

## Nathaniel Rateliff: The Man, His Band and His Mission

National Standards: 7-8, 10-11

Nathaniel Rateliff has long performed and released music with his band The Night Sweats, but a few years back, he found himself writing songs that were more acoustic and didn't seem to fit the band. Hence, he released *And It's Still Alright* in February 2020, right before the pandemic hit. But, that doesn't mean he's giving up on his band.

Prepare

Have students watch some live performance footage from the 10 outdoor shows Rateliff performed in support of *And It's Still Alright* during the pandemic, plus footage of his traditional concerts. How do the acoustic shows differ from his plugged-in ones?

Key points in the article:

- Rateliff lives for the road. He did just ten outdoor shows during the pandemic to promote his acoustic-leaning new release, but now, he's plugged in and back on tour the ol' fashioned way.
- Rateliff spearheads "The Marigold Project," an endowment in which they "give out grants every year to organizations we feel are doing good things and that focus on social, racial, and economic justice."
- Rateliff says pursuing music as a career isn't easy, but "if you really love music, it's hard to get away from it."

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article:

- **RURAL:** an area in the countryside instead of the city.
- **MUSICAL INFLUENCE:** musical artists who have inspired one and have an effect on the character of one's music.
- **COLLABORATOR:** a person who works together with another person on a specific project, song or other activity.
- **IDEOLOGY:** the science of ideas and ideals.
- **THROWBACK:** utilizing the characteristics of a past time.

Discuss

Have students discuss what various musical artists did during the pandemic when live music wasn't allowed in much of the U.S. Were virtual shows the main outlets for bands and musicians at that time? What about more outdoor shows, such as Rateliff's gigs, or intimate concerts?

What are some of the challenges for those entering the music business, as Rateliff discusses in the interview? He mentions how artists have to create music for themselves and not the record label, management, booking agents or even crowds. How important is it to stay true to one's vision when creating music?

How does Rateliff's "The Marigold Project" help small communities? Discuss how the organization has worked with Farm Aid and helped create legislation to prevent land grabs, help small communities with factory farming, and more.

Ask

- Why did Rateliff decide to release a solo, acoustic album in 2020? What led him to that decision?
- What life event caused Rateliff to never go to high school? How did that experience influence his life path?
- What inspired Rateliff to get involved with small communities with his "Marigold Project?"

Questions

1. What year was Rateliff born?
2. How did Rateliff learn guitar?
3. Name one of Rateliff's influences.
4. Rateliff is active in which city's musical community?
5. What's the name of Rateliff's current band?
6. What's the name of the band Rateliff first formed in 2002?
7. What's the name of Rateliff's endowment organization?
8. Rateliff's acoustic-leaning solo album is called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What's the title of Rateliff's new album with his band, out November 2021?
10. One of Rateliff's big hobbies is collecting what?

Answers

1. 1978
2. As a teenager, he taught himself guitar.
3. Van Morrison, Bob Dylan, The Moody Blues, Jesse Collin Young
4. Denver
5. The Night Sweats
6. Born in the Flood
7. The Marigold Project
8. And It's Still Alright
9. The Future
10. Vintage guitars

Expand

Ask students to discuss the balance some artists have of releasing solo music and creating music with a band. Does doing solo music hamper, at all, an artist's commitment to their main band? What artists have been able to participate in both their main band plus a solo career? Slash is one that comes to mind, with the guitarist making music with Guns N' Roses and Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators.

What differences do you have to account for when writing an acoustic album verses a plugged-in, amped up one? Will the lyrical content be any different? How about the songs' arrangements?

## Feature Story: How To Play Stevie Wonder's "Loves In Need Of Love Today"

National Standards: 1-9

There's no denying that Stevie Wonder is one of the musical heroes of his era. The song "Love's In Need of Love Today" my Award-winning double-album, Songs in the Key of Life. Many artist have honed their craft by studying Stevie Wonder's work, and "Love's In Need of Love Today" an apt place to start.

Prepare

Have students listen to "Love's In Need of Love Today"; both a studio version of the song and various live versions. Then, have the students familiarize themselves with the basics of the song, such as the tempo (99 BPM), key (E<sub>f</sub>) and chords (Eb, A7/E, Fm7, Ab, Eb, Gm, Cm7).

