

# PUTTING MOVES TO MUSIC

BY PAUL DE BAKKER



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WORKSHOP PUT ON BY  
PAUL DE BAKKER  
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LEARNED AND  
DISCUSSED. IF YOU HAVE  
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# INTRODUCTION

## WHO IS PAUL??

Paul was born and raised in the Netherlands, and moved to the USA in 2006. After many travels, he landed in the Pacific Northwest in 2010 and is planning to never leave again.

He is an engineer by trade, with over 20 years of experience as a kite designer, builder and performer. He has 5 Dutch National Championships and 6 US National Championships as a Sport Kite flier and a National Championship as a kite builder. His designs are flown all over the world by some of the best kite fliers around.

Over the years, Paul has been expanding from designing strictly sport kites to include some of the most influential single line kites. Paul is intending to continue to push the envelope in the coming years, as he has a number of new designs in the works, both sport kites as well as single line.

# PICK YOUR MUSIC



# THE MUSIC

Picking your music is the hardest part. Not only does it have to fit certain time requirements, but it also has to match your personality and style. A poor choice of music can make a good flier look like an amateur.

Let the music do the work. Good music choices means that the job is 60% done.

Start by selecting music that you enjoy. You are going to have to listen to it over and over, so better choose something that you are not easily annoyed with.

Use the 'Song List' to make a list of music that you are thinking about. Is there an overall feeling you get when listening to this music?

Note the time as well. Some songs can be trimmed down if they are too long. If you know the Beats Per Minute (BPM) include that as well.

## SONG LIST

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Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ BPM: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ BPM: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ BPM: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ BPM: \_\_\_\_\_

- If the song is too fast it can be hard to control, if the song is too slow it can be hard to make the performance dynamic and engaging.
- Good music also needs a bit of variation; changes in parts of the song like melody and tempo help to keep the song and the performance lively.

There should be some complexity, but overall it is easy to follow when explained by the kite. There are layers to the whole piece.

The song should have some depth to it. Depth gives you room to grow as your skills improve.

- Pick music that is adapted to your skill level. It is only a little bit "better" than you.

There is ALWAYS a new song that is more difficult for when your skills improve significantly.

- The music should be what 80% of your audience will like.

Remember, this is for a performance to the public. It needs to be music that they want to listen to. It is not worth running the risk of them losing interest in your performance because they don't like the song. Listen to your own funky music when it is just you. Avoid falling in the trap of picking music that is overplayed, or overly cliché.

- The song should make you want to really listen to it again when you first hear it.

# ME THE KITE THE LOCATION





# 'ME'

Flying a stunt kite routine is a physical activity. Be prepared to move, and to move a LOT!

**"ABW"**

ALWAYS BE WALKING

The most important thing is to be dynamic; it is the best speed control. Even in simple routines, speed control is done through moving forward and backwards, and can be your most dramatic contribution.

Fliers tend to overlook this easy element, and instead attempt to pack their routines full of difficult tricks chained together. Yet, speed control is just as effective at impressing the audience, while simultaneously giving the flier room to improve their position on the field.

## **Shoes**

Make sure you have both grip and mobility. This is an active exercise.

## **Your Skills**

For a performance or routine, fly what you can perform 90% of the time. The tricks that you can only cleanly execute 50% of the time, no matter how showy, are for your own solo jam practice sessions.

# THE KITE

Picking a kite for a performance is a very personalized experience, however here are some tips for picking the best kite for the job. *Most of these tips are for dual line stunt kites, however are worth thinking about for other performance kite types.*

## Size

Pick a Medium to Larger Kite - Approximately 7-8ft

This gives you the advantage of slowing the speed of the kite down and helping keep overall good control of the kite.

## Bridle

3 point bridle is key (For Dual Line)

A 'Turbo Bridle' acts as auto speed control, and while it is good for precision, this removes a potential element from your bag of tricks. It is important to be in control of the speed of your kite.

*This is Paul's personal preference. There are more solutions, ultimately pick the system that works best for you*

## Trickability

First and foremost the kite needs to be stable and predictable. Without this foundation, any routine will suffer.

The kite should be able to easily stall, land, and corner. Overall trickability is nice, but a secondary consideration. While a 'trick-machine' is great for freestyle flying, part of your routine will be about filling the spaces in between, and the kite needs to be able to handle those moments gracefully.



# THE LOCATION

Plan to fly your routine with at least 100 ft lines, preferably 120 ft lines (for outdoor). The longer the lines, the bigger the canvas, and the more time you have to maneuver and stay in control.

