

**THE**

**MODERN BEAT**

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO PLAYING THE DRUMSET

BY TOM PIERARD

# THE MODERN BEAT

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Cover design and photography by Melissa Pierard

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Well known for his eclectic musical tastes and versatility in drumset playing, Tom Pierard has worked with many great artists and ensembles including Rhian Sheehan, Warren Maxwell, Kora and many more. After having completed a Bachelor of jazz music performance at Massey University Wellington under Lance Phillip and jazz great Roger Sellers, Tom was headhunted by internationally acclaimed ensemble Strike Percussion, and performed extensively world-wide as well as delivering Masterclasses in Korea, Taiwan and Australia.

Tom has twice attended and performed at the Taiwan International Percussion Convention, and in 2011 became the HOD of Music at the Eastern Institute of Technology in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. He lives there with his wife and two children.

In 2016 Tom completed an MMus (Comp) at Auckland University.

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All playalong tracks written by Tom Pierard. All instruments performed by Tom Pierard except bass and guitar on 'Blues' and 'Jazz' - (Matiu Whiting).

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# WELCOME

## HELLO – AND THANK YOU FOR BUYING THIS BOOK.

My name is Tom.

I am a drummer, producer and teacher, and I'm pleased you've decided to buy this collection of philosophies on the approach to performing on the drumset.

Let me make this clear - this is not your normal drum exercise book. This book doesn't contain rows of every possible variation so you can sit in a room and practice for ten hours a day. Instead, you'll learn how to develop exercises specific to you and the sound you want from your drums. What you will gain from this is a vocabulary not limited to what's in these pages, but instead one that is forever growing.

Our main aim as drummers is to provide time and groove (I'll go further into those terms later) but aside from these essential elements, we'll learn the skills to say exactly what we want to say and how we want to say it through the drumset.

## **THERE ARE FIVE MAIN POINTS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND BEFORE WE START:**

### **NOT EVERYONE CAN PLAY**

Everyone is different, and everyone has a way they learn best. Some may prefer to sit and practice one or two rudiments for hours and hours, while others may prefer to learn songs, or even just parts of songs. Some learn by listening, some by seeing and some just by doing. With this book I've tried to suit as many learning styles as possible with the written notation, the explanation of each chapter and the video clips of each exercise.

In saying that, I've had students who have found learning the drums just too hard. You need to understand that while a lot of people can play a few basic things, drums are

### **YOU CAN PLAY ANYTHING IF YOU SLOW IT DOWN. JUST MAKE SURE IT'S CONSISTENT!**

actually very difficult to play well – but as with most things, the more you learn, the more enjoyable they are to play. This comes back to building your drummer's vocabulary of grooves and techniques, and you'll start to find that as you learn, they'll become muscle memory, a kind of second nature.

The first thing you'll need is to commit – you've done that already by buying this book!

One of the biggest errors a student can make is failure to identify a mistake in their practise. This can be as small as playing a rhythm wrong or as big as slowing down or speeding up – the principle is the same; if you play it wrong more than three times you're practicing a mistake. If you have trouble playing an exercise in this book at the recommended speed, the first thing you should do is slow it down. Try to play it so slowly that you know exactly what you're going to play, before you play it. If this means slowing right down to 20 bpm then so be it – just make sure you practice the whole pattern at that tempo. You don't want to be getting used to slowing down or speeding up!

# THE MORE YOU CAN PLAY, THE LESS YOU HAVE TO SAY

When you go out and perform with the skills you're learning here, you may feel like you should be playing at the very top of your ability all the time. Many beginners make this mistake. Instead, try to see it as all of the technical things you learn providing a foundation for everything you play, be it a solo or a very simple groove. You may have heard the phrase "Yeah, but can he groove?" applied to busy drummers. This refers to the ability to sound locked in (in the pocket) with the rest of the band. You need to understand that as a drummer you're playing not only for yourself, but also for your bandmates and for the audience, and one of the greatest gifts you can give an audience is to make them want to move both physically and emotionally with you as you play.

One of the best ways of doing this is by taking a holistic approach to your playing - you should be listening to not only yourself and your individual bandmates, but also to the whole sound the ensemble is making. If you let this dictate your playing, as you should, you'll find that busy playing isn't always required. However, this sound can be made infinitely better by practicing a raft of different techniques. We'll look at this concept more closely in the chapter called 'Focused Groove'.

As a student you have to be strict with yourself in this aspect. Remember, if you can already play it, you're not learning anything new, and you shouldn't call doing that 'exercise'. That's certainly not to say you shouldn't play easy things, but when you do, you should consciously differentiate. For example you could play a very simple groove with a metronome for 20 minutes but your actual focus is practicing timekeeping and groove rather than learning the pattern, and you should concentrate on that while you're playing it. Another good one is practicing going between straight notes and triplets at the same slow tempo – again this is improving your rhythmic spatial awareness and this practise is extremely valuable. You'll probably notice that there might be similar exercises in two different chapters in this book, this is because we'll be focusing on different things for each one, and as an effective learner you should take the time to change your focus while you practice each one.

