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“As a bassist, artist, and producer, what do you want to hear in a drummer?”
“Time, groove and feel—that’s it!”

—Marcus Miller, Studio Bass Legend
Modern Drummer, June 1998

Introduction

Welcome to my DVD play-along book and CD. It brings me great joy to see this long-time vision of mine come to fruition! My partner, Russ Miller, and I have gone to great lengths to bring you the best play-along package possible. An incredible amount of hard work, love, and passion went into this project for your benefit. I hope you enjoy playing along with this incredible music as much as we enjoyed making it. I have met a great many of you out on the road while touring, speaking, and doing clinics on the subject of my life-long passion, R&B drumming. This package comes to life as a direct result of the desire that many of you expressed to me for a play-along package that was truly authentic. So here it is, brothers and sisters. Dig in!

This play-along package chronologically documents the evolution of R&B drumming. It features 11 of the all-time funkier tunes covering the most significant sub-genres of R&B music from the 1950s through the late 1990s. Styles include gospel, blues, New Orleans funk, Motown, soul, funk, go-go, new jack swing, and hip-hop, right on to the contemporary urban R&B grooves of today. There are also three bonus tracks in the style of these legendary R&B songs for you to play along with as well.

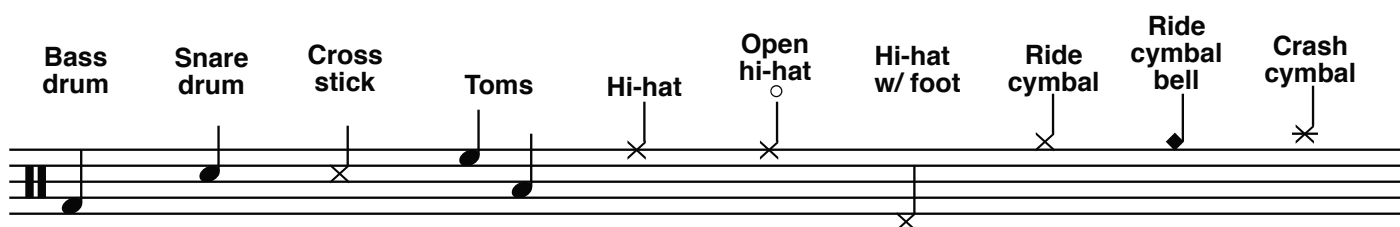
Original songs by R&B legends such as James Brown, The Meters, Aretha Franklin, Earth, Wind & Fire, and Janet Jackson are covered with true authenticity both in performance and in production. The CD features stellar performances by an all-star R&B band that includes legendary Earth, Wind & Fire guitarist Al McKay. Documentation for each song includes historical background information about the original recording and drummer, tips on approaching the music, rare photos, and album cover artwork. Also included are recommended listening guides to help you master each feel and a top-10 list of my favorite recordings for each featured drummer to inspire further study.

Along with the above is a chart for each song, complete with a transcription of the drum groove in each major section. This package clearly redefines the traditional play-along, and we hope it proves to be a useful and inspirational tool for mastering the concepts of groove drumming!

For a more in-depth view into my concepts and philosophies, please refer to the following issues and articles that have appeared in *Modern Drummer* magazine:

- Dancing with Destruction*, February 1997
- Ask a Pro: Playing to a Click Track*, October 1997
- Maximizing Your Practice Time*, April 1998
- Zoro Feature Interview*, March 1999
- Gettin' on the Good Foot*, May 1999
- The Drummers of Motown*, July 1999
- Developing the Funky Hi-Hat Part 1*, February 2000
- Developing the Funky Hi-Hat Part 2*, April 2000
- Zoro/Lenny Kravitz Cover Story Feature Interview*, September 2004

Drum Key



OLD LANDMARK

TWO-BEAT GOSPEL FEEL

Original Recording Profile

Recording Artist: Aretha Franklin
Producers: Jerry Wexler, Arif Mardin, and Aretha Franklin
Drummer: Bernard Purdie
Original Album: *Amazing Grace*
Record Label: Atlantic Records
Recording Date: January 14, 1972
Recorded live at New Temple Missionary Baptist Church in
Los Angeles, CA



