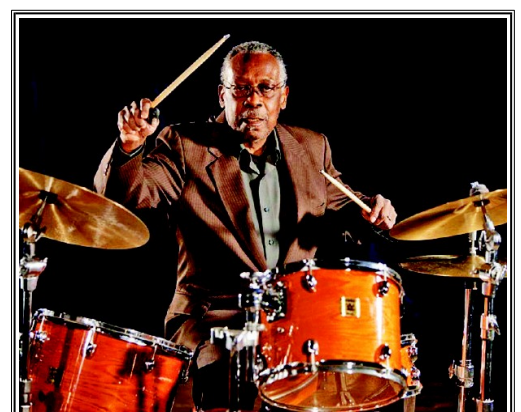
¡INSPIRATION!

> Pure joy from Clyde:

<https://youtu.be/-N4Q5VgIryw?t=111>

>> Stanton's as funky as they come nowadays:

<https://youtu.be/MjpAukfmGfQ>



credit: thetrapset.net

#4 - THE THING

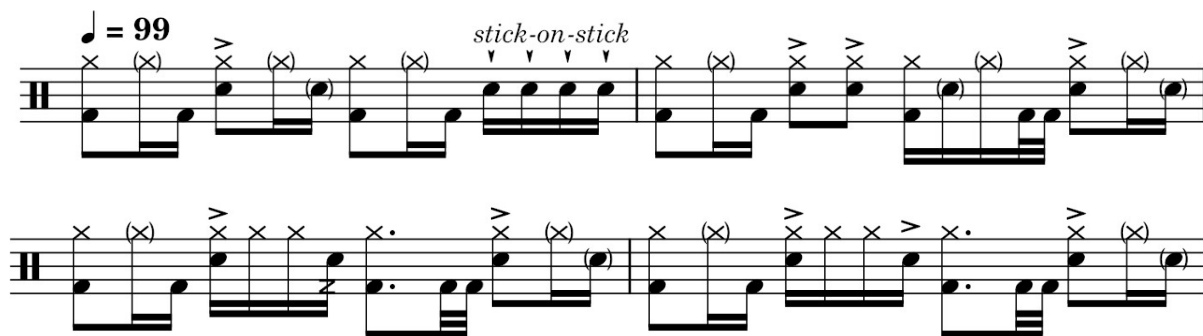
With Carleen leading from the back, the Groovers live up to their name with some deeeeeep funk...

Original track: 'The Thing' (1970) - Carleen & the Groovers

1:44 - https://youtu.be/DWM_-yLI9k8

Drummer: Carleen Jean Butler

Sampled on: 'Rock Steady Romance' - Lion Rock



PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) There's a real swagger going on, propelled especially by the 'a' seeming to arrive a little late (see that kick of beat 3 bar 1!), not to mention the "SHANK-tip" leaning heavily into those quarters.
- 2) Crank up that snare for a crisp crack!
- 3) Foot doubles will have to be on the money for this one.

¡INSPIRATION!

> 'Can We Rap', the group's most well-known hit, featuring ANOTHER Carleen break, this one with plenty of paradiddles!: <https://youtu.be/au6hzTFZrDY>



credit: discogs.com

#5 - ROSANNA 1/2 TIME SHUFFLE

Purdie and Bonham walk into a bar and bump into Jeff Porcaro...
Not the most sampled of all grooves, but one that all drummers should be able to recite like a sample!

Original track: 'Rosanna' (1982) – Toto

0:00 - <https://youtu.be/qmOLtTGvsbM>

Drummer: Jeff Porcaro

Sampled on: *unbelievably nothing notable...yet!*

the O.G.

as it evolved

♩. = 171

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) That ghost note following the snare backbeat on 3 is a toughie, so feel free to omit it initially to get playing along from the start.
- 2) Put a tad more weight on the hihats landing on the beat, or the second of every double if you will (see the ride bells!).
- 3) Note the 'Bo Diddley' kick, traced back to a 3-2 Cuban son clave.
- 4) Inspired by Purdie, that pedal hihat can bob up and down on the quarter notes to create some delicious open hihats.
- 5) Pull-out accents on the first of the two shuffle notes. Playing on the ride with the accents on the bell can help develop this.

¡INSPIRATION!

> **Jeff in his own words:** <https://youtu.be/NMI81yI1T0Q>
"I stole that beat from"...

