

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DRUMLINE  
BASS PACKET**



## **FOREWORD**

### **OUR MISSION**

Individual improvement is the key to our success as an ensemble. One person does not make our drumline great; everyone must work to achieve greatness. As members of this organization, we obligate and challenge ourselves to improve our abilities as players. By striving to achieve nothing less than personal excellence, we ensure the quality of our ensemble.

### **OUR PHILOSOPHY**

The Iowa State Drumline has the crucial role of providing a solid rhythm and tempo to an ensemble in excess of 340 members. To do this, drumline members must individually play accurate rhythms and parts. There is no “hiding” one’s playing in the line. Each member is expected to equally contribute to the overall sound of the line. Thus, the line is able to produce a full quality sound with the volume to project into a full stadium.

### **HOW TO USE THIS PACKET**

It is inadvisable to attempt to learn everything in this packet in one sitting. The packet is generally set up in the order of the learning process, so it is logical to start at the beginning and work through the packet. All the advanced concepts are fundamentally based upon the previous concepts, so an understanding of the core concepts in this packet is necessary for progression onto advanced drumming.

Practice with a metronome is required; this will promote accurate rhythms and the ability to play much more consistently as an individual. Also, play in front of a mirror and observe how your hands move. Make sure you flow when you play and avoid awkward, jagged motions that look or feel uncomfortable. Feel the rebound and use it to your advantage. Keep your hands relaxed and fingers on the stick, turn your wrists, and hit the drum with sufficient velocity. Play with confidence and don’t be afraid to ask questions.

Throughout the summer, the Iowa State Drumline will be hosting several clinics to facilitate improvement among its current members and potential new members. The dates and times can be located on the drumline page of the website. These camps are valuable sources of information and instruction regarding technique. It is highly recommended to attend some of these camps to get a hands-on look at technique. Technique is not something that can be learned overnight - it is a long process. With enough time and practice, the concepts covered in this book will become a fundamental part of your drumming.

Good luck and happy drumming!

The first draft of this packet was written and compiled by Brett Ebert, Kelsey Knief, Luke Sesker, Dave Reid, and Scott Szurek in 2011. The current version has been updated annually by Luke Sesker and Travis Hattery since 2018. Our mission is to educate as many students as possible and to be transparent with our technique and approach. The information is not proprietary; please feel free to distribute this packet.

## The Iowa State Approach

### APPROACHING THE DRUM

A good analogy of the motion is a “police knock”. The motion of striking the drum is the same as a heavy knock on a door. In this motion, the wrist turns to knock on the door, but **the weight of the arm is used to apply more energy** to the door and create a louder and more powerful knock. Using this analogy, place a drumstick in your hand and replace the door with a drumhead. Maintain relaxation in the hand while playing to promote better resonance and more comfortable playing.

**The stroke is a wrist-initiated movement;** the wrist turn drives the motion of the stick. When turning the wrist and striking the drum, keep your hand and arm relaxed. Although the striking of the drum is a wrist movement, the arm should be allowed to move naturally. The weight of the arm is used to drive the stick into the head, creating a fuller sound.

Once the drum has been struck, do not stop the motion of the stick. Stay relaxed and allow the natural rebound of the stick to drive it up to the height of the next note. In effect, you are only driving the stick down and the rebound from the head drives it back up. **Your hand does not pull the stick up, but merely follows the movement of the stick and directs its upward motion in the proper direction.** Depending on heights and tempos, it may seem as though the stick spends the majority of its time in the up position as the stick goes down fast, comes up fast, and then waits in the up position until the next stroke. This is because volume comes from velocity.

### REBOUNDED STROKES

Rebounded strokes (regardless of height) should be the most fluid, relaxed, and comfortable notes to play. The stick is driven down by the wrist, strikes the head, and then the natural rebound of the stick drives the stick back up to the height of the next note. **The hand stays relaxed throughout the entire motion.** The “police knock” concept applies to rebounded strokes at any height.

Depending on whether the next stroke is another accent or a tap, the stick is either allowed to rebound fully or is stopped at a lower height to allow for a tap. If the stick is kept down after the accent, **make sure not to squeeze the implement to force a lower height;** actively stay relaxed in the hand at all times. Do not assume playing lower means playing weakly. **When playing taps, still play with a full and powerful sound, just from a lower initial height.** The weight of the arm is used to give the tap added power and fullness of sound. While the arm is used to give a full sound, ensure that the movement of the stick is motivated from the wrist.

