

Confident Drummer

Free Resources

10 Top Drummers' Signature Licks

Confident Drummer Series

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10 Top Drummers' Signature Licks

You know when you hear that phrase and you immediately recognize who is playing it?

You have heard it so many times that you have no doubts about it.

Some drummers have a lot of them and some have none, but signature licks are fascinating.

They are one of the ways we can use to define our style, and I think that in a world where many musicians tend to sound alike it's important to learn from the masters what it means to develop at least one signature lick.

How do we do it? Well, it's quite simple: repetition. We pick an idea and practice it over and over, use it in a million different ways, personalize it (both in terms of style and sound), and we keep doing it until one day that lick has become uniquely ours.

Actually for many of us there's no need to force it, as we naturally tend to develop phrases that we like and play them often.

However, consciously working out a few licks may be a good way to further shape our style and add one more element to our own voice.

So why don't we study a bunch of them from the absolute best? I've collected a few of the signature phrases I've learned over the years from these exceptional musicians:

- Steve Gadd
- Dave Weckl
- Gregg Bissonette
- Steve Smith
- Manu Katchè
- Keith Carlock
- Benny Greb
- Larnell Lewis

- Mark Guiliana
- Marco Minnemann
- Mike Portnoy

You can click on each example to go to the related video demo. Or you can watch the quick 3 minute YouTube clip by clicking [HERE](#).

Each lick is shown in a specific version: the notes are placed on a certain subdivision and orchestrated on toms and cymbals in a particular way. That's the starting point.

Then the approach all great players use is to take the phrase/cell/sticking (which remains the same and is the actual lick) and use it in a multitude of combinations.

So it's a good idea to study first the underlying sticking, rudiment or hand/foot combination, then practice the transcribed example and lastly explore different solutions, based both on variations we heard the drummer in question play and also on our style.

In fact, ultimately the goal is not to become clones of other drummers, but to study the greats in order to get inspired to develop our own ideas and variations.

Of course the risk of overdoing stuff like this is always around the corner, but if we strike the right balance we can really make a statement.

As usual, once we have worked them out, we let the music dictate when it's appropriate to use these ideas.

These phrases are often performed very fast. However in the video demonstrations I've decided to play everything at average tempos, as a compromise to allow for both visual learning (therefore not too fast), and also auditory learning (therefore not too slow).

I tried to make sure the musical meaning of what is being played is clear, while at the same time you can visually understand what's going on.

Yeah, but... where is Vinnie ;-)? [HERE](#), I did a separate video on him.

If you are interested in this kind of studies, in Drum Chops Mastery you will find transcriptions of 50 of the greatest drummers of all time, as part of a complete course designed to help you master your soloing skills.

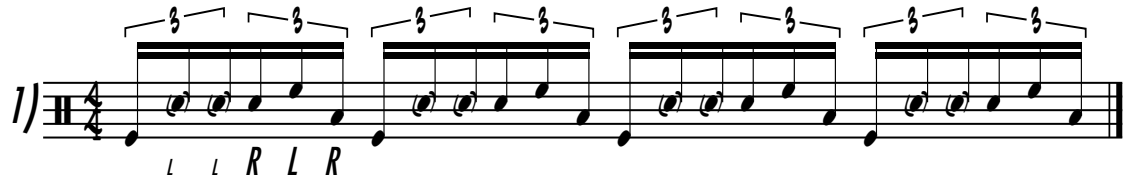
['Drum Chops Mastery - Gospel Chops And Beyond'](#)

Click here for a free excerpt and the full list of drummers analyzed:

[Drum Chops Mastery - Free Excerpt](#)

Top Drummers' Signature Licks

Steve Gadd

1) 

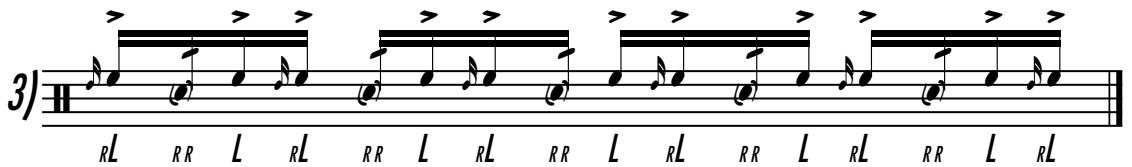
L L R L R

Dave Weckl

2) 

R L R L

Gregg Bissonette

3) 

R L R R L R L R R L R L R R L R L

Steve Smith

4) 

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L R L L

Manu Katchè

5) 

R L R R L R R L R L R L R L

Keith Carlock

6) 

R L R R L L R R L L R L R R L L R R L L R L R R L L

Top Drummers' Signature Licks

Benny Greb

7)

R L R L R L R L R L R L

Larnell Lewis

8)

L L R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L R

Mark Guiliana

9)

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Marco Minnemann

10)

R L L L R R L R L L L R R L R L L L R R L R L L L R R L

Mike Portnoy

11)

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L