## IT'S NOT LEARNING IF YOU CAN ALREADY DO IT

If you want to consciously go over the things you already know, call it 'revision' or just warming up. Don't trick yourself into thinking you've been practicing for 30 minutes when you haven't.



# LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN

Listen to every aspect of your playing. Listen to the tone you're getting out of each drum; listen to your kit as a whole and how balanced the different voices are, listen to the other players in your band and how your part interlocks and fits with theirs. And lastly, listen to the whole sound the band is making – I call this projecting your ear, and it's a skill that takes a long time to develop.

Listen to as much music and other drummers as you can so you can form your own educated opinions on what you like. There is a Recommended Listening page in this book – it's a great place to start.

In today's connected world, we're lucky enough to have all kinds of musicians who prioritize entirely different musical things. One drummer might dedicate their entire life to learning the marching bass drum while another might solely focus on speed. Another might only want to ever play in their own bedroom. If you want to have your own sound, you need to have your own set of priorities.

They change often, but here are mine at the moment:

1. **TIME**
2. **FUN**
3. **TIME**
4. **TIME (YES THIS IS MEANT TO BE REPEATED)**
5. **LISTENING**
6. **GROOVE**
7. **DRUMSOUND**

- .
- .
- .
- .

## **12. FLASHY STUFF (FILLS, SOLOS, TWIRLS ETC)**

Don't get me wrong, I love showing off as much as the next guy, but as a musician it's important to understand how to connect with both your fellow musicians and the audience. If you're playing in terms they can't understand, then you won't get much of a response – and if you don't get a response you usually don't get hired.

Now if we go back to when I started playing at around 13 years old (my memory is pretty hazy around this time), I'm pretty sure they used to look more like this.

1. **METAL**
2. **SPEED**
3. **DOUBLE KICK**
4. **LOUD**
5. **LOUD**
6. **WHAT ELSE IS THERE?**
7. **YEAH MAYBE SOME TIME**

This is a maturity thing. I'm still on my own journey with the drums and you're on yours – which means you should just go with what you like for now and let nature take its course. They may change entirely or they might not, just take it a day at a time and try to find some good (and maybe patient) people to play with.

So now that you have an idea of what to expect in this book, please remember that what I've written and talked about is just one person's view, where many exist. Admittedly I've been playing and teaching drums for a long time now, but I can still admit this particular learning style doesn't necessarily suit everyone. Technically one could argue that there isn't really a wrong way to play the drums, and that's exactly how you should think when creating drum grooves and patterns.

However, when it comes to technique, the ways I'll show you have been time-tested and are the general ways of playing longer, faster, louder or quieter and with the least impact on your body. I would hope that once you've worked your way through the book you'll be able to form your own opinions and ideas about what works best for you as a player and a learner, and so now you can begin with an open mind and let me help you unlock your potential as a great drummer with your very own sound.

## **THE FIVE-STEP METHOD FOR FINDING YOUR SOUND**

You'll soon notice that in this book, the exercises don't often follow the same formula i.e. some sections may require you to practice several variations, while others will have only one or two. The reason you won't see many variations of the exercise isn't because I'm lazy! It's more to encourage you to experiment with your own interpretations.

You've heard the saying 'Give a man a fish and he'll eat today; teach man to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime'. Apply these steps and you can develop your own exercises to suit your individual needs and decide how fast you move forward with drums – work smart AND hard!

*Follow these steps with each exercise:*

- 1. TRY VARIATIONS WITH YOUR RIGHT HAND**
- 2. CHANGE THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN YOUR LIMBS**
- 3. PLAY A PART ON A DIFFERENT DRUM/LIMB**
- 4. MOVE ON ONLY WHEN YOU CAN PLAY THE EXERCISE 8 TIMES WITHOUT MISTAKES**  
**– IF YOU MAKE ONE, THEN START THE COUNT AGAIN.**
- 5. CHANGE THE METRONOME ACCENTS**

# **DRUMSET ANATOMY**

## **KICK/BASS DRUM**

- Played with your right foot
- Gives the low end to your sound

## **HIHAT CYMBALS**

- Held closed with your left foot
- Usually hit with your right hand with the shoulder of the stick
- Stamped with your left foot to keep time

## **TOMS**

- Sometimes useful for fills
- Usually set as flat as possible

## **SNARE DRUM**

- Provides the backbeat
- Snare wires can be controlled with a throwoff mechanism
- Usually played with the left hand (crossing underneath the right)

## **CRASH CYMBAL**

- Usually implies an entry/change of section
- Should be struck on the edge with the shoulder of the stick

## **RIDE CYMBAL**

- Usually played with the hihat hand
- Usually treated like a hihat for keeping time
- Can be used as a crash cymbal



# **PRACTICE SCHEDULE**

A good practice regime is not always possible. When you're younger you might have a short attention span and it might be lower on the priority list. When you're older it can be hard to practice around work and the kids.