Historical Overview

This is a classic gospel song that has been covered by many artists. The particular version that we based the arrangement on was sung by the queen of soul herself, the great Aretha Franklin. It is from her seminal 1972 album titled *Amazing Grace*, which featured an amazing gospel choir and live orchestra. You may have heard this song if you've seen the movie *The Blues Brothers* starring Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi. James Brown played a Baptist minister and sang this song in the highly uplifting church scene. If this song doesn't immediately inspire you to start clapping on beats 2 and 4 then you may want to check your pulse because you are probably dead! If you can't find 2 and 4, you may want to reconsider pursuing a career as a drummer.

Approaching the Music

This song is based on a fast two-beat gospel swing feel. It's not uncommon, in the more old-school traditional gospel music, to hear the tambourine louder in the mix than the drums. This is especially true with regards to the original recording of this song. In fact, you can't hear the drums very well on this live recording, but you can feel them for sure. However, based on the style of music, there are only a few ways to approach playing a two-beat gospel song at this tempo. Listen closely to how the tambourine plays a variety of swung rhythms. This has a direct influence on the way I play my hi-hat and the bell of the ride cymbal on this song. Basically, it's similar to a jazz swing ride pattern with a steady R&B backbeat.

Recommended Recordings to Help Master This Feel

The Gospel Box (1999, Rhino Records)
Aretha Franklin's Amazing Grace: The Complete Recording (1999, Rhino Records)
Jubilation! Great Gospel Performances Vol. 1-3 (1992, Rhino Records)

10 Classic Bernard "Pretty" Purdie Tracks

1. "Rock Steady" by Aretha Franklin, 1971
2. "Home at Last" by Steely Dan, 1978
3. "Until You Come Back to Me (That's What I'm Gonna Do)" by Aretha Franklin, 1973
4. "Kid Charlemagne" by Steely Dan, 1976
5. "Babylon Sisters" by Steely Dan, 1980
6. "Deacon Blues" by Steely Dan, 1978
7. "The Fez" by Steely Dan, 1976
8. "Day Dreaming" by Aretha Franklin, 1972
9. "Green Earrings" by Steely Dan, 1976
10. "Memphis Soul Stew" by King Curtis from *Live at the Fillmore West*, 1971



(Courtesy of Bernard Purdie)

Bernard "Pretty" Purdie

The master of the groove, Bernard "Pretty" Purdie is one of the most recorded drummers of all time and most definitely one of the most groove oriented drummers to hit planet earth! This guy just keeps getting better. He plays with such intention, such depth of thought, and such joy of spirit. We are lucky to have so many great recordings he has given us. He is truly one of the most prolific players of our time.



(Courtesy of Zoro collection)

I have had the pleasure of playing with Bernard on many occasions, and it's always a privilege and honor as well as a great lesson. Here are a few photos of us hanging at various events throughout the years! The last photo ain't nothing but a groove and represents four generations of drummers dedicated to the pocket: Bernard Purdie, myself, and James Brown drummers Clyde Stubblefield and John "Jabo" Starks. It helps to be surrounded by the giants of groove!

Insight from the Masters

"He (the drummer) is the backbone of the band. If you take care of that job then you can do anything you want. Your job is to hold the band together. Your job is to support everybody in that band. It's your job to give the band what they want, when they need it. And in return, they'll give you what you need. But, you've got to give it to them first. Always, that's your role."

—Bernard Purdie
Modern Drummer, May/June 1979

"Some jazz drummers look down on rock 'n' roll because they don't know it. They can't interpret it, so they can't play it. They can't play it, so they don't like it. Rock 'n' roll has simplicity. Jazz is sometimes busy, and it's always easier to play busy. When you play busy, you can hide your mistakes, and the more you play, the more mistakes you'll make. That's why it's so hard to groove. When you're grooving, you don't have to play anything but 2 and 4, but when you miss, it sticks out like a sore thumb. It's harder to play rock and R&B than anything else, because it is so simple."

—Bernard Purdie
Modern Drummer, November 1985