### DOUBLE STROKES

Double strokes require a slightly different approach depending on tempo. At slow tempos, a double stroke consists of two individual wrist turns, one for each hit of the drum. As the tempo increases, gradually apply more pressure to the stick with your back fingers. This small application of pressure will allow the stick to play two notes from only one wrist motion. **The transition from individual wrist turns to a more singular stroke is a gradual one, not a transition at a specific tempo.** Playing doubles with wrist turn is a more accurate and powerful way of playing, so this method should be used as much as possible. However, every player will reach a point where it is no longer possible to play every note from an individual wrist turn. Practice will allow you to increase the tempo at which accurate wrist turns are playable and improve your ability to play full and powerful rolls.

It is important to maintain consistency among the two individual notes in the double stroke. **Each drum strike in the double stroke should sound equal.** Do everything you can to minimize placing an emphasis

on the first note in the double. With a few rare exceptions, the height of doubles and rolls should be low enough to ensure the first and second impact of the double is of equal height, volume, and fullness.

### POSTURE AND MARK TIME

An often-overlooked element in drumming is one's posture. Good posture has two important benefits: it promotes better playing and marching, and it is aesthetically pleasing to the audience. Think of your body as a series of pivot points: ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, and head. **All these points should be stacked vertically.**

When standing, your weight should be evenly distributed throughout the bottom of your foot. Be sure to keep your chin up and keep your eyes focused forwards. This promotes a confident, strong appearance. **While maintaining good posture, actively stay relaxed in your shoulders, arms, and hands.** Avoiding excessive tension in the arms, shoulders, and back will allow you to play better and more comfortably for longer periods of time.

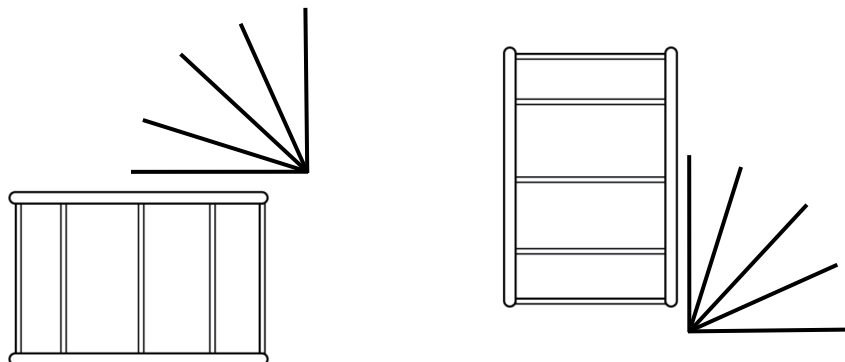
Accurate internalization of tempo is critical to a drumline's success. **The whole bottom of the foot leaves the ground together, and then returns to the ground together.** The foot strikes the ground on the downbeat. In standard 4/4 time signatures, the left foot strikes the ground on beats 1 and 3, while the right foot strikes the ground on beats 2 and 4.

### DYNAMICS

At Iowa State, **we use the classic 3"-interval stick height system to define dynamics.** It is important that everyone without exception approaches these dynamic levels the same way. If everyone is not playing with the same velocity at the written dynamic level, the balance and blend from player to player will suffer along with clarity. Essentially all strokes have the same intensity, while increasing and decreasing the distance and speed at which the mallet strikes.

Our dynamic levels are defined as follows:

<b>pp</b>	<i>pianissimo</i>	½ inches	grace notes
<b>p</b>	<i>piano</i>	3 inches	flat to the drum surface
<b>mp</b>	<i>mezzo piano</i>	6 inches	mid-way between flat and 45 degrees
<b>mf</b>	<i>mezzo forte</i>	9 inches	45 degree angle with the drum surface
<b>f</b>	<i>forte</i>	12 inches	mid-way between 45 degrees and 90 degrees
<b>ff</b>	<i>fortissimo</i>	15 inches	90 degree angle with the drum surface



# Bass Drum Playing Technique

## GENERAL APPROACH

Our technique is designed to produce a smooth, resonant sound; relaxation is a critical concept of our technique – at no time should you feel yourself purposely squeezing an implement or tensing any muscles. **The key to our technique is to maintain a high level of control over the implement while being as relaxed as possible.**

## BASS IMPLEMENT GRIP

Although we put a lot of emphasis on relaxing and reducing tension, the implement would fall out of the hand if we didn't hold it securely. Where the implement is most-firmly gripped is typically called the “fulcrum”, because the implement will pivot around this point within the hand. There are different fulcrums that can be utilized for different purposes, but all fingers should be on the implement at all times so that the player can switch between them if necessary. The most general-use fulcrum is made with both the middle and ring fingers. The rest of the fingers should be wrapped around the mallet very naturally without any tension, but the player should feel themselves primarily grasping the moving the mallet with these fingers.