Trust me - if you have a routine that you follow as closely as you can as often as you can, you'll notice drastic improvement very quickly.

*A good practice routine could look like this:*

## **WARM UP**

- Play along to 2-3 songs with varying difficulty
- Do 10 minutes of paradiddles at 3 different bpm
- Do 10 minutes of doubles at 3 different bpm

## **PRACTISE**

- Work at a chapter of this book for 30 mins
- Develop 2-3 of your own adaptations for 20 mins

This could be anything up to 90 minutes – difficult to fit into anyone's day at the best of times! Aim to practice like this at least twice a week. It's also a good idea to have your drums somewhere easily accessible so you can fit in the odd 10 – 20 mins of playing if you have a spare moment.

# **PUT YOUR PRACTICE INTO CONTEXT**

Try to put your ideas into practice by playing with some other musicians if you aren't already. While you're at it, be open to feedback and encourage your bandmates to let you know if you need to play a little less or a little more of something – I've learned a great deal from non-drummers, many of them have their own preferences on how drumming should be approached. Gaining these insights will only make you a better player.

# READING NOTATION

*A brief introduction on reading music.*

Here is a time signature: (Show time signature in a bar of rest)

## DRUM NOTATION

Crash Cymbal      Ride Cymbal      Hihat      Open hihat

2      Hihat stomp      Hihat splash w. foot      Cross-stick on snare      Kick drum

3      Tom 1      Tom 2      Snare      Floor Tom

The image shows three staves of drum notation in 4/4 time. The first staff shows symbols for Crash Cymbal (x on a vertical line), Ride Cymbal (x on a vertical line), Hihat (x on a vertical line), and Open hihat (o on a vertical line). The second staff shows Hihat stomp (x on a vertical line), Hihat splash w. foot (x with a 0 below it on a vertical line), Cross-stick on snare (x on a vertical line), and Kick drum (a quarter note). The third staff shows Tom 1 (a quarter note), Tom 2 (a quarter note), Snare (a quarter note), and Floor Tom (a quarter note). Each staff starts with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

The time signature tells us how many (the top number) of what kind (the bottom number) of notes there are in a bar. The bottom number can only be multiples of four, with 1 meaning a whole note, 2 meaning half notes, 4 meaning quarter notes etc. The top number can be any number – by this definition, you may come across signatures like 7/16 or 3/8. Most of the music you will read in this book as well as hear on the radio is in a 4/4 time signature, which means we count four quarter notes to a bar. This means that when we count four beats going into the exercise, these beats are quarter notes.

Sound complicated? It gets much easier the more you do it!

So when we have four quarter notes in a bar, they can be broken up into 8 eighth notes and 16 16th notes. Say we want to count all 16th notes in the bar - we still say the number of the beat, so the way 16th notes are universally counted is like this: (A)

**A**

1 e + a    2 e + a    3 e + a    4 e + a

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with four groups of four sixteenth notes. Below the staff, the counting is written as '1 e + a', '2 e + a', '3 e + a', and '4 e + a'. Each group of four sixteenth notes corresponds to one of these counts.

When we play 8th notes, we still count the 16th notes, we just only play half as much. It's like playing every 1st and 3rd 16th note. We count them like this (B)

**B** **C** **D**

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +    1 2 3 4    1 3

By this logic, when we play quarter notes we play each beat but give each the full length of four 16th notes. Try playing this exercise but still use the 16th note counting – that is, count 1e+a 2e+a 3e+a 4e+a but you'd only play when you count the number (C)

½ notes take up two ¼ notes (eight 16th notes) so we give each that value when we play them. (D)

Let's try some different combinations of 8th and 16th notes. In this first bar each beat is made up of an 8th note and two 16th notes. Therefore we'd count all of the 16th notes but only play 1, +a 2, +a etc. I've included both which parts of the beat you'd play on as well as the sticking on the top line – try and play the different variations over the next four bars. (E)

**E**

R R L R R L...    R L L R L L...  
1 + a 2 + a 3 + a 4 + a    1 e a 2 e a 3 e a 4 e a

R L R R L R...    R L R L    R L R L...  
1 e + 2 e + 3 e + 4 e +    1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a    1 e 2 e 3 e 4 e

If you're going to leave space rather than play you still need to indicate the length of space. For this we use rests. There is a rest to represent each kind of note. (F)

**F**

whole note rest    1/2 note rest    1/4 note rest    1/8 note rest    16th note rests



Try to sightread these bars which incorporate rests while being sure to give them their full value.(G)

## G

1 e + 3 + a 1 a + a 3 e a

e + a 4 e + 1 e 2 e a e + 4

Occasionally in these exercises you'll encounter triplets – which are a way of basically playing three notes of consistent length in the space it normally takes to play two.

