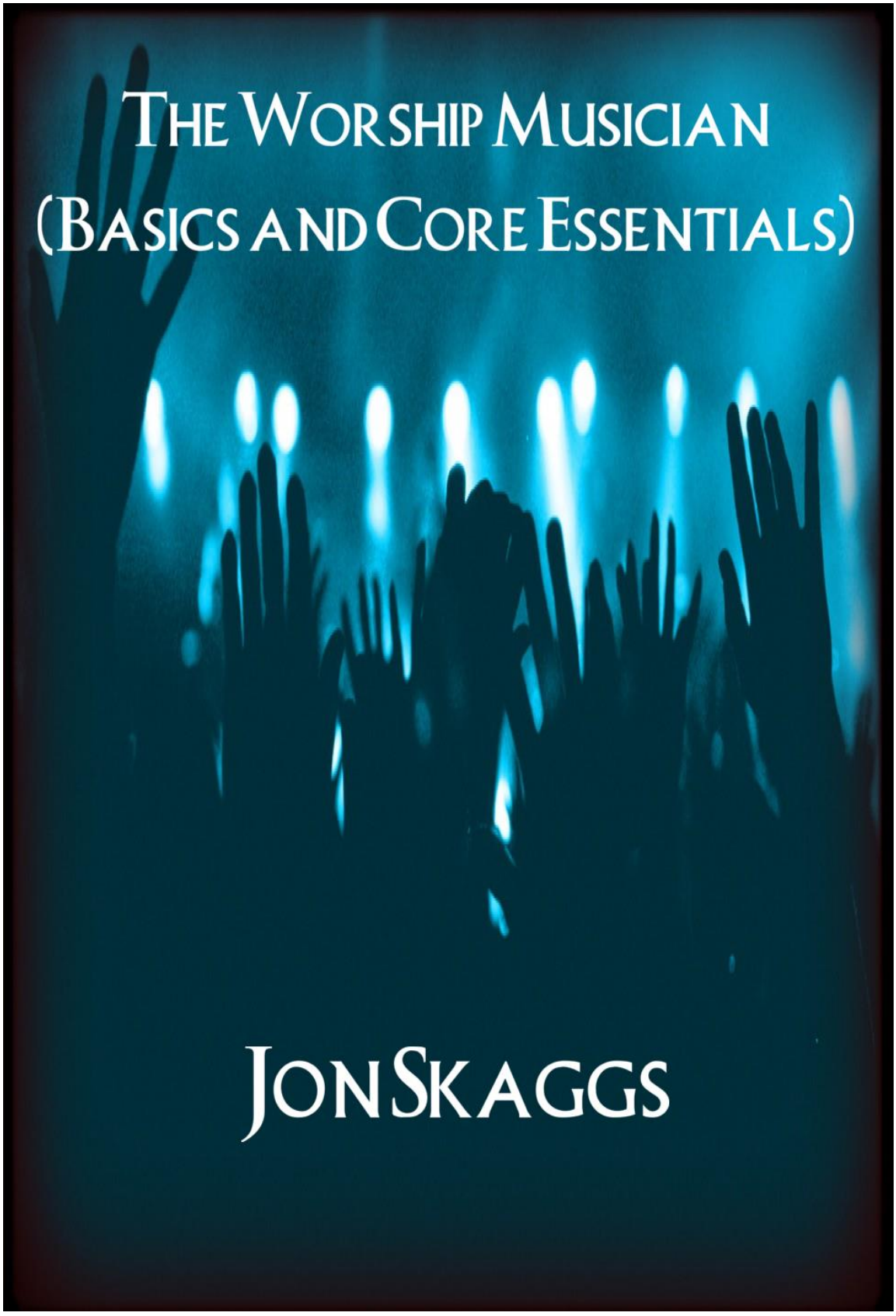

THE WORSHIP MUSICIAN
(BASICS AND CORE ESSENTIALS)
JON SKAGGS

The Worship Musician (Basics and Core essentials) by Jon Skaggs



About the Author:

Jon Skaggs has been a producer, composer, drummer, and writer for over 20 years. He has played with some of the biggest names in music in both Christian and Mainstream. Though that is the case, Jon is passionate about the church and worship. As Christ is central in his life he wants to teach and guide other musicians the importance of being equipped with the truth and excellence in music. You can find out more info about Jon at his website http://jonskaggs.net and visit http://theworshipmusician.com for more resources, blogs, and articles from other Worship Leaders, Music Producers, and Christian Artists.

Jon is available for worship team clinics, speaking engagements, teaching sessions, or to sit in on drums with your band. If interested you can contact him here! mailto: jon@jonskaggs.net

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Introduction:

Hello! And thank you for purchasing this E-Book! I hope to provide you with some core essentials from my personal experiences of being a professional musician since 1994. I hope the information I provide is useful for you to be as successful as possible not only as a musician but as a musician specifically for your church worship service.

As Musicians, we carry a large role in leading worship from our respective instruments. There will be many illustrations on how I prepare myself and properly address a church worship service as a Musician to perform this large task. This will not be a technique book as much as it will be a book on how to be as successful as possible in your time preparing, rehearsing, and playing for your worship service. These are what many others and I regard as the core essentials. Keep checking back at our website http://theworshipmusician.com for more additions and add-ons to this eBook. Our website will also be a great place for you to read articles and connect to more resources as a worship leader and worship musician.

Chapter 1: Preparation

In December of 2005, I was living and working in Dallas, TX. One morning I got a call from a Nashville area code, which doesn't happen very often when living in Dallas, so I decided to let it go to voicemail because I simply didn't know who it was. When I listened to the message it was the manager for Nichole Nordeman. She was looking for a drummer to come on tour with Nichole for 48 dates in the Spring of 2006. Since you don't really get a lot of those calls as a sideman in Dallas my jaw hit the floor and I felt deeply honored that I was asked.

Upon accepting the tour, Nichole's manager said that she would be sending me songs that would possibly be in the tour set. When I found out what they were I studied them, locked in their respective tempos, and did my best to memorize them as much as possible. When the tour rehearsal dates began creeping closer the bass player and I decided to get together and play along to the tracks on the CD. When we all arrived at the first rehearsal I was surprised that Nichole wanted to change up the arrangements a bit to fit a more acoustic set instead of the more aggressive electric tone of what her current record sounded like at the time.

We rolled through the songs one by one at a fast pace. Even with the arrangement and dynamic changes we still played the songs at an accelerated rate. Nichole was very pleased at how everything was sounding and decided to not even bother with the already planned extra day of rehearsal. It seemed that our individual rehearsal time payed off in a very big way. Now everyone had an extra day to spend with their families before hitting the road. Preparedness definitely pays off!

A request for me to play a with an artist, weekend worship service, or a performance somewhere almost always comes first with the assurance and trust of the Worship Leader/Bandleader that I will be as prepared as I possibly can be on long or short notice. I truly believe preparedness is not only responsible to yourself and musicianship. But it is even equally more responsible and respectful to the person(s) who hired you and the listener who you'll be playing in front of. And you will soon find out if you stop getting emails or your phone stops ringing as to how much your respective bandleader/worship leader values preparedness as well.

