

Tense Usage in the Lenny Kravitz Text

Although the most frequently used tense in this article is the **PRESENT**, since it is supposedly an account of daily life and daily routines, there is, nonetheless, a surprising variety of other tenses used. It is this range of tenses which makes the text interesting to read, gives it energy and movement and allows the reader to engage more fully with the writer's message.

Of the present tenses the **PRESENT SIMPLE** predominates, since habitual, repeated actions are being described:

- "**he lives** with their daughter..." (Intro.)
- "**I live** in a two-storey house..." (1.3)
- "**I go for a run**..." (1.4)
- "I often **head** over to Fairchild Tropical Garden...." (1.5)
- "... **a chef comes** five days a week..." (1.33)
- "I also **drink** a lot of coconut milk...." (1.34)
- "**I don't** always **find** it easy ..." (1.51)

Notice how often an adverb or phrase of time is used in these examples.

The **PRESENT CONTINUOUS** is used to describe Lenny Kravitz's present state of mind and to recount continuous actions: "**I'm feeling** pretty happy..." (1.11) "...because all these **things are** usually still **racing around** in my head." (1.51)

The **PRESENT PERFECT** is used very rarely in this text. The first time is in relation to a present continuous, so that the defining reference to the present which this tense always has is established:

"I'm feeling pretty happy because **my new album, *Baptism*, has ended up** helping me get through a lot of personal things..." (1.11)

The other example is in the same paragraph where the relation to the present state is still active: it represents the use of the present perfect with a superlative: "...it's the best thing that **I've ever written**." (1.13-14) [so far; it's possible that Kravitz may write something even better in the future, but this is the present situation].

Lenny Kravitz also uses what seems to be the future, but is really the **MODAL will**, for expressing habitual actions: "When I get back, **I'll shower** and have breakfast..." (1.6) "... but the odd time **I'll cook** for my kid..." (1.36)

These examples also suggest a possible rather than an absolutely regular habitual action; it is something that usually happens: "**I'll do** things like get the plunger out or hang up new pictures."

This use is informal and is common in conversation accounts of a sequence of events. Notice in these examples that there is a reference to a time phrase or a preceding action: "When I get back..." "the odd time..."

This sense is also expressed using the **MODAL might**: "**(The chef) might prepare** something like sweet potato and freshwater fish..." (1.35) (he doesn't do it everyday).

The use of the *'ll* to indicate an habitual action is also found in the consequence clause, following a preceding condition, expressed in the 'if' clause:

- "**If** I'm just heading over to the studio, **I'll stick on** something simple..." (1.7)
- "**If** I've been down at the studio all day, **I'll usually come in**, flop down..." (1.46)
- "**If** I've stopped to think how ... **I'll sleep** all the better for it." (1.53)

Lenny Kravitz also uses the **IMMINENT FUTURE**: "...**I'm about to direct** a movie." (1.49)

Sometimes events in the **PAST** influence or explain events in the text. The **PAST SIMPLE** is used for a completed action or state in the past, either with a specific past time reference: "**I tossed** the microwave **out** the other day..." (1.36), or with an implicit past time reference "It's to do with the way the way **I grew up, my grandparents lived** in ... **my parents lived** on..." (1.44) [we know it was in the past because we know that Kravitz is adult now]. "There's two acres ... in which **a friend helped** me plant loads of trees and bushes ..." (1.27) [we know it is completed in the past because Kravitz refers to the trees **now** "being great for the dogs."].

There is a classic example of the past simple with the **PAST CONTINUOUS** to describe the occurrence of one past event during another past event: "**It came** to me in a flash while I was sitting at the piano one day." (1.14)