Each of those is worth two 8th notes (d), when we count 8th notes we still only say the number on the  $\frac{1}{4}$  note beat, we just count every second 8th note with the word 'and' (+).

As you might expect, each eighth note is worth two of 16th notes (e), and when we have a bar of 16th notes we count it 1e+a 2e+a 3e+a 4e+a. Note that the notes are each still grouped by individual beats.

Now we have four different ways of grouping each 16th note within each beat (F,G,H,I). You can see that while we still count '1e+a' in our heads while we play, we still wait for a note's whole worth. For example in pattern F we have an 8th note and two 16th notes making up each beat, so the 8th note takes up the length of the '1' and 'e' while each 16th note is the '+' and 'a'.

## H

1 trip - let 3 trip - let 1 trip-let 2 trip-let 3 trip-let 4 trip-let

## I

1 2 3 4 5 6 2 2 3 4 5 6 3 2 3 4 5 6 4 2 3 4 5 6

## J

## K

## L

1 + 2 + a 3 + 4 + a 1 e + 2 e + a 3 + 4 +



# CHAPTER ONE

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*TECHNIQUE FUNDAMENTALS*

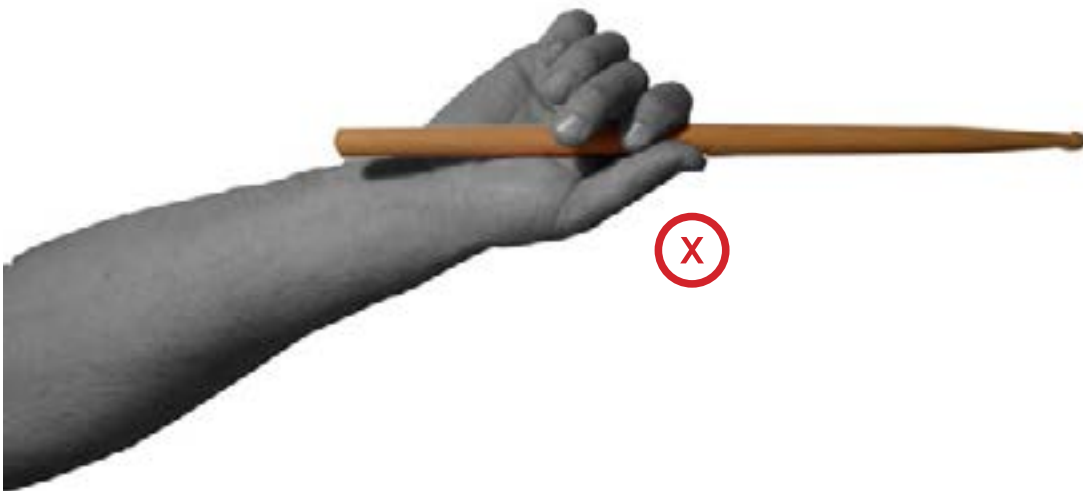
Despite the fact that you're striking them non-stop, drums can be one of the most ergonomically well-designed instruments you can play. The key is to learn to control the stick so that it works for you, and these exercises can show you how to do that.

With a good warmup, the right technique and proper posture, you'll learn your limitations, and be able to develop them to the point where you can play for hours at a time.

## STICK CONTROL

### HOW TO HOLD

A great drum sound starts with great technique. Many self-taught drummers make the mistake of learning the opposite of good technique; that is, clamping the index and middle finger around the stick leaving the ring and pinky fingers completely disengaged (pictured below).



I'm not going to say that this is flat-out wrong, it's just when it comes to playing doubles and other techniques it's far easier if your hand has the opposite shape with the ring and pinky finger around the stick while you pinch the front end slightly between your thumb and the middle segment of your forefinger (pictured below).



Note that your hand should be relaxed around the front of the stick. Try to mirror this technique with your left hand.



When you sit at the drums your back should be straight, your arms should be relaxed and your sticks should form a wide triangle with the heads of your sticks coming together at the centre of the snare drum (pictured below).



This is your resting position, and it's how you will start when you practise anything that requires only one drum i.e. rudiments, archs etc.

You should strike the drum with a whipping motion and release and catch the stick when you strike, rather than gripping it tightly and digging it into the skin – digging will not only choke the sound, but will also jar your wrists which can lead to Repetitive Strain Injury. Practice doing this with 8th note single strokes (R, L, R, L) for a while at 60 bpm. It can also be helpful to practise this in the mirror so you can see if both hands are arching at the top of the stroke and both sticks are being caught at the same level at the end of each stroke.