Now, enter the scenario you may or may have experienced of being hired or asked to volunteer your time and talents for a Worship Service or Performance. A lot of you, like myself, have a smart phone or a device that you carry around with you at all times to access your email or stay connected with the world. So it's very safe to say that a bandleader and/or worship leader will contact you via email with a planning center availability request or a simple text asking if you're around for the weekend that you'll receive almost immediately. In which at this

point you, in this particular scenario, are available and looking forward to volunteering your time so you're reply is Yes on the planning center request or an emphatic Yes! in a text message reply.

Many of you may or may have not seen what the planning center looks like. If not here's an image below.



The Planning Center – The process of gathering and organizing will be an incredibly easy process if your worship leader uses the planning center. If you're a worship leader reading this eBook. I highly suggest that you look into using this amazing online scheduling, organizing, and planning resource. http://get.planningcenteronline.com/ . If you're a musician, the planning center will be an easy way to prepare for the worship service. Once you accept the planning center request that you receive in an email. You are granted access to the whole service plan and set list complete charts and mp3's. If the planning center is not something your worship leader uses then you have to do a little more homework. The following 2 actions below are what have been apart of my normal repertoire for many years until using the planning center.

They are as follows --

- **Gathering** -- I go about gathering as much info as possible about the Service i.e. How many songs? Is there already a set list? Are there Mp3's and Charts available? Gathering all this info is essentially my guide or barometer, if you will, of how much preparation I will need to have for the Service or Performance. You're either going to have an incredible amount of info or very little. I've definitely had both and maybe the latter half of that way more. We're all musicians; so how organized do you possibly expect us to be?? Nonetheless, spend as much time as possible gathering at first. It will help you schedule how much "prep" time you need to allot in your day(s) leading up to your Service or Performance.
- **Organization** -- After gathering, I spend a little time organizing my info. And for most of us in the music industry, organization just does not happen naturally. So I had to "learn" this skill and it really paid off for me. For instance, finding out a set list has been a huge timesaver and helps me memorize songs, know keys of songs, lock in and program tempos on a metronome (If Needed), Program Tracks or Loops (If Needed). Also helps to feel the dynamics of a set, determine parts, patterns, tunings, grooves, instruments to use, charting the songs, and will be a huge factor in saving time in your rehearsals by simply having gathered and organized as much info as you can. You're not always going to have everything you need and not every situation will always be optimal. This organization process will simply help you see what you have to work with and do your best with what you have gathered. Keep in mind that set lists have a habit of changing. So always keep a bit of "Murphy's Law" in mind while organizing your info. The best thing to do is forge ahead with what you have to work with, be aware that changes might happen, and be prepared to be flexible and have a good attitude at all times.

Notes – An iPad is an incredible necessity anymore for the worship musician. If you are afforded the opportunity of using the planning center; Then you may use your iPad as a music stand also with its music stand add-on feature. You can use an assortment of stand clamps and mounting apparatuses to view your iPad charts while playing. The charts and songs are easily imported from planning center and can be an incredible asset. With the music stand you may also take notes, listen to the song audio, and use a built in metronome to find the tempos. It’s a great add-on feature for the planning center if you haven’t already tried it. You can find it here at this link
http://get.planningcenteronline.com/services/music-stand#learn-more

Chapter 2: Listening and Charting

Listening and Charting -- Now that I've gathered and organized as much info as possible. I am going to listen to the given songs as much as I can, when at all possible, to memorize the material. In today’s world of mobile technology; you're

afforded the opportunity to listen to your music anywhere at any time. You can download songs from email onto your iphone, android, or blackberry and listen to them at work, on the road, or at home. Whatever method of listening is best for you. It should be in a way where you recognize the nuances of the particular part for your instrument, song arrangement, and obvious hits and pushes in each song. It’s most important to key in on time signature, groove, tone, chords, keys, riffs, specific melodies, tempo, hits, stops, pushes, starts, and stops most importantly. And a great way to memorize those, if you don't have a chart provided to you, is to make one of your own.

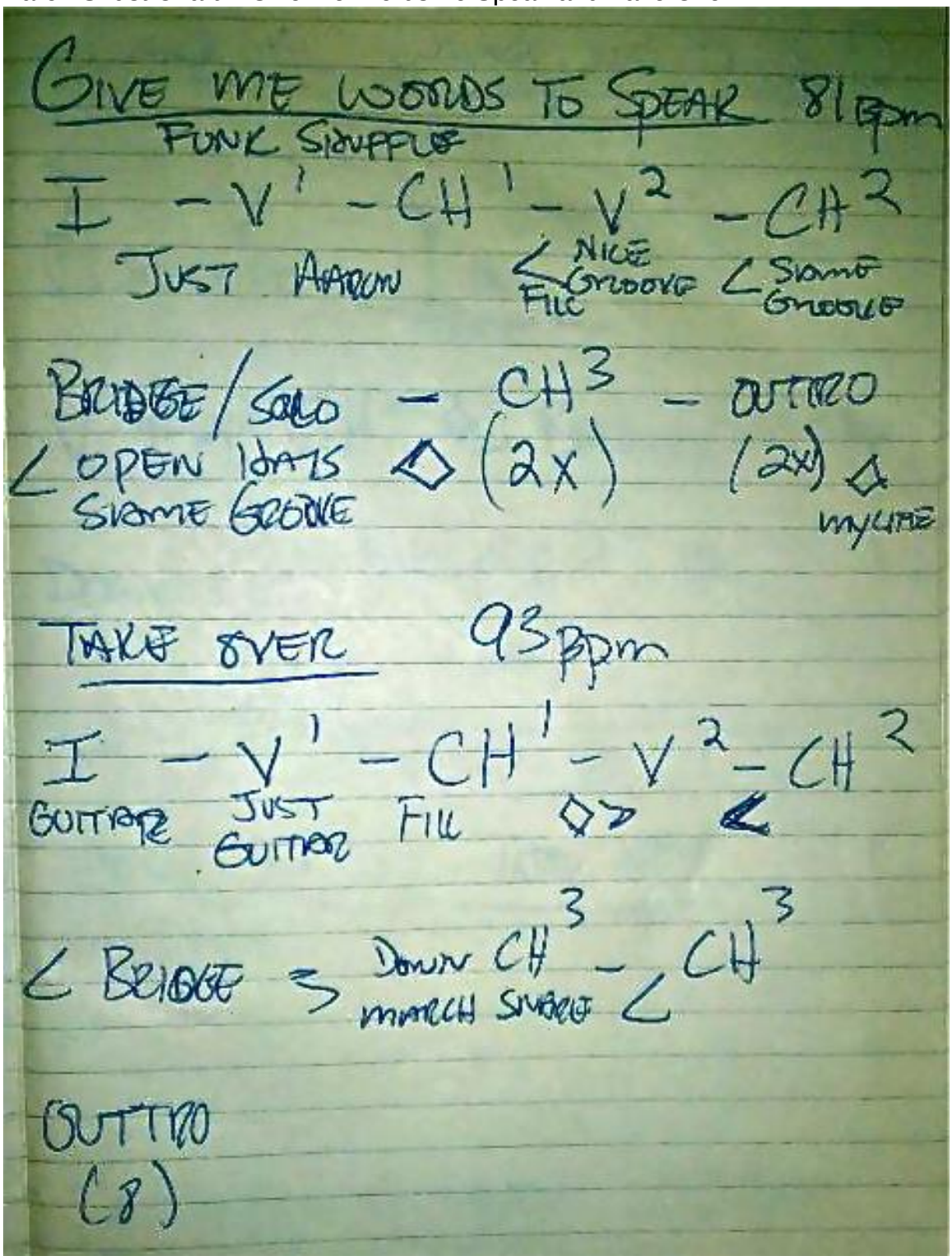
One of the most challenging listening and charting gigs of my life were a few mega churches that I played very often in Dallas, TX. The challenge of them was that they were both very different in format and chart styles. One of them being Prestonwood Baptist Church, which was more of an adult contemporary, choir, and track heavy format. I would always have a music stand full of charts falling all over the place and a full plate of keeping a large orchestra, band, and choir all in sync while playing with tracks and charts. The memorization was key here because of the amount music with tracks. Although I had charts, I did a lot of chart marking to remind me of stops, tempo changes, and interesting beginnings and endings.