Key points in the article:

- Stevie Wonder played almost all of the instruments on the original version of "Love's In Need of Love Today" The credits only list one other person playing on the song, a percussionist on bongos. How common is that in today's music? Not very!
- The beginning of the song is key to its charm. The song opens with an a cappella section and begs to be performed by an ensemble that can sing the section's four parts. We recommend you reach out to a choir teacher to help with this section of the song.
- In the second chorus of the song, the chords repeat over and over, called a "vamp" which offers a shining section for soloists to show off their stuff.
- The song really showcases keyboard playing, as there are several keyboard parts on the record. The primary, electric piano part is the most important keyboard part.

Begin

- Using the beginning of the lesson, help students work on the a cappella section. Divide students into four parts and have them sing the section like a traditional chorale. Sing along with each part to help students get the hang of the lines.
- Next, focus on the instruments in the song. This record can be performed in a wide range of ways. Come up with different presentations of the song, such as one featuring just vocals and keyboard and another featuring a full rhythm section.
- Discuss the intangible "vibe" of the song. Stevie Wonder was known for his incredible feel while performing. How can students perform this piece with that same passion and vibe?

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- ARPEGGIOS: strumming of chords one note at a time.
- A CAPPELLA: meaning "unaccompanied by instruments" in Italian.
- VIRTUOSITY: having exceptional skill in music or another artistic area.
- INFLUENTIAL: having strong influence on something or someone.
- VAMP: where the chords repeat over and over.

## Discuss

Aside from the technical aspect of “Love’s In Need of Love Today;” what made Stevie Wonder bring the song to life? How important are the vibe and feel on a song such as this one? Are the vibe and feel even more important than the technical delivery of the song? Discuss other famous examples of musicians who are known for their emotive, passionate delivery.

## Q&A

1. What was Stevie Wonder’s first No. 1 hit?
2. What was Stevie Wonder’s real name?
3. “Love’s In Need of Love Today” appears on which Stevie Wonder album?
4. What’s the only instrument Stevie Wonder did not play on the original record?
5. What kind of bass did Stevie Wonder use on the song?

## Answers

1. “Fingertips.”
2. Stevie Wonder was born Stevland Hardaway Morris.
3. “Love’s In Need of Love Today” is the opening track from Wonder’s 1976 double-album Songs in the Key of Life.
4. Bongos.
5. Wonder provided bass via synthesizer. (That said, the song can easily be performed by an acoustic bass or electric bass guitar.)

Expand: Divide students into small groups and have them master “Love’s In Need of Love Today” Then, have them perform for each other and discuss how each group tackled the song in a different way.

## Feature Story: When Audio Met Video

National Standards: 1, 7, 10-11

Humans have long used physical performances accompanied by musical pieces to offer a tantalizing experience for the eyes and ears. As modern technology has progressed, so has the union of audio and video. From the telephone to feature films to TikTok, a lot has changed when it comes to audio and video over the decades, and these pairings will likely become even more popular in the future

Prepare

Have students watch clips of "shorts," "soundies" and feature films from the 1920s. What was the audio and visual experience like in these films? Do they have any resemblance to today's movies and music videos? While the technology has changed drastically, discuss what similarities are present. Then, watch some modern music videos and TikTok videos.

Key points in the article:

- There's a rich history of audio and visuals being paired together to great accord, starting with the advent of the telephone in the 1800s and progressing to the video bits teenagers post on TikTok today.
- While humans have always enjoyed bringing audio and video together, advances in technology have brought continual evolution to how people use the two for entertainment.
- The music video is a shining example of bringing together audio and visual components. MTV (Music Television) kicked off on August 1st, 1981, and was a major vehicle for getting the music video to the masses.
- Audio and visual pairings will likely become even more popular in the future, thanks to expanding bandwidth, connection and processing speeds, as well as greater access to the Internet around the world.

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- KINETOSCOPE: a small motion-picture device
- KINETOPHONE: a kinoscope (small motion-picture device) combined with a phonograph to record sound and movement simultaneously.
- VITAPHONE SHORTS: short music videos in the 1920s and 1930s that featured bands, vocalists and dancers. Shorts were typically six minutes in duration, and featured art deco-style animations and backgrounds combined with film of the performer singing.
- PREMIERE: the debut performance of a movie or musical or theatrical work.
- ENTREPRENEUR: someone who launches or operates one or more businesses.