# THE MOELLER TECHNIQUE

This technique is the method of including an extra note during the upstroke of your strike. This means you're playing twice as fast by only slightly modifying your action, and is our way of playing at much faster tempos easily or accenting different notes within groups. Again, practice these patterns in a mirror if you can – if your hands are matched, the sound will be more consistent. Remember, I've recommended a good tempo to start each pattern but you should try to challenge yourself by working up to faster tempos each time you practice. Of course, if it's too difficult at first, remember one of our main points – slow it down until it's at a comfortable level for you!

**Bpm** (♩ = 80)

**EX 1A** *Groups of two (8th notes)*

**EX 1B** *Groups of two (16th notes)*

Alternate hands

R R R R...      R R R R...

**EX 2** *Groups of three*

R R R...

**EX 3** *Groups of four*

**EX 4** *Every 3rd note of four*

R R R R...

**EX 5** *Groups of two groove*

12/8

EX 6 *Groups of three groove*

EX 7 *Every 3rd of four groove*

# IMPORTANT RUDIMENTS

There are many rudiments to learn on the drums, all of which will greatly benefit your time, tone and technique when practiced. Perhaps the most well-known of these is the Paradiddle (R,L,R,R,L,R,L,L) because it covers not only the single stroke roll, but also the double stroke roll, which is one of the most challenging things for a drummer to play. Some other great paradiddles to look up are flams, flamtaps, ramaques, hertas and many others – I encourage you to find and practice as many as you can. Here I've written exercises around the three I've found the most useful: The inverted paradiddle, the double stroke roll and the five-stroke roll.

The Double Stroke Roll – this is something that many drummers get wrong, thinking they can bounce the double stroke instead of learning the correct action. In these exercises we start by exaggerating the louder second note to build the wrist technique and then we ease off with the goal of the pattern sounding as much like single strokes as possible. When incorporated into your grooves and fills, the double stroke can be a very useful tool.

Bpm (♩ = 110)

## EX 8 Building the technique

R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

## EX 9 Flattening the accent

R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

## EX 10 Combining with the feet

R R L L R R L L R R L L .....

## EX 11 Doubles in a groove

L L L L L L L L L L L L



## THE INVERTED PARADIDDLE

I always use this version of the paradiddle to warm up. Not only does it warm up both the single and double strokes, but when applied to the toms it also warms each part of your arm from the shoulder to the wrist. Be sure to apply each of the foot variations (C,D,E,F) to all inversions of the pattern;

Remember – when accenting the first note of each pattern, you can begin your arch during the double of the previous hand for maximum efficiency.

Exercise: Bpm (♩ = 110)

### EX 12 Standard Accented Parradiddle

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

### EX 13 Three inversion of the accent

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

### EX 14 Combining with the feet

#### EX 14A

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

#### EX 14B

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

#### EX 14C

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

#### EX 14D

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

## THE FIVE STROKE ROLL

This rudiment stands out to me as being particularly useful within fills as well as some grooves – we'll look at some of these applications in chapter 5. Remember to keep the doubles at a consistent volume throughout the first four strokes.

Exercise: Bpm ( $\text{♩} = 110$ )

**EX 15** *Accented 5 stroke roll*

R R L L R    L L R R L    R R L L R    L L R R L

**EX 16** *5 stroke rolls over a 4/4 kick*

R R L L R    L L R R L    R R L L R    L L R R L    R R L L R

**EX 17** *Including the left foot*

R R L L R    L L R R L    R R L L R    L L R R L    R R L L R

Kick technique can be a problem for some players as the muscles can be more difficult to isolate than in the arms. In general, try to leave your toes on the pedal and kick with a heel bouncing motion. Whether you dig the beater into the skin with each kick or not is up to you—some patterns use both i.e. samba—but be aware that the note will be more resonant if you release the beater right after impact. This may take some practise!

Heel up/heel down – While you should ordinarily bounce the heel, some styles call for different approaches. I’ve found the heel-up technique most useful for playing heavy metal as it’s fast and loud, while heel down is a much quieter method and is usually more used in jazz and latin music.

**EX 18** *Straight Heel up* (♩=110)

**EX 19** *Sextuplets* (♩=80)

**HEEL UP**

**EX 20** *32nd notes* (♩=80)

**EX 21** *Swung quarter notes* (♩=180)

**HEEL DOWN, PLAY KICK QUIETLY**

**EX 22** *Swung triplets* (♩=110)

## HEEL/TOE

While there is more than one way of playing two kick notes very fast, this technique is the one I've found to be the easiest and least fatiguing.

### EX 23 *Learning the technique* (♩=80)

R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T

### EX 24 *Changing up the hands* (♩=110)

R L H T R L H T R L R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T

### EX 25 *Triplets* (♩=120)

R H T L H T R H T L H T R H T L H T R H T L H T

### EX 26 *Triplet groups of four* (♩=130)

R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T

### EX 27 *Adding the left foot* (♩=130)

R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T R L H T

EX 28

Natural sticking is simply playing an accent with the natural hand, be it right or left. There are exceptions, but you should try to play any accents with whichever hand would be playing them if you were playing 16th notes through the whole bar. Each pattern first plays the accents as they would fall in groups of 16th notes, and then rests on the un-accented notes while retaining the same sticking. The kick drum is played on every quarter note for reference.