Charting Process -- The memorization process is vastly enhanced by hand charting out the songs in a pattern that I'll illustrate for you here. If you have charts provided to you then use those as a guide and feel free to make markings. You're not always afforded the luxury of charts and I believe that help a considerably in memorizing music in your set list. If you don't, take note of the handwritten charts below

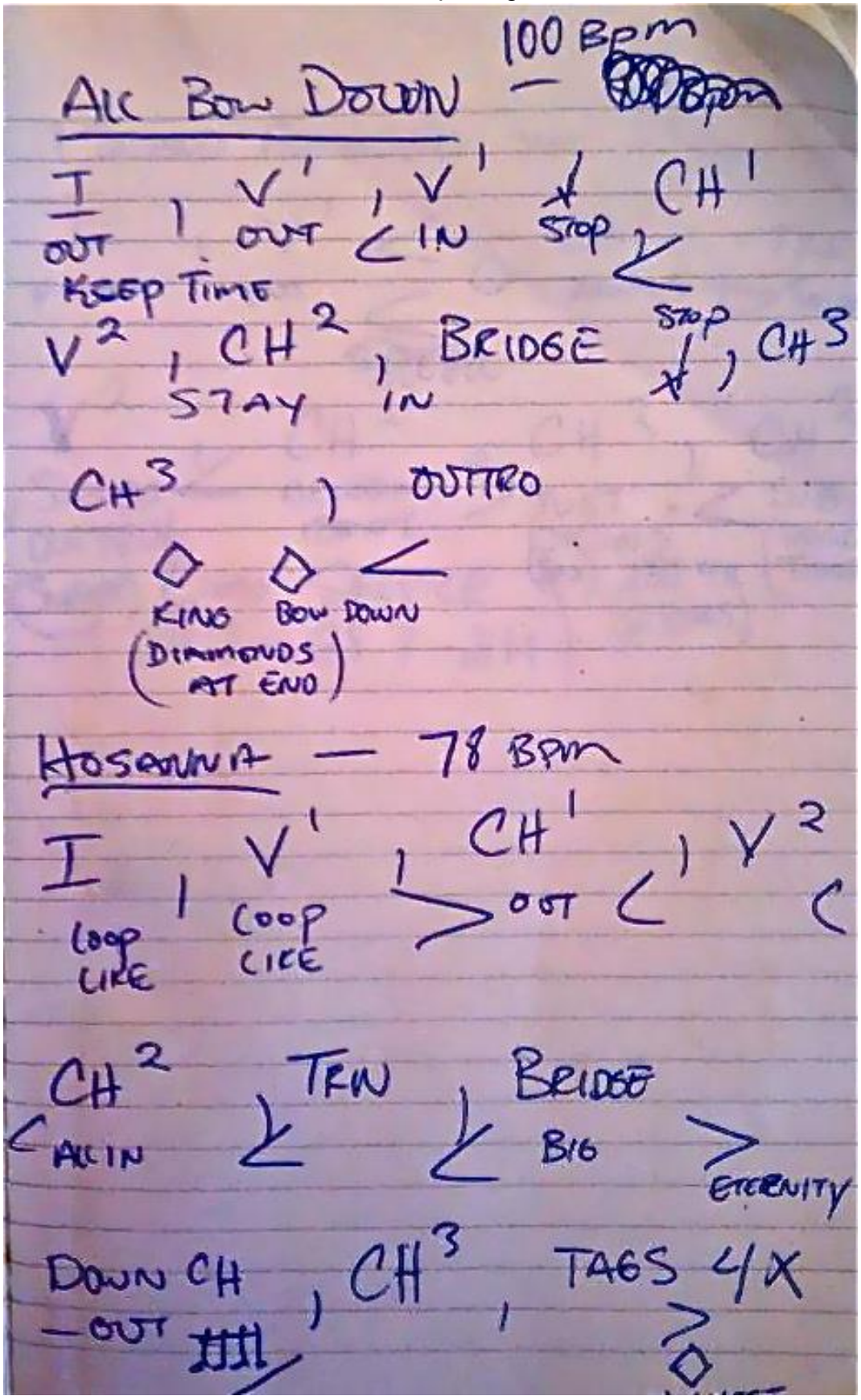
Note - *These are charts for a drummer. Bass Players and Guitarists might need to expand charts to include chords in their respective sequence.*