Discuss

Are there certain aspects of audio and video that have remained unchanged throughout time? Technology has changed immensely, but perhaps the desire for humans to experience the marriage of

audio and visual in an entertaining form hasn't changed much. Also, what are some of the most "viral" examples of audio and video today? Find popular examples on TikTok or YouTube. One example is the Justin Bieber song "Baby," which is mentioned in the article. The song has garnered 2.5 billion views and helped launch Bieber's career.

#### Q&A

1. In what year was the basic phone invented, and who invented it?
2. Who received the first U.S. patent for a telephone?
3. Who created the first kinetophone?
4. What were "Soundies" and where were they located?
5. What was the last music video played on MTV's Total Request Live (TRL) program?
6. In what year did MTV's TRL launch and end its run?

#### Answers

1. Italian inventor Antonio Meucci invented the first basic phone in 1849.
2. Alexander Graham Bell received his first U.S. patent for a telephone in 1876.
3. In 1884, Thomas Edison developed a kinetophone, which was a kinoscope (small motion-picture device) combined with a phonograph to record sound and movement simultaneously
4. "Soundies" brought together sight and sound to create short musical films on coin-operated, 16mm rear projection machines called Panorams. "Soundies" machines were located in nightclubs, bars, restaurants, and other public places
5. "...Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears.
6. TRL launched in 1998 and ended its run in 2008.

#### Expand:

Ask students to make their own short audio and video clips. What can help make their clips stand apart? Have them perform short, original songs - or even just parts of songs - and watch each others' video creations. Also, discuss what's next for the technology of audio and video. What will be the next TikTok or YouTube outlet?

## Feature Story: Techniques: Voice Leading

National Standards: 1, 4-6, 10-11

Voice leading - defined as the art of creating harmonies with individual melodic lines or voices - can make any average chord progression something special. Musicians travel from one chord to another using different combinations, making sure that even repeated chords are dynamic and constantly changing.

### Prepare

Isolate the three elements of the lesson: The paths of least resistance (navigate chord progressions with efficient single note lines), building your lines (expand simple lines into complex parts with melodic and rhythmic variation) and fun with half steps (the simplest of lines can lead to complex harmonies).

Discuss with students how voice leading can add to the song's overall structure and appeal. How do cool harmonies and improvising solos add to a song's so-called "wow factor" and appeal?

### Key points in the article:

- Voice leading forms the basis for many key musical skills, including harmonizing, crafting supporting parts lines, and coming up with fun, spur-of-the-moment solos.
- The best way to start learning voice leading is to start small and navigate chord progressions with just a little movement in pitch.
- Voice leading is all about creativity. Each move you make presents a new plethora of possible future moves. The options are endless.

### Begin

Using the first part of the lesson, have students experiment with simple voice leading by linking chords with just a little movement. Have them follow the blues progression in the lesson and, when they feel more comfortable, elaborate on it.

- Help students understand the concept of voice leading by showing them examples of how to do it.
- Then, play the scale again and start "noodling" and improvising in that same key.
- Have students create harmonized pads by building lines with whole notes and half notes, then fleshing them out.
- Have students move up and down the chromatic scale (half steps). Experiment with playing, and don't worry too much about mistakes right now- just get comfortable with the idea.

### Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- **VOICE LEADING:** the art of creating harmonies with individual melodic lines or voices.
- **PADS:** lines of long sustained notes across the harmony.
- **CHROMATIC SCALE:** a scale wholly made up of half-steps.



- CHORD PROGRESSION: a succession of different chords.

#### Discuss

Voice leading is the basis for exciting musical skills such as harmonizing and improvising. What artists are known for their ability to harmonize and improvise? Have students discuss their favorites throughout history. When it comes to improvising, John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Jimi Hendrix are a few that come to mind. For harmonizing, The Beatles; Crosby, Stills and Nash; and The Beach Boys are key.

#### Questions

1. When was the "Common Practice Period" in Western classical music?
2. Chords and chord progressions are the result of what four elements all interacting with each other in rhythm?
3. In what forms of music do you hear voice leading?
4. What's the first step in voice leading?

#### Answers

1. The "Common Practice Period" was from about 1650 to 1900.
2. Chords and chord progressions are the result of melodies, bass lines, countermelodies, and harmonies all interacting with each other in rhythm.
3. You hear voice leading in all forms of music, from an orchestra to a jazz combo, a church choir to a rock band.
4. The first step in voice leading is to link chords with as little movement in pitch as possible.

#### Expand

What are some examples of songs featuring voice leading that stand out to you? Have students find some on YouTube.