

# Making Tracks

## "George Pendergast: Essential Rhythm" loop collection

By Frank Moldstad

Tired of generic drum tracks for your looped music projects? Here's a loop CD full of natural-sounding rock grooves, breaks and fills that will cure what ails you. With accomplished drummer George Pendergast of Dishwalla fame on the skins, "Essential Rhythm" is a diverse collection of well-recorded drum loops compatible with just about any audio program, from ACID and Reason to Pro Tools.

The CD, Pendergast's third in a series, is available now for \$49.95 directly from [georgeloops.com](http://georgeloops.com). Recorded at Amplifier Sound in San Francisco, "Essential Rhythm" includes more than 600 loops, all in 24-bit/44.1k Acidized .wav format. The loops cover a wide range of tempos, from 47 to 156 BPM. Plus, they're well-organized for fast browsing, starting in incremental order with the slowest tempos.

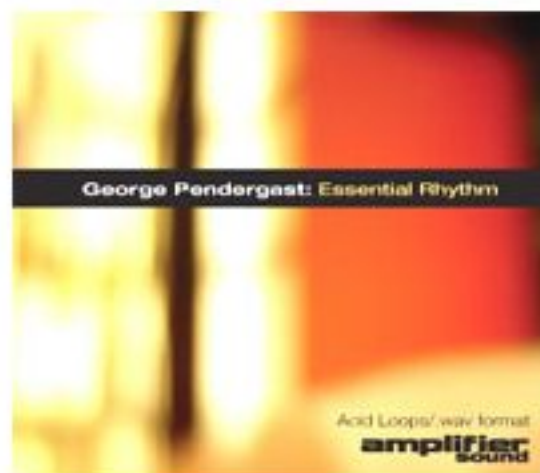
The loops are divided into six categories. While the bulk of them are contained in "George Beats" (332 drum kit loops) and "Rhythm Combos" (179 drum and percussion tracks), the CD also includes a selection of bass, acoustic guitar, percussion and one-shots. These, too, are all professionally recorded and played – among the players are percussionist Chester Coolie (currently performing with Big Bad Voodoo Daddy), bassist Misha Feldman (Pen15 Club, featured on TV's "The Simple Life") and guitarist/producer Thom Flowers (The Ataris and many others).

It's a well-done collection of stuff you can really use. Some of the grooves are subtle and simple, while others are aggressive and driving. The collection has been methodically assembled with families of related beats and fills. That makes it easy to embellish the main groove with good choices for everything from fills and choruses to intros and outros.

Using Sony's ACID 4.0, I found it easy to quickly construct great-sounding loops from scratch with the "Essential Rhythm" collection. In ACID, the CD loop files appear in an Explorer window docked at the bottom of the screen. Using the Up and Down arrow keys, you can preview all the choices on the fly, find one you like and drag it into the main window. Whatever tempo it is, it will automatically conform to the master tempo selected for the song. But usually it's best not to deviate radically from the original BPM count, in order to preserve a more natural



George Pendergast hard at work.



"Essential Rhythm" cover

CD.

After scrolling through the George Beats folder, I selected a 120 BPM loop as a main groove, dragging it up to the main window and using ACID's paintbrush tool to create an eight-bar bed. With a few strategically placed strums taken from the Acoustic Guitar folder and some corresponding bass notes in the same key from the Bass folder, the song structure began to take shape. Then I dragged a couple of drum fills up to the song window and sprinkled them at the end of the fourth and eighth bars. With the loop area selected, I hit Play and was off to the races. You don't have to be a musical genius to assemble something this way, but it helps to have such good material.

Pendergast did some impressive playing here to develop this collection. Although most of the loops are in 4/4 time for maximum flexibility in rock-oriented music, he shows some deft high hat, snare and bass drum work while staying totally anchored on the spirit of his grooves. Nothing is overplayed or too busy, although there are several quirky grooves that might be used sparingly. It's good to have those, too ... sooner or later, the need will arise. There are ballad-style grooves at slow tempos and funkier alt-rock anthem type material at faster speeds. There is also an ample selection of simple, straightforward grooves that would be good accompaniment for just about anything.

The Rhythm Combos and Percussion loops have some great stuff in them, too. The latter features individual bongo, conga and shaker grooves, while the Combos include a stylistically diverse group of drum kit and percussion mini-jams.

The Acoustic Guitar and Bass loops are organized by key, and consist primarily of single chords and notes. There are also some single note slides on each instrument, which sound like a bright, open Martin guitar and a Fender bass.

Finally, there are the One Shots. With these you could build a groove from scratch – if you had the time and the patience – as high hats, kicks and snares are represented with several examples each. The individual drum sounds are handy for emphasis, such as a well-placed hard snare plopped down in a musical silence.

Overall, the Essential Rhythm loops sound spacious and ambient, with just enough depth to allow them to sit well in a mix. Processing was wisely kept to a minimum during recording and mixing.

Many times, drum loops are so generic they suck the life out of any creativity you try to impose on them. Not these. Everyone from video editors to songwriters will find this a valuable tool for building fresh and natural-sounding rock grooves for their projects.



During the recording sessions.