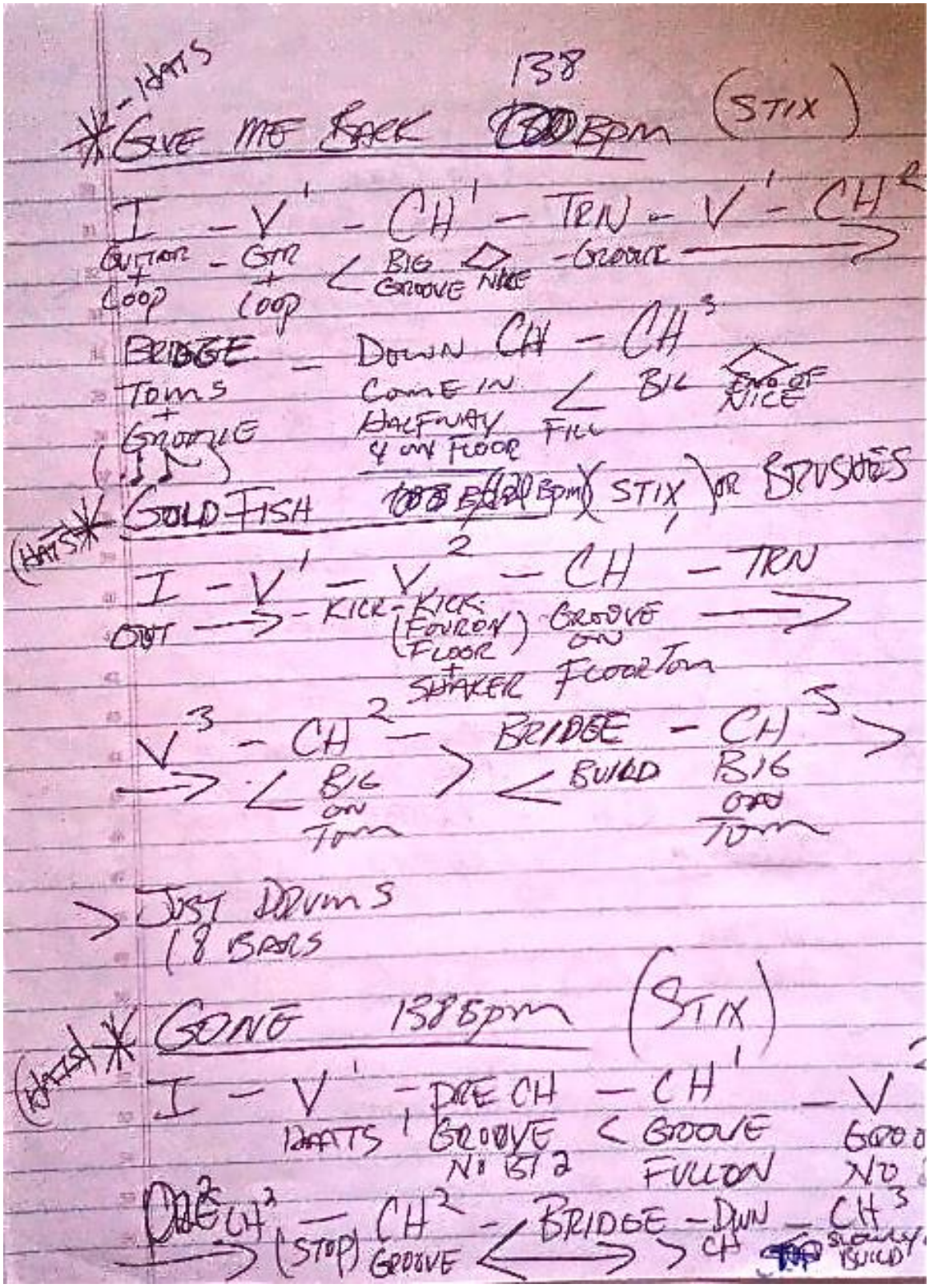
View on the next page

Aaron Shust Chart – Give Me Words To Speak and Take Over



Willow Creek Church Chart for Worship Songs “All Bow Down” and “Hosanna”





Kina Grannis Chart – “Give Me Back”, “Goldfish”, and “Gone”.

The chart above is for an artist that I got a call to play with at the last minute. There were 3 rehearsals for 2 sold out shows at The Highline Ballroom in New York City. I had to learn about 15-16 songs in the midst of producing a record. So knowing I had little time and there was so much material I charted out the songs in order of how I downloaded them because there wasn't a set list available. I would spend a solid day with the artist I was producing and then after wrapping with them I would spend the rest of the evening "studying" and charting. From what I gathered from the bass player in my "gathering process"; is that the former drummer had bad sense of time and didn't ever come prepared. So I knew that valuable information would come in handy as I prepared and charted. And as I walked into the first rehearsal everyone was very impressed with how I knew the tempos and arrangements so well. And then as the performance commenced in NYC it was a success! I had the set programmed and memorized thus making a happy artist and a successful show.

So with that let's dissect the above charts as to what I key in on to help me memorize songs and guide me through the preparation process and upcoming rehearsal
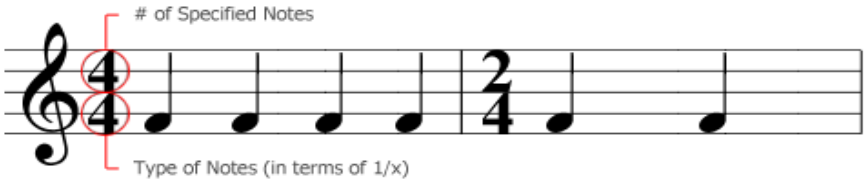
- **Tempos** -- Tempos are commonly known as BPM's or beats per minute. Tempo is a very central part of music. If you are the drummer, then it is your job to maintain the tempo for the whole band. I almost always play with a metronome or a click track live. And one of the first things I ask a new artist I'm playing with is if they're comfortable playing with a metronome or a click track live. So one of the first things that I do when I listen to a new song is lock in a tempo with my metronome and make the marking of the BPM on my chart for reference. The same can go for any musician in the band. As for some guitarists like to know tempos to set delays.
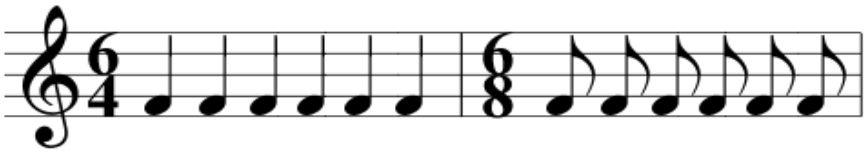
Pictured below is the Metronome model that I use (Boss DB-90). You can program tempos and use an assortment of different subdivisions. It’s easy to use and easy to connect to a sound system if you’re worship band is using an in ear monitoring system. All you need is a dedicated click channel on your FOH or Monitor console, A DI Box, and a ¼ inch cable that will connect to the ¼ input on your metronome labeled headphones. I always start a soundcheck with the volume all the way up so that I have enough signal to turn down if needed. (A future tutorial on how to program tempos in a metronome will be on http://theworshipmusician.com)

Photo of Metronome on next page



- **Time Signature** -- A time signature of a song is how a song is counted in each bar or measure and is what distinguishes the note value. The most common time signature in modern music is known as Common time or 4/4 time. 4/4 time is Four beats per measure and the Quarter note value is one beat. Meaning, when you count 1, 2, 3, 4. You are counting in Quarter notes, which is the note value of 1 beat. In 4/4 time, Four Quarter notes equal 1 bar or measure. 2 bars equal 8 beats or quarter notes. You also have other note values other than quarter notes that can comprise of 4 or more beats per measure and per the time signature. These note value consist of sixty-fourth notes, thirty-second notes, sixteenth notes, eighth notes, half notes, and whole notes. With all of these note values there is a rule that the time signature applies to them. For example, 4/4 time cannot exceed four beats to equal a bar or measure. The same thing applies to another very common time signature in modern music, which is 6/8 time. This time signature is different because the eighth notes get the beat in relation to the bottom number being 8 and there are six eighth notes to make up a full measure. See example below:





- **Arrangements** -- Memorizing an arrangement is key to learning any song. Song arrangements will have many key elements that make them easier to memorize. Within each arrangement we can memorize entrances, grooves, stops, holds, pushes, and endings. Every song may or may not have the same structure. But it's pretty safe for me to always listen to a modern song and know there are going to be a lot of the same parameters involved. It's also up to me to know what to fill in those given parameters.
- **Chords –** Having a chord cheat sheet is great to practice and rehearse with. In often cases, you might have to use your written chord chart to understand voicings, inversions, and certain patterns where the chords land so you can play the song.
- **Key Signature –** Finding the key signature of a song can be a bit tricky sometimes. But it's always easy to just find the root note or tonic (Note of the Key). And if you know your circle of 5ths you can figure out where to go from there. If you're more advanced in music theory you may know the number system. The number system is the easiest way to interpret the circle of 5ths in a logical way. (I'll explain this further in a future add-on for this eBook) . Once you know the key of the song. Apply it to your chart.