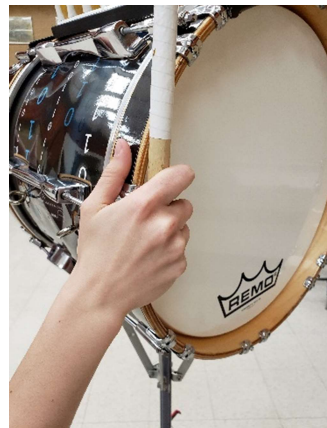
**Grasp the stick firmly within your hand, but loose enough that someone could grab the stick out of your hand with minimal effort.** The stick should be free to move loosely within your hand. The pads of all fingers should be in contact with the implement. The bottom (butt) of the mallet should be flush with the bottom of the hand.

When the mallet is gripped closer to the bead, we call this “choking up” on the mallet, referring to the choked-off sound this can produce from the mallet. It is very important to grip the mallet in the right position and with a relaxed touch; this all contributes to, volume, resonance, and overall mallet control.



## SET POSITION

With the sticks properly gripped within the hand, align the sticks vertically along the rim closest to the player. To reach this position, it is only a bend of the elbow; there is no additional tension or movement in the shoulders or upper-body. In the set position, the bead of the mallet should rest one inch above the player's eye. Once the mallet is in the correct position, use the thumb to grip the rim of the drum, while still gripping the mallet with the fulcrum.

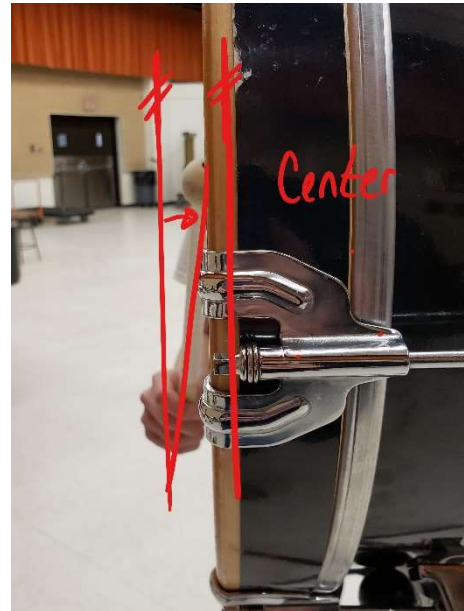


## TACET POSITION

To reach tacet position, you should start by standing at the drum with your arms relaxed to your side. Properly grip the mallet in your hand, but let the arms hang with no tension or muscle engagement anywhere in your upper-body or arms. While standing in this position, your thumbs should be facing forward, and you should be holding the mallet with proper technique. From this position, rotate the elbow up until your forearm is parallel to the ground. Your elbows should be resting naturally near your body. From here, rotate the wrist until the mallet is at a 45-degree angle to the ground.



When standing in this position (with all angles of forearm/wrist/mallet defined), the bead of the mallet should be in the center of the drum-head. If this is not the case, then the drum is at the wrong height and should be adjusted. **Do not adjust your stance or technique to play in the center of the head – stand with correct posture and then fit the drum to this posture.**



Once the bead of the mallet is aligned with the center of the head and your upper-body is completely relaxed, there is one last step to reaching tacet position: The bead of the mallet should rest at  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the playing surface. To reach this position, do not alter your shoulder or elbow position. Simply rotate your wrist and forearm towards the drum head until your bead rests at  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the playing surface. This is tacet position.

## PLAYING ZONES

There are a lot of tones available in such a large-diameter drum. If played near the edge, the drum can produce a “tingy” contact sound. Generally, due to the role of the bass line in a typical marching ensemble, the “sweet spot” of the drum which produces the desired tone is the direct center of the drum head. Playing in the center of the head creates a resonate, powerful sound.

