

## KIDS CAN DO WHAT THE VERY BEST PROS CAN DO

I'm watching the 1983 and 1989 performances by Stevie Ray Vaughn on TV, Austin City Limits reruns, and noticing that the drummer seems to keep the simplest possible time in all grooves. Cool, calm, collected, deliberate, drumming. The back beat. No pyrotechnics. Now that I have the DSL magic on my iMac I can zip to [drummerworld.com](http://drummerworld.com), click on Clyde Stubblefield's video of how "the Funky Drummer" is stickin' the Chickin' Pickin' and showing us what he did to back up James Brown on "Give it Up or Turn it Loose." At first glance, Clyde wasn't doing as much as I thought he was doing. The back beat. A little anticipatory kick on the bass drum before the back beat. The most sampled drummer in the world doesn't have to be sampled. Anyone can do it – technically. A four or five year old can handle the coordinations of SRV's drummer, JB's drummer, and a tall seven or eight year old with legs long enough to reach the pedals on a drum set can do it all IF they have the touch, the feel, the groove that comes from lots of practice in context, like growing up in a storefront church or the equivalent.

So how do we foster lots of practice in context?

Pat Campbell:

When we can provide practice in context, kids make amazing leaps in their musical growth. The Emerald City Jazz group in Seattle does as much when kids and adults play together on special occasions. Adult pros include the drummer, bass player, guitarist, and two sax players, all of whom have active schedules playing with other bands in the area; two of them are on call for touring jazz musicians who arrive periodically to play in the city's clubs. Saxophonist Bob, who plays the horns of all sizes with unstoppable virtuosity, is also the sought-after sax teacher for kids in local middle and high schools. When they pass a point of certain accomplishment, Bob will invite them into their first gig with the Emerald City Jazz (EMJ), where they invariably solo on "Birk's Works". Back in their lessons, they learn to improvise while also adding Emerald City standards like "Satin Doll", "Song for My Father", "Canteloupe Island", and "Watermelon Man" to their repertoire. Three years into lessons, they're getting invitations four and five times a year to play with the big guys of EMJ, and that they do, for the city Parks and Recreation Department, the occasional school auction and parish picnic, and summertime festivals. Bob and the other adult players take to heart the belief that kids can do what the pros can do, and sure enough, the riffs of the pros rub off on the young sax players as they learn the licks by osmosis. Give them a chance to play with experienced adult musicians and the result is astonishing musical expression and technique.