Chapter 3: Song Structure

I started to pay attention to song structure more when I was working for the Drummers for Jesus celebration and clinic as co-founder in 2003. At the event, I had the honor being the drum tech for Vinnie Colaiuta. It was amazing to me how much he paid attention to his chart and made note of certain sections with a different emphasis. In fact, I went back to all of his recordings with Sting and it became even more clear how well he emphasized a groove for certain sections and re-introduced them in Choruses from an Intro and etc. I had a paradigm shift at that point. I watched one of the greatest drummers alive with some of the greatest chops ever. Play the simplest grooves and complete a song. It felt right and it was a turning point for me. In fact I had a gig the very next day and implemented this into my charts and memory. It has truly revolutionized my playing.

So as you see in many of these charts I have a lot of scribble markings like "I" for Intro and "v1" for verse 1 and so on and so on. This is indicating the song structure. It's like getting directions to someone's house and it shows you the way to your destination and in this case, the end of the song. This type of road map will be more useful to you as a musician. And no it will not help you in any way on the road if you're lost.

So let's study the different parts of a song. Below is typical song structure of most

pop songs and most worship music of today.

Intro - 4 bars, Verse1 - 8 bars, Pre-Chorus1 - 4 bars, Chorus - 8 bars, Turnaround - 4 bars, Verse2 - 8 bars, Pre-Chorus2 - 4 bars, Chorus2 - 8 bars, Bridge - 8 Bars, Down Chorus - 4 bars, Chorus3 - 8 bars, Outtro - 4 bars

- **Intro** -- Commonly a song introduces itself with just instruments at first and no vocals. Sometimes a song starts with every instrument and sometimes with just an acoustic guitar. However the Intro of a song is, typically your Entrance to the song occurs in the Intro.

- **Verses** -- We all know what the verse in song is. It's the part in the song where the vocals are first introduced. So by most standards in music dynamics, a musician will typically come down in volume or possibly drop out completely.

- **Pre-Choruses** -- This is an optional part of a song structure and is used by most songwriters to give listeners a preview of the coming Chorus. When it does happen it will often be short and either dip in volume or slowly ramp up to a bigger chorus.

- **Chorus** -- Now the Chorus! Or "Refrain", which means to repeat. It is the only part of the song that typically repeats throughout the song. The parts previously mentioned usually support it. A Chorus might sound and feel a lot like the Intro and may usually be louder than the other parts of the song.

- **Turnaround --** Sometimes called a "connector" or "turn". A turnaround is also like that of the Intro and a continuation of a Chorus typically without vocals. In modern music it is usually instrumental, very brief, and is a bit of what I like to call a "lead in" to the next verse or a Bridge. Just like it says, you're basically turning back around to the front of the song and going back into a verse and can often be one of the most unnoticed parts of an arrangement.

- **Bridge** -- The Bridge of a song is usually going to happen one time and can be the loudest part of a song dynamically. It typically occurs after a second Chorus and is sometimes called "The Payoff". The Payoff meaning it's often where you're the loudest or making the song's point as much musically as you are lyrically. The Bridge is a good prelude to how the rest of the song will be in volume and will keep the same intensity from the Bridge into the Final Chorus of the song.

- **Outtro and Ending** -- The Outtro is like the Intro, but differs in the fact that you

are more than likely going to be as loud as the Bridge and Final Chorus. Sometimes it will be the mirror image of the Intro and the Turnarounds according to how the song is written. The Outtro often characterizes itself with letting the listener know that the song is about to End.

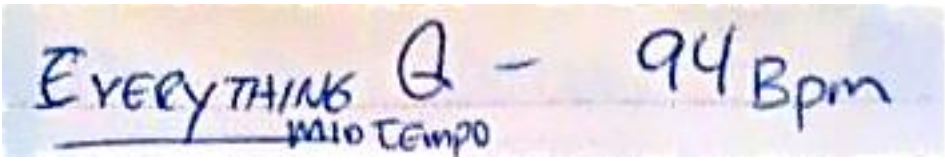
Chapter 4: Dynamic Chart Markings

I have to attribute my time in playing at Lakepointe Church in Rockwall, TX to a big part of my knowledge of chart markings. I found that I took a lot of the charts that came from my time in playing there and merged them with a bit of others I read to make my own. So a lot of this is a lot of my own interpretation of what I think is what best works for me. But nonetheless it seems to work well and most of all I can decipher it and apply it to any situation where I'm preparing or playing live.

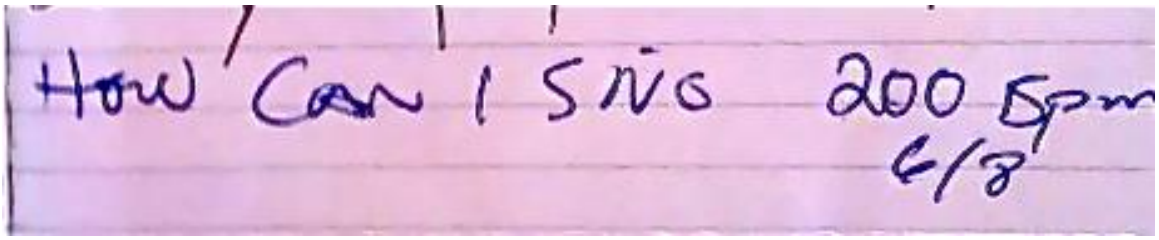
I played auxiliary percussion at Lakepointe Church for 4 years. And in that time, I learned to mark up my given chart to help me know where to place certain instruments, parts, and sounds in the appropriate section. This translated into making charts for the other instruments I played. Over the years I incorporated symbols and markings from percussion charts, Music from Lakepointe Church, and praisecharts.com to make my own.

Below are the explanations for the different symbols and markings you see on the handwritten chart examples. My handwritten charts are a mixture of standard musical notation and Nashville style charts.

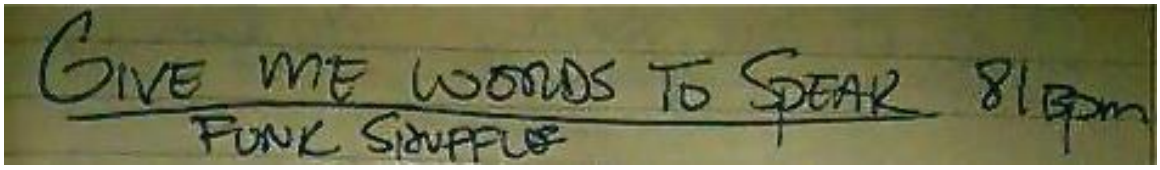
- **Tempo Markings** -- I usually put the tempo marking at the top of my chart for future reference in case I'm programming my tempos for particular songs or a set. Can come in handy if asked what a tempo is for a particular song.