If you are flying indoors be mindful of other site complications, such as drafts and obstacles

Look for things that will make ground work harder, or will kill your kite. It is easy to see the obstacles such as fences, barriers, people, or structures. But, there is more to good ground work.

## Things to Watch Out For

Hard pack sand = Tip stands, cartwheels

Tall or rough Grass = Could poke holes in kite

Rocks = All of the above, and more

Ground work also applies to you, and your movement across the field, not just the kite. The ideal outdoor location is the beach with hard packed for the kite flier, and soft sand for the kite. This allows for easy mobility of the flier, while providing a soft landing spot that provides grip and control for the kite.

## Tips

- It is difficult to plan for the exact conditions you will have on the day of your demonstration or performance. Be prepared to tune your performance down a bit. Building in flexibility in your routine from the start will help when conditions change.
- Practice your routine in perfect wind, with perfect conditions, it will eliminate a variable when figuring out why something isn't working.
- Consider having different routines for different winds.

# AUDIENCE



# AUDIENCE

A crucial part of your routine is who you are flying for. It is worth considering if you are going to be flying for a crowd of mixed generations, at a church, for a school assembly, or a professional audience. Each group has different needs, interests, and expectations. There is no point in flying for an audience if you are not entertaining them. Your performance has to be more than just an exhibition of your skills, it must tell a story or convey a feeling that the audience can relate to. The emotion or story is what is at the core of your routine, regardless of who is watching.

## Audience Types

This is not a comprehensive list of the types of audiences you may encounter, but it will give you an idea of how to tailor your performance to a given audience.

### **SCHOOL ASSEMBLY**

Song: Disney/Pixar/etc

Duration: Short

Story: Kids are excited to see the kite fly, and to see you having fun.

### **MIXED AUDIENCE**

Song: ....

Duration: ~2-4 minutes

Story: Convey an emotion or attitude, personalized, show who you are that they can relate with.

### **PROFESSIONAL GIG**

Song: They Pick

Duration: unknown

Story: You will sometimes have little control over the elements of the performance, so you need to convey what the organizer is asking for. An emotion, a story, or something else.

### **COMPETITION**

Song: ....

Duration: ~2-4 minutes

Story: The performance needs to convey not only an emotion or story, but also needs to highlight certain skills that may be required.

## **Competition vs. Audience**

There is no real difference between judges and general audience. Treat them the same. Bring the same level of forethought and training to a demonstration as you would to a competition. Do not short change the audience, because you wouldn't short change your judges.

Keeping that approach the same for both competition and demonstrations only serves to make you a better flier.

## **More is NOT Better**

Cramming more tricks into your routine will not make it better. Tricks only work when they are exactly in time with the music. The more tricks you attempt to put into a short time, the less room you have for any errors. Tricks are high risk maneuvers, so use them sparingly, and only where they reinforce the music (and vice versa) They must be powerful and clean.

Using speed control, or changes in speed in between tricks is typically more effective visually than more tricks.

# THE CUES





# THE CUES

Every piece of music has cues embedded in it that tell the kite flier what should be happening. It is not as simple as saying 'big orchestral music is big sweeping figures while complicated techno music is about how flashy you can be with your tricks'. Within music there are layers that convey an emotion or story. That emotion is not all in just one layer. The power of music comes from how all of those layers blend together, so too must your flying.

## Parts of the Song

Music can be broken down into three general layers. The melody, the harmony, and the beat. Listen to your song several times and identify these parts, and listen for the cues in each part.

Music is a lot like a rock wall. There are grips along the way that you can hold on to and use. Not everyone will see or use the same climbing path.

## Some Tips

- Be mindful of the room behind you and front of you. You will need both to speed up in fast parts, and slow down in calm parts. Find a balance between the two, both from a storytelling perspective and a technical one.

*This can be easy to overlook when planning a routine, and has lead to many disqualifications*

- Corners for beats. When that beat drops in the music, make a clean corner turn.
- Low & Slow passage in the music, then go low and slow. Bring your kite down to the ground and do groundwork.



- Stalls for silence - you can always cheat this by taking the kite to the outside of the wind window. If the music is 'taking a breath/pause', your kite should too.
- Drumroll - Great opportunity for a 540 or spins
- Break beats - good for simple tricks
- Rising Intensity or pitch - upward lines, use the upper window
- Chord change - good signal for a direction change
- Circular Movements - good for voices, solo brass/piano
- Straight lines or Slides - use for drawn out passages
- Soft music -  $<90$  deg corners, with figures on the bass lines. Soften the flying.
- Slide from layer to layer in the song. Picking the most expressive one, then coming back to an earlier layer.

These are just suggestions to get your creative juices flowing.

# NOTES

NOTES