The image displays four musical staves, each representing a different drum pattern. Each staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The notes are quarter notes, and accents (>) are placed above the first note of each group of four. Below each staff, the sticking notation is provided, indicating which hand (Right or Left) plays each note. The patterns are as follows:

- Staff 1:** 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a R L L L L R R L R L L
- Staff 2:** 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a R R L L L R R R L R
- Staff 3:** 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a R L R R L R L R R L
- Staff 4:** 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a R L L L L R L R L

## SPECIAL TOOLS

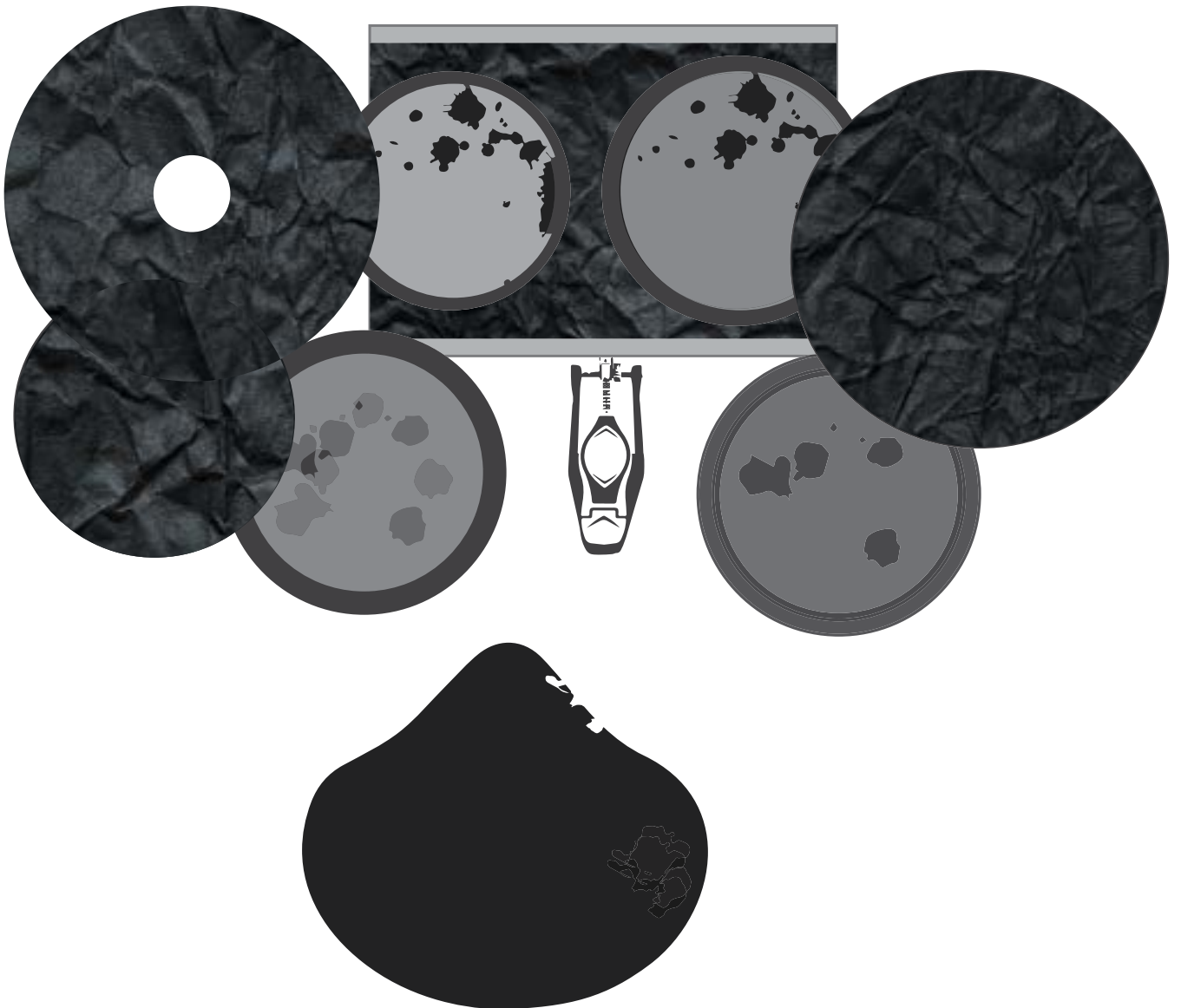
***The Rimshot*** – This is when you play the rim as well as the skin of the snare for extra volume. It's most common in rock drumming, and many recording engineers like it as it's consistent. Try experimenting with the height of your snare drums so you can do them comfortably.