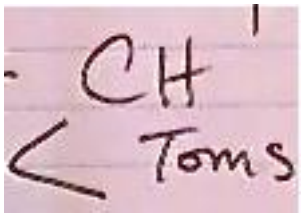
- **Time Signature Markings** -- A Time Signature marking will only be used if I'm not playing in Common time or 4/4 time. For instance I'll usually put 6/8 time at the top of my page to reference that specific time signature since it's not always a time signature I play in.



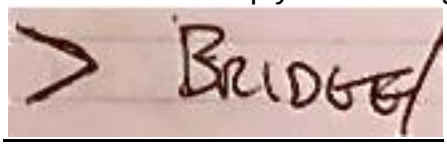
- **Feel Markings** -- This refers to terms like "Swing" or "Funk Shuffle". It's always nice to be prepared to give the correct "feel" to a song.



- **Crescendo and Decrescendo Markings** -- A Crescendo marking which looks like this.

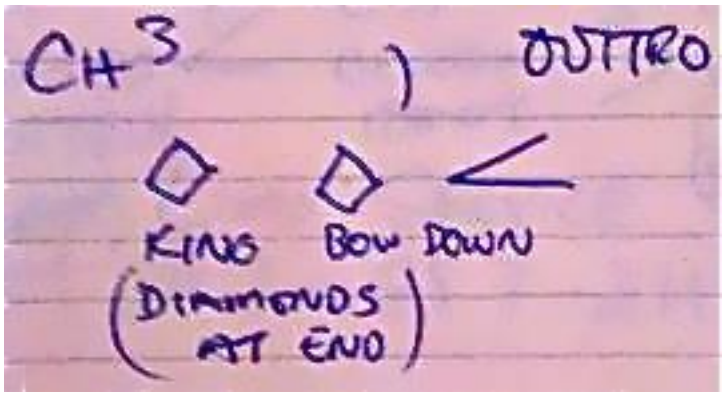


Are Italian markings which simply mean to gradually get louder. And the Decrescendo simply means to gradually get softer.



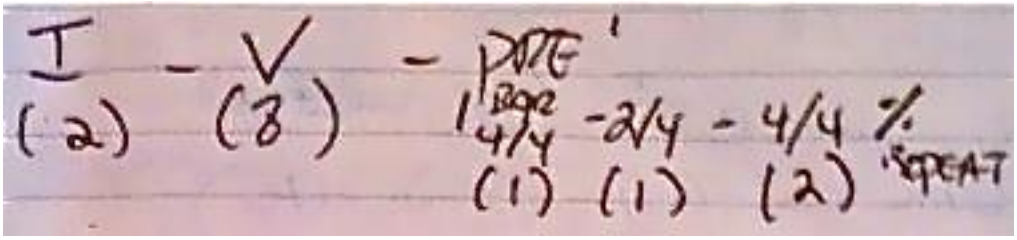
I use a Crescendo marking to indicate where I want to go into a louder section. They usually precede a Chorus or a Bridge, which are typically louder sections of the song. So to the other end of the dynamic, I use a Decrescendo symbol to indicate where I might go into a softer section of the song. You might see a Decrescendo marking going into Verse sections and Down Choruses.

- **The Diamond** -- The Diamond marking is one of the symbols you'll see more common in a Nashville style chart, shown here

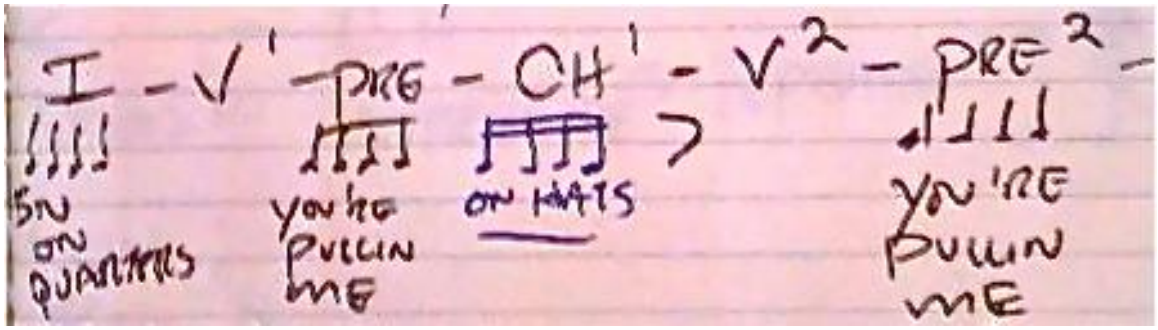


It simply means to hold out or sustain a note, like that of a whole note in standard musical notation. The Diamond marking, like the Whole Note, usually retains the value of 4 beats. When I use it, it is to indicate a cymbal crash that sustains for 4 beats or more going into a down or soft section. Or maybe just to sustain a crash through one measure or consecutive measures till you're back into a section with full groove. A guitarist, bass player, pianist and other instrumentalists will use the diamond marking in the same way. The diamond marking is an easy way to indicate a whole note and its note value.

- **Bar or Measure Counts** -- The Numbers under each section of the music denote how many bars or measures there are in that particular section.



- **Groove Markings** -- Groove markings might be more for the drummer. But any instrumentalist can use them to indicate a unique rhythm in a particular part of the song. They are the little sets of notation or name of a groove you see to indicate what groove I am playing in a certain section. I only use this to remind me if a groove changes in a certain section.



Other Markings not shown:

Chords – place chords in a way that's easy to read under the bar and measure counts.

Keys – place keys at the top of the chart by tempo and other relevant markings.

Even if you have a planning center music stand, printed charts, or an iPad. The above system is a great way to memorize any song. Writing out the song's structure and nuances is a great way to put any song to memory.

Chapter 5: The Rehearsal

Rehearsal and Preparation is a test of who you are as a musician. And the practice, repetition, and mastering of it is what makes you a professional musician. Rehearsal is where you begin to test all that you prepared up until this point. I always come prepared with all my charts, an ipod with all the songs for reference, and a set list (if there is one provided). Rehearsal is also a great place for you to get comfortable with the other musicians you're playing with. It's also used to understand the feel of everyone else playing around you if you don't play with other musicians on a regular basis. I call rehearsal "A psychological preparation" as much as it is a musical preparation. For a Worship Musician it's a spiritual preparation first. You have been preparing and working on your music up to this point. Now you have to get the feel of the worship leader, other musicians, and put in place what you've been learning.

Rehearsal before Rehearsal

It seems redundant but it's worth it. Your rehearsal before rehearsal can be very key in understanding the parts in relation to your instrument and visualizing your respective parts.

One thing that I do, if my home surroundings provide for it, is setup a drum kit and rehearse the given material with my, ipod or mp3 player, charts or handwritten charts, as much as possible. This is easier for guitarist and pianists to accomplish but will be a bit more of a challenge for the drummers. In any case, I try to setup a feel for my future rehearsal and performance as much as I can. There is no better preparation than actually getting to play through the parts that you are memorizing. At least the first time you get to have a feel for them all will be in your own private rehearsal time. This is one of the last things you can do to totally prepare before rehearsal. It's a tired and true way of making sure you are on your "A" game before you play the tunes with everyone else.