'Home At Last' – Steely Dan (Bernard Purdie)

'Babylon Sisters' – Steely Dan (*see above!*)

'Fool in the Rain' – Led Zeppelin (Bonzo)

>> **A whole solo drum piece based on the 1/2 time shuffle:**

<https://youtu.be/5ZKpAPpHm2Q>



#6 - SQUIB CAKES

A funk legend famous for his infamously fiendish grooves...

Original track: 'Squib Cakes' (1974) - Tower of Power

0:00 - <https://youtu.be/gQIhoKrCPLk>

Drummer: David Garibaldi

Sampled on: 'Fat Controller' - Squarepusher

'Earth (Gaia)' - The Orb

'Checkmate' - Cypress Hill

♩ = 112

the O.G.

as it evolved:

The musical notation is presented in two systems, each with two staves. The first system is labeled 'the O.G.' and the second 'as it evolved:'. Both systems start with a tempo marking of 112 BPM. The notation includes various rhythmic symbols such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, triplets, and accents. The 'as it evolved' version shows a more complex arrangement of the same basic pattern, with additional notes and rests.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) Get those swiss army triplets down.
- 2) Be able to pick out accents on either note of a double.
- 3) Keep sticks heights low so accents really jump out.

! INSPIRATION!

> "[A] groove that everyone seems to ask about": <https://youtu.be/-QqQ4jkNj1w>

>> Great lesson:
<https://youtu.be/P8jCz-F6xbg>



credit: europe.yamaha.com

#7 - COLD SWEAT

The first true funk song? Certainly another very funky break from Clyde. Once more, *“let’s give the drummer some”*...

Original track: ‘Cold Sweat’ (1967) – James Brown

4:21 - <https://youtu.be/8bztE5IbQ0o>

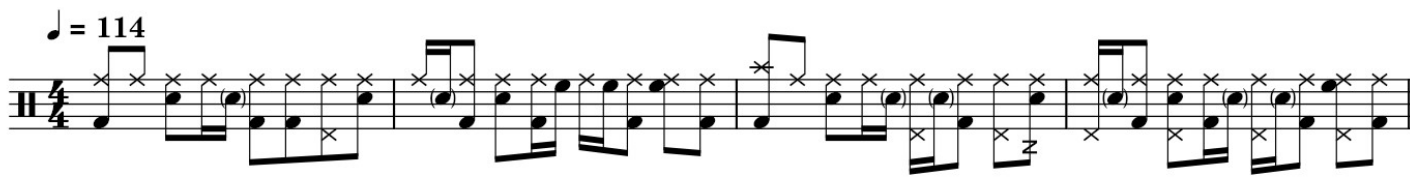
Drummer: Clyde Stubblefield

Sampled on: ‘Brown Paper Bag’ – Roni Size

‘Welcome to the Terrordrome’ – Public Enemy

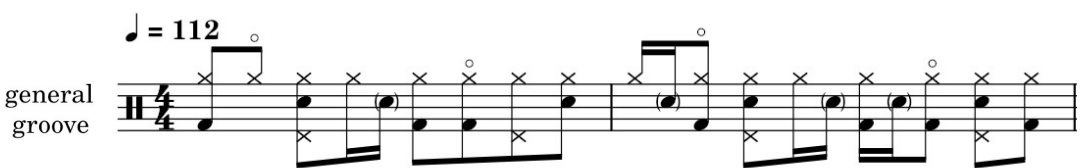
‘Genius’ – Pitchshifter

♩ = 114



♩ = 112

general groove



PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) Funk often leans into the 1 to remedy the syncopation going on elsewhere, so make sure to do that on beat 1 of every other bar.
- 2) Those pedal hihats are difficult to detect in the mix, but although seemingly improvised and irregular, try them on all four $\frac{1}{4}$ notes for flow, as Clyde does later in the track.
- 3) Chuck some buzzy, pressed snare hits in there for that Stubbs style.

¡INSPIRATION!

> From the horse’s mouth: <https://youtu.be/-N4Q5VgIryw>

>> Great teaching from Stanton: <https://youtu.be/6h0cHbskU2I> (0:56)

>>> The boogaloo style that Clyde refers to, synonymous with African-American/Cuban/Latino culture in the 60s: <https://youtu.be/DEjN42FW2sU>



credit: rollingstone.com

#8 - GOOFUS

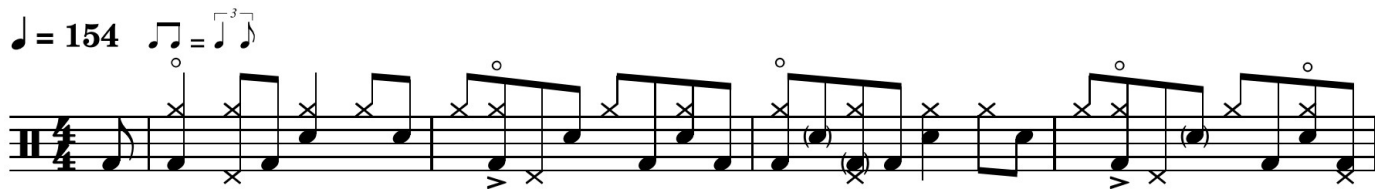
Making drumming-singers/singing-drummers cool way before Anderson .Paak...