Sometimes, the music will dictate an “Edge” or “mid” playing zone. This will be covered in more detail at camps and in-person, because there is no exact measurement for this position on the drum – it depends on the drum size and the sound that is produced by each drum. *In general*, the “edge” playing zone is approximately 2” from the rim, directly above the normal playing zone; “mid” zone is half-way between the “center” and “edge” playing zones.

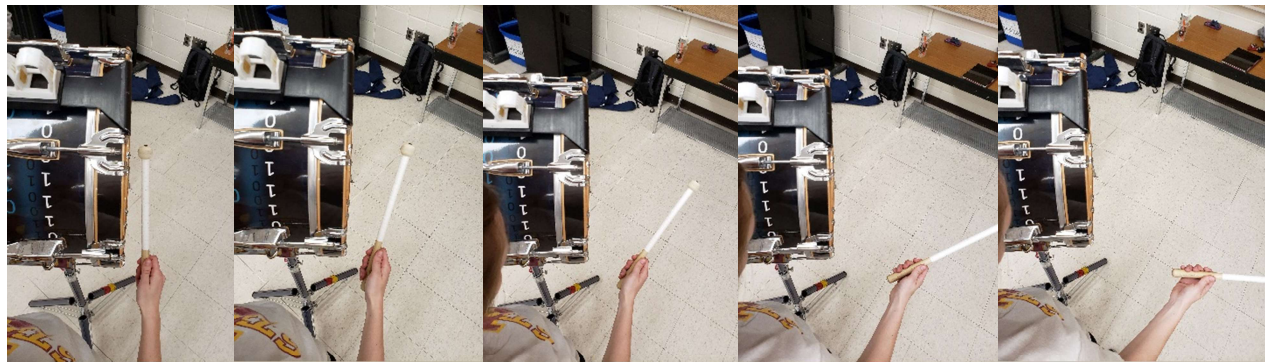




## BASS DRUM STROKE

Any of the strokes we play should be a “bead first” motion. Achieving this requires a strong wrist and forearm rotation (comparable to turning a door knob). As you stand at a proper tacet position, imagine your forearm on an imaginary axis which starts at your elbow, travels through your arm, and ends at your fulcrum. *In general*, any notes at ½”, 3”, and 6” are almost entirely played by a rotation on this axis (there are exceptions to this, discussed in-person and at camps). As higher heights are played, more arm will be incorporated naturally into the stroke, but the wrist rotation must be maintained; as the heights increase above 6”, the wrist still continues to rotate, but the arm is allowed to move further from the playing surface.

The bead of the mallet must follow a specific path between impacts of the drum head. Swiveling, wrist break, and making circles with the path of the mallet are undesirable. The mallet needs to follow an arced path between the height of the stroke and drum surface. Ultimately, the bead of the mallet *always* impacts the playing surface at a 90-degree angle so that all of the momentum and energy can go directly into the head and through the drum.



## PLAYING IN A BASS LINE

There are multiple levels of listening that apply to any marching bass line.

First is your own sound. Every individual must play the exactly correct rhythm at the exactly correct tempo. For this to happen, the individual player must also start the rhythm at precisely the correct time.

Second, the members of the bass line should be aware of the sound quality and balance of the other members of the bass line; this should not impact the first-level of listening – every individual should still be playing with accurate rhythm, tempo, and timing.

Third, the bass line can open their ears to understand how they fit into the entire battery voice. This is a more advanced concept that will be covered in-person throughout a competitive season.

Fourth, the battery ensemble must understand how they fit into the voice of the entire marching ensemble.

Each of these levels builds on the previous. For an individual member of the bass line, the most important element is the first level. The overall philosophy presented here is one that requires a very high level of individual responsibility and accountability. In order for a bass line to be great, every individual must be great.

**8816** is meant to be a “stock” exercise that has the option of applying the hand-to-hand pattern to many different rudiments, rhythms and stickings. While 10 variations are included, many more will be taught throughout the season, and applied to the same pattern of 8/8/16. You can even get creative and come up with your own variations!

All variations should be played at all heights and a wide variety of tempos. Play this exercise VERY SLOW, as well as very fast. This will help develop control. A great practice method is to play one beat by itself and master the timing, and then apply the 8816 pattern to gain a greater amount of consistency in approach through repetition.

Utilizing a metronome for tempo control and a mirror for self-critique of hand motion and flow are absolutely critical. Individual rhythmic integrity and tempo maintenance are essential for the success of the drumline.