No matter what, it is crucial that you get some time to work out the parts of a lengthy set to let your body and mind memorize anything. And if you're afforded the opportunity to always have your kit, guitar rig, bass rig, etc. available in the same space as you. It can never hurt to rehearse anything and everything that comes your way just to get the songs into your muscles the way you will be playing them live.

Make all of your Mistakes in Rehearsal:

I coined this phrase years ago. "Make all of your mistakes in rehearsal, and nail the show." Which means what it means really since rehearsing is to work out the kinks so that your performance or worship service goes as smooth as possible. As a Worship Musician, it's your role to hold the band and Worship Leader together throughout the Worship Set. So working out every part of your worship service in rehearsal is key. And just like I said earlier in the preparation portion of this eBook. Your preparation is your key to your success in rehearsal and your Worship Service. Knowing all of the arrangements of the given songs will help you have a smooth rehearsal and make the artist and the band very comfortable in playing the set with you.

As you can tell from the previous sections and chapters in this eBook. I have really formulated some plans of action on how to be as successful as possible for a worship service. But of course I have had many rehearsals where I've definitely fumbled through the songs and wondered, "oh man! Am I going to blow this when it comes stage time?" I can honestly say that my record is pretty clear though when it comes stage time that I usually have all my ducks in a row. I think the services where you are given little time to prepare and rehearse are some of the most nerve-wracking services ever. I have to honestly say that I do like them and I don't. Why do I like them?? Well I like a challenge every now and again and it keeps my charting and instinctual skills sharp.

When I was asked by the drummer of Casting Crowns to fill in for him on a date on the LifeSong Tour in 2006. I had about one week of notice to learn 16 songs to play in front of about 8 to 10,000 people plus. Oh and I also had to play for the opening act on 2 songs plus the full 35 minute Nichole Nordeman set after the opener and before Casting Crown's 2 1/2 hour set. So that put me on the stage for about 3 1/2 hours! Was I scared?? NO!!! Of course not!! I was so excited to be onstage that long doing what I love! But it was definitely a lot of homework. The only time I got to run and ask questions about any of the songs to Casting Crowns were at sound checks at shows before the event I had to play with them. It was a relief to have that at least and I definitely made my share of mistakes because a lot of the arrangements were changed to fit the live show and cut down time. So to make this long story short I played the show(s) and they went off without a hitch all except for a longer outtro on a CC tune that I only

rehearsed once and forgot to play longer. I basically improvised till the end and nobody could tell the difference. The show ended up being a blast and all of the mistakes I made in rehearsal ended up being left in rehearsal with the exception of one small mental error. But overall everyone was happy and I made Mr. Andy Williams proud. It was an event that will forever live in infamy in my mind of having little time to prepare for a big show and making all my mistakes with little rehearsal time at all.

Chapter 6: Warmup

I like to go through a series of warm-ups to loosen my hands, wrists, arms, shoulders, and maybe play a few tunes with any of the other band members who show up early. It's even more important to warm up before a long rehearsal that might last 2-3 hours. Warm-Ups are purely up to you for your particular instrument. But I do believe they're important.

Bonus for Drummers

Visit Drum Warm-ups at worshiptraining.com – Click Here

- Single Stroke Rolls: *(Video)*
- Double Stroke Rolls: *(Video)*
- Grooves:
- 12/8 time (Video)
- Mid Tempo Groove (Video)
- Warm-ups for other instruments are COMING SOON!

Chapter 7: The Worship Service:

So you've prepared and rehearsed for a few days up until your worship service. Or you've only had a couple of hours to do some of the things that I've talked about in the previous sections. The worship service that you've been preparing and rehearsing for will be the test of how well your memory acts under a little pressure.

The Worship Leader:

Remember whom you're playing for most of all and who called you to be there. Further elaborating on my quote of why a rehearsal is not only "A psychological preparation" but most of all a Spiritual preparation. This is because you have to constantly keep yourself in cheque. Aside from most church worship services, you are playing songs that the Worship Leader may have written and has a certain vision for. For instance, certain worship leaders really like you to only play the parts that were given to you on the recordings they gave you. And then some will obviously not mind if you change it up a bit if they really want to try something different from the recording. But more often, in my experience, a worship leader will want you to come in prepared with only the part given to you on a recording. You will find that all the things that I referenced during the preparation chapter are more experiences of what I've confronted when playing with many worship leaders. The majority of them might appreciate your creativity with coming up with a different part than what's recorded. But I always play it safe, respectful, and learn what is on the recordings.

The Green Room:

The "Green Room" or "Dressing Room" is just a place to hang out, mingle, and eat some appetizers before you hit the stage. I really like to use my green room time to wind down a bit and run over a few of my charts and songs one last time. But the most important thing is to simply relax and not get anxious about how you're going to play. Your nerves can be your worst enemy and your best friend. You don't ever want to not care about how you play but you also do not want to get too anxious that you forget all your cues and arrangements. So use your green room time to relax and mentally/spiritually prepare while hanging with the musicians that you are about to play with. I also urge you to specifically focus this time to seek God and meditate on some scripture. There may be a lot of things going on in your life or your life may be struggle free. But at any rate, you are a worship leader just as much as the main worship leader. It’s important to be in tune with God so you may not only be at your best as a musician, but as a spiritual leader.

Stage Time:

So the stage manager or worship leader summons you to the stage. You have now prepared, rehearsed, and memorized your material. But there are still some key things to remember and execute during your worship service. Here are the last ten things you should remember and do while you play with your band.

1. **Memorization:** If at all possible do not use your charts. Have the music,

arrangements, and cues memorized to concentrate on making the groove, band, artist, and band feel comfortable. If you are playing on short notice and need charts. Then use your best awareness to make the previous points mentioned happen as best as you possibly can. If your head is buried in charts you sometimes forget that you might play and look more boring. If you're a master at reading charts and have mastered your stage presence along with this skill. Then this point might not apply to you. But I still say memorize your music as best as you can. It makes for a better worship service for your congregation if you seem more aware than distracted.

2. **Stage Presence:** Which brings me to my next point about stage presence. And further explaining my point about why your presence on stage is key while you are performing through the set. After all we do enjoy the music we play while we are stage don't we?? And maybe there is a slight chance you don't enjoy a few of the songs. But it is very important that you maintain a positive presence since you are on stage, visible, and seen as a worship leader on stage as well in your worship service. Maybe to some this could seem like I'm telling you to act or fake your presence on stage. But actually I'm just telling you to enjoy yourself. I believe that's the best stage presence you can ever have. Stage Presence is key for not only the enjoyment of the listener. But also for your enjoyment of the performance or worship service.
3. **Eye Contact:** This also goes a bit of hand in hand on the issue of Stage Presence. Stage communication with the Artist, Worship Leader, and your band using eye contact is not only essential for good stage presence. But also to simply communicate an early ending, an audible vamp so the artist can talk over the music, a repeat of a chorus or verse, or anything that the artist or any of your band members might need to communicate in through the course of your set or song. Eye Contact is merely one way of stage communication. But do your best to work out good stage communication with the artist, worship leader, and band you're playing with. Eventually you will work out the system that works best for you. And eye contact always seems to be the most essential part or basis for any part of stage communication.
4. **Rhythm Section Unity:** The rhythm section I'm talking about here is specifically the drummer and the bass player. And in reality IT IS the true rhythm section of a band. And just like I talked about eye contact in point 3. The communication between you and the rest of your band is essential. But the communication between the drummer and bass player is very important to create a strong foundation throughout the show or worship service. And since the bass player follows kick patterns. There needs to be some communication prior to the performance or worship service as to exactly what you will be playing. But whatever the pattern the drummer and the bass player end up agreeing on. Just make sure it is uniform and you are playing the same thing. I always say that a great bass player will always want to be on the side that your hi-hat is located to have a visible

line of sight of a drummer's kick pedal. And since that is not always possible. A drummer should make it a point to be aware of the bass player at all times.