***Finger technique*** – this is useful for when playing extremely fast tempos for longer than short bursts i.e. blast beats. The fingers are your smallest gear, which means that while this can be a very fast technique, it's also difficult to play very loud. You can practice it by holding the stick with your forefinger and thumb and then using your other fingers one at a time to 'sling' the stick. After you've used all three fingers, use them all together.

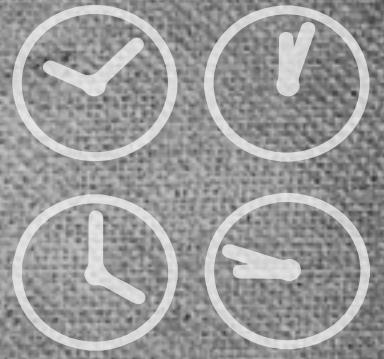
***Push/Pull*** – This is another very quiet technique which has little application. You may hear some jazz drummers use it on cymbals while it typically doesn't occur in rock drumming. There are two movements used; the first is the downstroke – at the end of the downstroke the fingers remain extended and the stick is allowed to fully rebound so that the tip is now pointing up at a 45° angle. The second movement is the extended fingers 'snapping' the butt of the stick back, which forces the second strike.

The movement becomes smaller the faster you get.

***One-handed roll*** – This old trick can be performed on any hard surface, but we usually use it on the snare when applicable. It involves using the rim of the drum to lever the stick up and down (similar mechanics as the push/pull) and is most commonly used in a modern context for gravity blastbeats, which we'll look at in chapter 3.







# CHAPTER TWO

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*INDEPENDENCE*



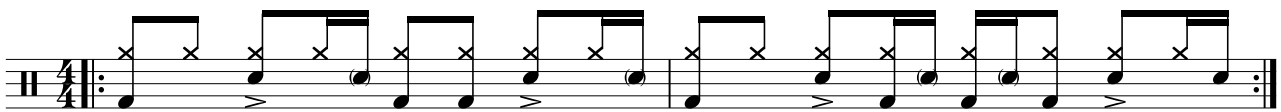
True independence on the drumset means not only playing different patterns with different limbs simultaneously, but also different dynamics. While these independence exercises will extend your drumming vocabulary and help you to develop more creative patterns, just remember to play appropriately, whatever the situation. If extra complexity isn't needed, don't try to force it – but if it is, use these exercises to develop your own ideas to use.

### SNARE IDENTITY

While the normal role of the snare is to provide the back beat, snare ghost notes have become an integral part of a modern drummer's arsenal. Try to experiment when you write your drum parts – ghost notes can be a great way of changing a groove drastically without overplaying or breaking the flow of the song.

Straight ghost notes – The hardest part about these exercises is maintaining a consistent volume with your snare hand while you use the Moeller technique on the hi-hat or ride hand. Once again, if the recommended tempo is too fast be sure to slow it right down.

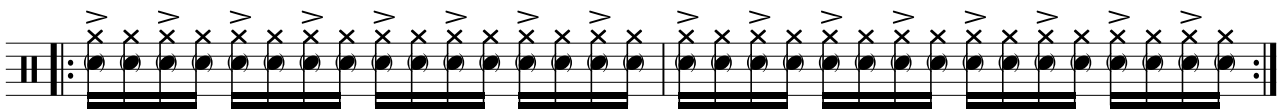
#### EX 29 *Starting to ghost* (♩=90)



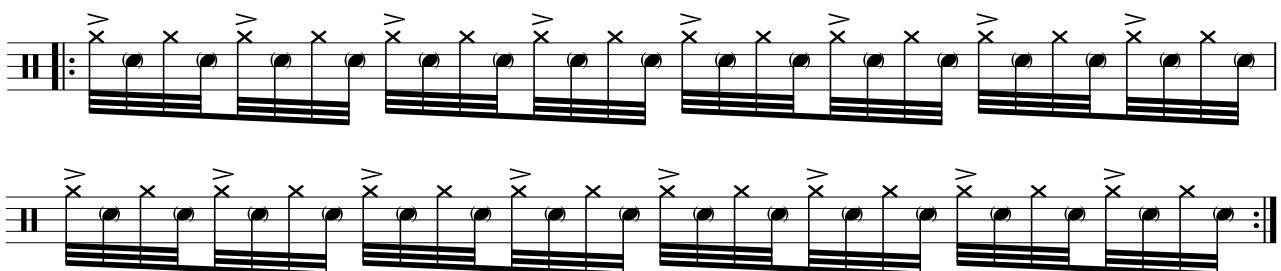
#### EX 30 *Getting harder* (♩=90)