Bass drums should be prepared to isolate any rhythmic partials of any variation. (i.e. only play on the “and of 1” or “play on the up-beats”)

Additional around patterns for Tenors and splits for Bases will be created and taught throughout the season. Come to camps prepared to learn!

Cymbals will find a guide to the standard notation utilized by Iowa State in this exercise as well. Timing and consistency are crucial to develop as you isolate each sound.

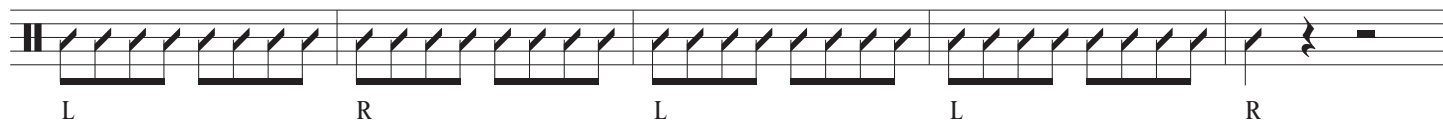
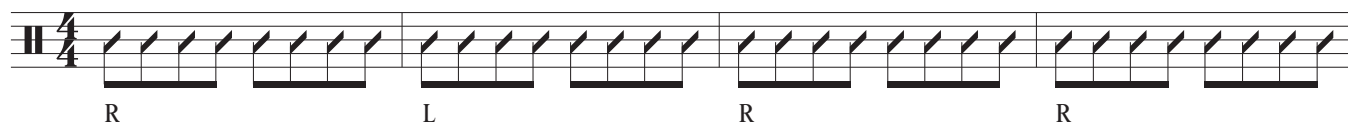
Happy Drumming!



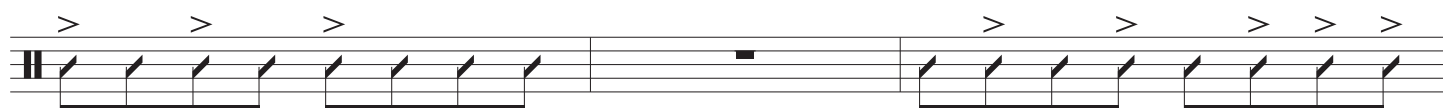
## Variations on a Theme

Hattery

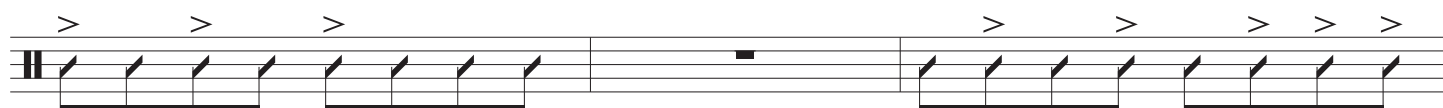
## Stock



## Bucks



## Invert Bucks



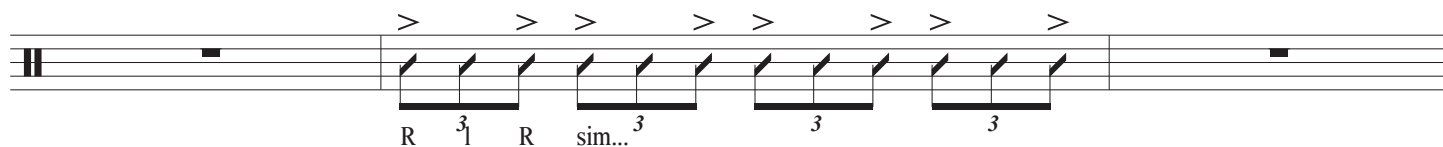
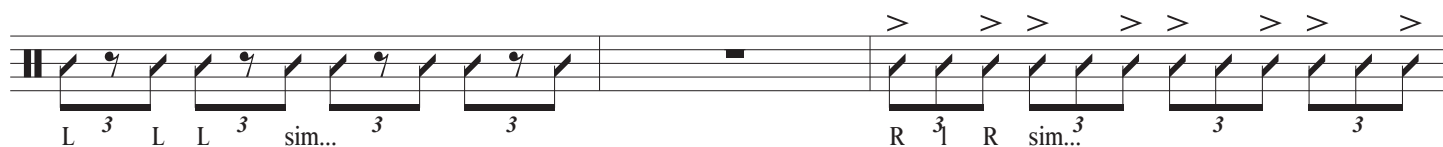
## Diddle Sticking