5. **Transitions:** Transitions are one of the most important parts of a performance or worship service. And by transition, I'm referring to the time between songs that can sometimes result in awkward silences. Especially when you end a song and take to much time to begin the next one. There are many factors that make for long transitions i.e guitar tuning, track or computer malfunction, guitar tuner still on thus no acoustic guitar sound. For the drummer, your role here is mostly when it is your job to click off each song in the set. So make sure to buy the metronome, or one like it, that I mentioned earlier in this eBook. The reason to use this type of metronome is because of its ability to program the BPM's for each song in a set. I believe if it takes more than 2-3 seconds to dial in the next BPM, and then click off the next song. This probably will result in taking too much time and be a dreaded awkward silence. So make sure you have a final set list. Mark the set list with asterisks in front of the song name to indicate if you're starting a song. Maybe make a few notes at the end as to what the feel/groove might be or any other important notes. I also make a point to put the BPM beside the song name just in case the BPM's I have programmed are lost.
6. **When in doubt, be simple:** I find it easy for a lot of musicians to play a lot of notes including myself. But ironically, it has always seemed to be the hardest to just play simple. This is truly tested in every part of your playing, especially in your choice of parts. A lot of music today focuses more on the quarter note and eighth note more than anything else it seems. I always try and think of every part within those parameters before I attempt anything else. It always seems the simplest choice for patterns always tend to be correct choices and serve the song best. For example the bands Coldplay and U2 use a lot of quarter and eighth notes in their music. Their music has also influenced a majority of the music that you play and hear today. In fact the signature delay effect that The Edge uses in a lot of the classic U2 songs is based on the eighth note. But by choosing the simplest option while playing live. You will tend to make the song sound and feel better. There is no room on stage for a musician who overplays. It's a big reason a lot of musicians never keep their gig or only get called once. Just make sure and choose the simplest option first when choosing a pattern or fill to play.
7. **Dynamics and Intensity:** I've expounded on this a bit in the previous chapters a bit but it seems I can never reiterate it enough. Throughout the set that you play it's important to play soft as much as you play loud. The point is to always play confident, strong, with feel, and not too mechanical. Now you have to add in your level of dynamics and intensity on top of that. Obviously in quiet situations use your taste and best judgment to match the intensity that a quiet section involves. And in the big, heavy sections play with the best intensity and dynamic that fits that situation. A lot of this

is tasteful playing at a volume that is appropriate for the song. After awhile your awareness will develop of how loud you are as opposed to how loud the rest of the band is. So be aware of your surroundings and adjust your playing intensity and volume accordingly.

8. **Improvisation, Composure and Having Fun:** Firstly, let's cover improvisation and what I mean by that. By improvisation I'm not talking about straying from a part or playing jazz improv. I'm talking more about the improvisation that happens when the artist or worship leader that you're playing with makes a mistake in the song or song structure. This might be if he goes too short or long through a section. We all know when we play live that nerves can affect our memory and we forget a part, section, or groove. The best thing to do is obviously improvise. And by improvising I mean subtly improvise. That may be continuing a part through a section that went too long or going to the turnaround groove when a section goes too short. Whatever might happen just make sure that you don't lose your composure and totally stop in the middle of the song. Composure can cure the worst of mistakes if you improvise your way back into the song that appears like you meant to play the mistake. It's just important that you blow off your mistakes or anyone else's and continues the song as arranged. And through all of this loosen up and have fun. If you shoot a smile at the rest of the band and the artist you are playing with it gives them a big boost of confidence that we're all in this together and we are making this fun for everyone in audience. After all music is entertaining and makes us laugh, smile, or cry. But as musicians it's our job to communicate the songs intended message as best we can. And in the process have fun and provide for the enjoyment of all of the other musicians in the process alongside you.
9. **Worship:** This should be the pinnacle of everything that encompasses the worship musician. I believe that this verse in the Gospel of John is the summation of everything that Jesus calls on everyone who enters the church sanctuary and normal life to worship him.

> [23] Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. [24] God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24

Conclusion:

I hope that this eBook has provided you with some knowledge of how to prepare, rehearse, and perform with greater confidence than ever before. The topics covered here are everything that I've experienced and tested to help you be as successful as possible. I believe that each of the points in this eBook will help you progress even further in helping you be at your best for any artist or worship

leader. Feel free to contact me concerning any of the points explained in this eBook; I am always happy to help. Sincere thanks for buying and reading!! I wish you all the best and success. God Bless you all!! Jon Skaggs

Extras:

Extra No. 1:

Song Memorization Tool:

This can be a tool for you to memorize a song on the fly and apply certain grooves, chords, parts, and dynamics for those different sections. Once you get the hang of it this will help you feel out a song's movement from beginning to end. This type of structure that you'll see below is sometimes referred to as The Verse with Middle Eight. Meaning the "B" part is 8 bars long. But in today's music the "B" part can be 4 or 16 bars longs depending on the writer(s). Below is an easy way that I have formulated this and made it work for me. I simply make all sections 8 bars long for ease. If it's 16 bars then I'll double it like so (A, A for repeating 8 bar verses) or (B, B for repeating 8 bar Choruses). And if a section is shorter, which will probably be more applicable in an Intro, Turnaround, or Outtro, I'll write (I 1/2, or T 1/2). Again this is what works for me. It's a great way to show up to a rehearsal, if you haven't really heard the material, and memorize it or reference it quickly if you seem to forget where you're going.

Look at the key and Examples below for reference.

Key:

I = Intro and Outtro

T = Turnarounds - Sometimes known as Midtros or Connectors

A = Verse

B = Chorus Sections

C = Bridge Sections

Looks fairly simple right?? Here's a few examples of very popular songs using this type of tool

Chris Tomlin's "And if Our God is For Us"

I, A, A, B, T 1/2, A, B, B, C, C, C, B, B, B, I

Worship Ideas "Forever Amen"

I, A, B, T 1/2, A, B, T 1/2, C, B 1/2, B, I

Coldplay's "Clocks"

I, I, A, A, B, T, A, A, B, B, T, T, C, I, B, B, I, I

Feel free to elaborate and make it your own. It is a tool for speed and accuracy when don't have time to gather, prepare, memorize, and rehearse all of your material. Sometimes life is busy and interrupts all the things we would like to do and have time for. Hopefully this tool will help you in a crunch or in everyday charting while you prepare and rehearse for your worship service or performance.