

For Katrina Chester (Consultancy for Learning the New Breed)

I write this with a deep sense of gratitude to Katrina Chester for her steadfast determination to honor and promote the work of her late father Gary Chester. Mr. Chester was first and foremost a masterful drummer. As a studio musician he played on many of the many of the most popular recordings of the 1960's and 70's (A jaw dropping discography is presented his masterpiece book *The New Breed*.) So, before he ever got into teaching the dude had serious street cred.

When back problems forced his retirement from the studio, he opened a teaching practice and over several years developed "systems", which were to appear in his classic book *The New Breed*. Many top drummers of the day sought him out for lessons. After reading reviews from these players, I bought a copy of the *New Breed* and began working with it. I achieved only limited results because I failed to follow all the detailed instructions Gary laid out in the book.

That all changed when I was down a YouTube rabbit hole about a year ago and came across a video of one of Mr. Chester's top former students discussing the benefits of studying the method. I noticed there were several videos posted featuring other top former students. I watched them all and, lo and behold, there was a link to contact Mr. Chester's daughter Katrina to be connected to one of them for lessons. At that point during the pandemic my live work had diminished considerably. I figured I could make use of my extra time by buckling down on my drum studies. So, I reached out to Katrina via the email link and filled out a questionnaire. Katrina took my answers and matched my interests and abilities to a *New Breed* teacher. In this case it was Mr. Karl Latham, a very accomplished NYC based drummer with vast experience in jazz, R&B and Broadway show drumming. Mr. Latham studied with Mr. Chester for a solid year and a half in the early 80's, years before the book was published. He said that for a year and a half he studied and practiced only the *New Breed* systems and ***nothing else***. In our first Zoom lesson Karl shared with me that he was a big fan of the late great keyboardist and jazz/R&B artist George Duke. I knew I had found the right guy!

Studying the *New Breed* with Mr. Latham has been a real game changer for me and has brought benefits that have far exceeded my expectations. Like me, most drummers who attempt studying the *New Breed* without a teacher tend to gloss over the details and instructions. I noticed there are many videos on YouTube of drummers trying to interpret the systems. None of whom are following the directions:

- The player must play the systems slowly at first...painfully slow...like 40bpm.
- The player must sing...always!
- The player must sing...the quarter note but the upbeats, 16th note partials and the melody, the ride pattern, the hi hat pattern, the bass pattern.
- It is recommended the player play flat footed...even on the hi-hat! (Really hard for me!)

- And, of course, alternating right hand and left-hand lead on the ride cymbal or hi-hats.

Following the detailed instructions have had a profound effect on my drumming:

- My relationship to and sense of the quarter note is much stronger.
- My reading improved.
- My concentration level and ability to focus for long periods has improved.
- My overall comfort level on the instrument has improved.

These are a few of the things I've noticed in my own playing that are a direct result of studying the New Breed systems with Karl Latham. His instruction has helped to keep me on track and forced me not to overlook the details of my performance of the systems or music performance in general. Finally, I think for me ***the single most important dimension*** of studying the New Breed is that these systems have inspired an incredible amount of creativity. I'm coming up with many of my own systems, which I have applied in every project I am involved in.

In closing, I would say that any drummer who is motivated to study the New Breed will benefit immensely from the help of a qualified teacher. Who better to arrange it than the passionate, well-connected daughter of the master himself...Katrina Chester? You won't regret it!