

# American Music Theory, Arranging, Production and Performance

## Alec Romo Nichols

### GOALS

Throughout my past four years at Kent Denver, my main musical goal has been to learn the ins and outs of American music. This includes compositional techniques, form, grooves, production techniques, arranging software, transcription and much more.

### WHY

Jazz and R&B have created the foundation for all popular music that exists today. Everything from form, to music theory, to horn arrangements and more stem from the beginnings of American music.

In order to become a more well rounded musician and not just a drummer, learning music, and not just the drum set, was key to my growth.

I set out with the goal of answering all of my questions that I had about music theory, production, arranging and performance so that I could get closer to understanding the type of music that I play.

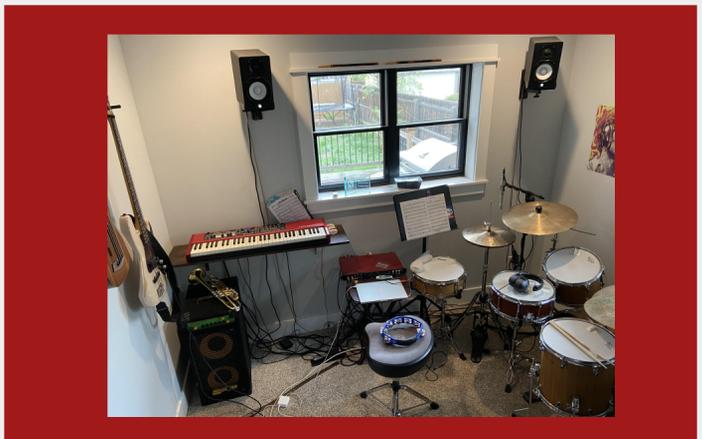
### HOW

Throughout my learning journey, there were a lot of experiences that were key to my growth.

**My Growth at 4 instruments:** Over the past four years I have been honing in my skills as a multi-instrumentalist. I have been slowly getting more proficient at drumset, electric bass,



Me goofing at Hard Rock Cafe



My Bedroom Where I Record

**Gigging experience:** I have played at the Porretta Soul Festival in Italy, smaller festivals in Colorado, local venues, and events such as weddings. Through these experiences, I've created a larger network.

**Arranging ability:** Slowly through trial and error, my arranging has improved. I have learned where to delegate parts, how to best voice horns and use their strengths. I have a long way to go but am proud of the start that I have made at Kent.

**Research paper on John Coltrane:** This research paper propelled me into looking at music through an academic lens. I spent hours upon hours analyzing works of John Coltrane to further my understanding of how music works. In addition, I was challenged to convey my findings in ways that the general public would understand.

**My experience as a band leader:** Both in the bands at Kent and bands I have organized outside of school, I've been a leader. I have had to learn the best way to talk about my charts with the musicians playing them. I have learned a lot about myself and about leadership through this role.

### WHAT

#### Capstone Project

My capstone project was a recording of Master Blaster by Stevie Wonder. I transcribed the entire song, arranged horn and vocal harmonies, contacted musicians to accompany myself, played bass, keys, and drums, mixed the project, and edited the project. It takes a lot of takes and work to get the final product that you want on a recording. Recordings don't capture the energy of playing like performances do. That's why there has to be a lot more attention to detail. It was a blast to do this project with my friends Ashley Capoot '18, Beau Hanson '17, Chris Ferrari, and Yaseen El-Magharbel. Yaseen and I will also be classmates at USC next year. Recording allows me to take all of my skills and apply it to one project and this recording of Master Blaster optimized that concept.



Master Blaster Chart I Transcribed and Arranged



Work in progress Logic Session for Master Blaster

### LOOKING FORWARD

Past high school, I will take these skills into my musical career at USC. There I will have plenty of opportunities to perform, arrange, produce, and learn in an environment of like minded people.