Original track: 'Goofus' (1976) - The Carpenters (cover)

0:00 - <https://youtu.be/YRQqvNNZDCs>

Drummer: Karen Carpenter

Sampled on: *nothing to date, so get sampling!*



PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) Karen plays with some gorgeous feel here, contrasting weighty onbeat notes (especially those funk-inspired open hats on beat 1), with sharp and incisive swing on the offbeats, sometimes called skips. You can really pick-out the '+'s of beat 1, bars 2 & 4, with some ferocity, whilst maintaining an overall laidback lilt.
- 2) Chuck an old shirt/teatowel on the snare for that warm, muted sound.

! INSPIRATION!

- > She was a BEAST: <https://youtu.be/vdECTv0-Epo>
- >> It's origin as a bouncy swing tune: <https://youtu.be/A2kgxAdfx6g>



credit: fanpop.com

#9 - FUNKY MULE

A little known drummer fuels the fires of future drum 'n' bass...

Original track: 'Funky Mule' (1969) - Ike Turner & the Kings of Rhythm

0:00 - <https://youtu.be/BmeCHPKFpwk>

Drummer: McKinley "Mack" Johnson

Sampled on: 'Inner City Life' - Goldie feat. Diane Charlemagne

'Soul Surfing' - Fatboy Slim

'Complex' - Photek

♩ = 135

r l r l r l

3

l r l r l r l r l

3

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- 1) Note the Garibaldi-esque intro fill and feel, a clue as to the sorts of places the Tower of Power man took his inspiration from. Try playing with some of that crisp and incisive attack.
- 2) Snare ghost notes aren't a characteristic of this groove, but those doubles in particular do feature some dynamic lilt. Although somewhat softer, they do have a certain weight on the second of each pair. In fact, they may very well have been played as Rls, the right hand moving over from hihat to snare, but experiment with what sits best for you to capture an authentic feel.
- 3) "Mack" propels the groove forward with fire, especially sitting ahead of the beat on that final fill. This is especially evident when the rest of the band enter and rein the tempo in a bpm or two.

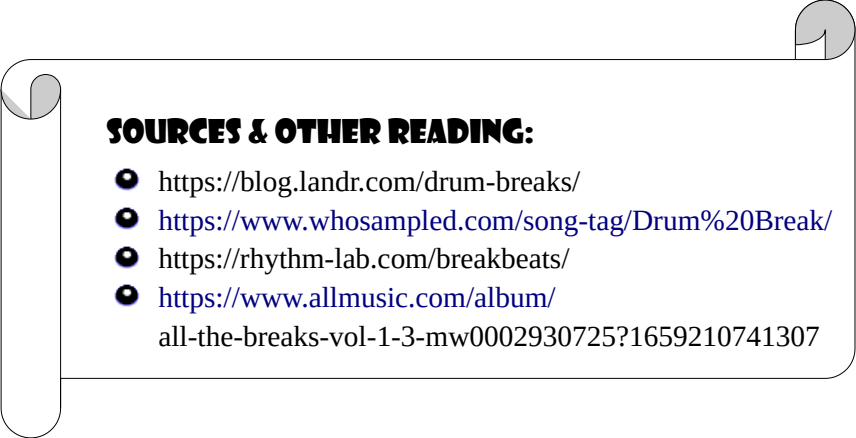
¡INSPIRATION!

> Adam Betts is killing the live drum 'n' bass game, here with Goldie:

<https://youtu.be/bkUpqQLoVXo>



credit: en.wikipedia.org



SOURCES & OTHER READING:

- <https://blog.landrr.com/drum-breaks/>
- <https://www.whosampled.com/song-tag/Drum%20Break/>
- <https://rhythm-lab.com/breakbeats/>
- [https://www.allmusic.com/album/
all-the-breaks-vol-1-3-mw0002930725?1659210741307](https://www.allmusic.com/album/all-the-breaks-vol-1-3-mw0002930725?1659210741307)