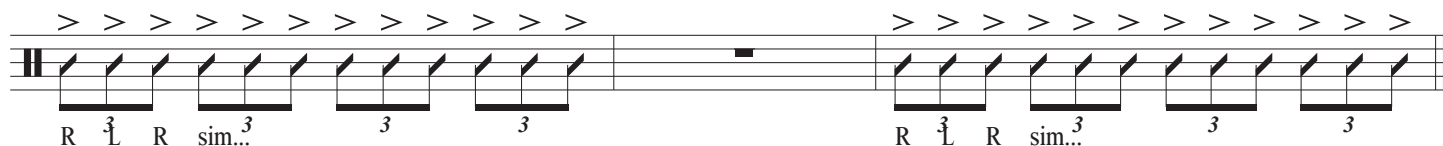
## Swung



## Swung - tap fill in



## Swung - Accent fill in



# Bounce

Sesker

$\text{♩} = 110$

*ff* R R R R R R R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L L L L L L L

5 R L R L L R L L R r r R L R r r R R L R L L R L L R R L R R R R L

9 R R R R L R L R R R R R L R L R L R L L R R R R L L R L L L R L L L L R L L

13 *f* R L L R R L R L R L R R R L R R R L R R R L R

17

21 R l r L r l R R l r L r l R R R L L L

24 *ff* R l r L r l R L R L R L R

Tempo: 120

Measures 1-12 of the Bass Drum part. The score is written on four staves in common time (C). It features complex rhythmic patterns including triplets, sixteenth notes, and eighth notes. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) at the beginning and *mf* (mezzo-forte) at measure 9. Rhythmic notation includes 'r' for right and 'l' for left.

Measures 13-16 of the Bass Drum part. The score continues on four staves. Measure 13 shows a change in rhythm with more eighth notes. Measure 16 features a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *ff* (fortissimo).

Bass 7: Straight Sixteenth Notes

Measures 21-24 of the Bass 7 part. The score is written on a single staff in common time (C). It features a consistent pattern of straight sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *ff*.

# Legacy

## Part I

Dan Kelly

Bass Drums

*f*

5

R R R r L r L R R R r L r L R R R r L r L R R R

9

R R *mf* R

13

R R

16

R R R L L *f* *p* *ff* R R R r L r L

19

R R R r L r L R R R r L r L R R R R

23

R L L L R L L L R L L 3 3 3 3 3 3 R R R R R R

26

R R R R L R

# Offense Cheers

## First Down

First Down

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

The 'First Down' cheer is written for two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff features a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes, with lyrics 'R L L R L R R L L R R L' underneath. The second staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

## First Down: Parrot Var.

First Down: Parrot Var.

The 'First Down: Parrot Var.' cheer consists of four staves in 4/4 time. The first staff has a melody with lyrics 'R L L R L R R L L R R L'. The subsequent three staves provide a rhythmic accompaniment using chords and single notes.

## Eat 'em Up

Eat 'em Up

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

The 'Eat 'em Up' cheer is written for two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff features a melody with lyrics 'R L R L R R R L L R L R R L L R R R R R R R L R'. The second staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes, including accents (>) over the final four notes.

[illegible]

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented on two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line in G major, featuring a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment, primarily consisting of chords and single notes in the right hand, with a more active left hand. The piece concludes with a double bar line.


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

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



## Defense Cheers

Iron Man >



Musical notation for Iron Man in 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some triplets. The rhythm is indicated by 'R' for right and 'L' for left. The notation includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The notation includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The notation includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef.


6  
Throwdown  
> > > > > > > > > > > > > > > >  
  
R L R L L L R R R L R L R R L R R R R R R R R R R R R R

[illegible]

12

R 1 R R 1 R 1 R R 1 R 1 R 3 3 R R R R R R R R R R R

[illegible]

19   
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

Uranus

22

3 3 3 3

30 Who Knows?

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

36

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

40 Sad But True

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

45

R L L L L R R

48 Brooklyn

*ffff* R L R L R L R L L R L *ff* R R R R R R R R R L RL L

53

RLR R RLR R R R R R R RLR R RLR R R R R R RLR R RLR R R R R R R

59

R R R L R R R R R R L

61 Machine!

*ff* R L R R R R L R R R L R L R L R R R R L R R R L R

65

*ffff* R R L R L R R L R L R R L R L R R R R R L R L R