#### EX 31 *Splitting hands* (♩=80)



#### EX 32 *Splitting hands* (♩=80)



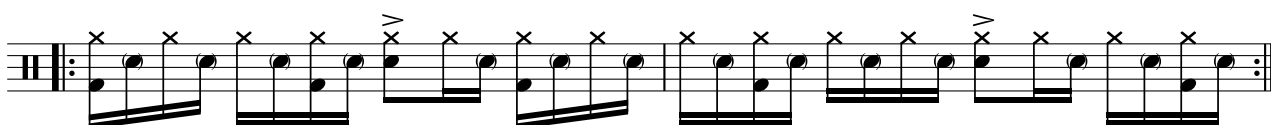
### EX 33 *Right hand variations* (♩=90)



### EX 34 *Adding the kick*



### EX 35 *Ghosting groove* (♩=100)



## TRIPLET GHOSTING

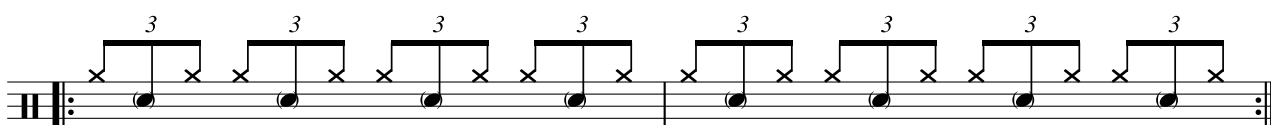
It's always a good idea to practice going between straight and triplet notes at the same tempo. When you do this, you're improving your internal sense of time as well as changing how you subdivide (measure the time in your head) simultaneously. Here we apply it to ghost notes, and it's something you can always try in a 12/8 feel – whether it's anything from swing, a shuffle or a swung hiphop feel.

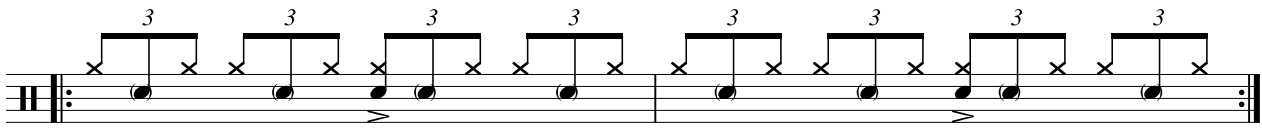
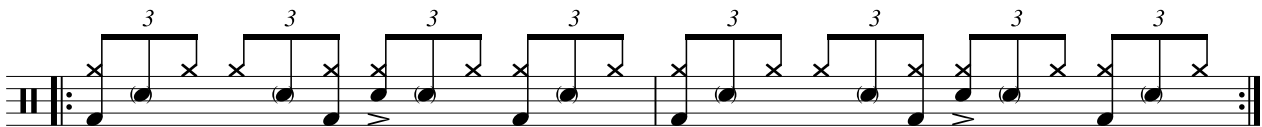
These exercises work towards the halftime shuffle feel, which incorporates ghosting as well as requiring a special technique to accent the backbeat.

### EX 36 *Swing ghosting* (♩=110)

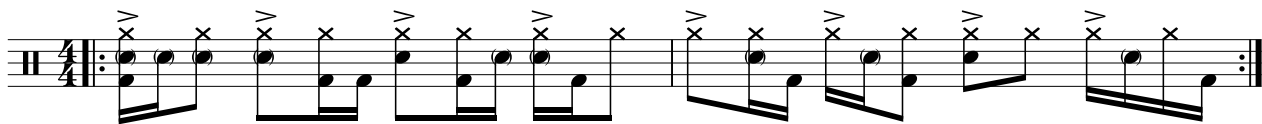
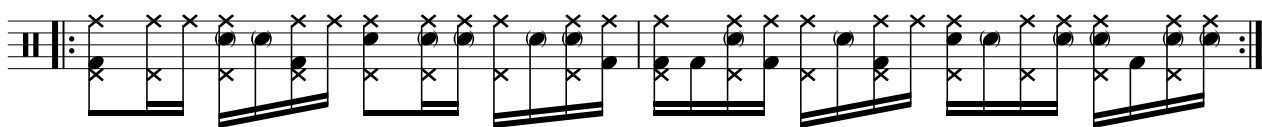


### EX 37 *Filling the gaps*



**EX 38** *Getting the backbeat in***EX 39** *The halftime shuffle***CREATIVE GHOSTING**

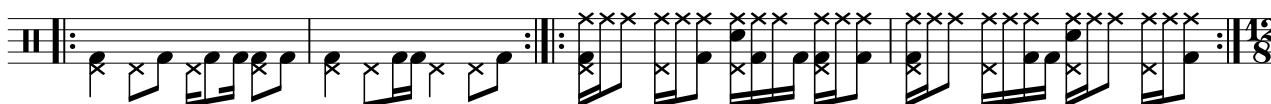
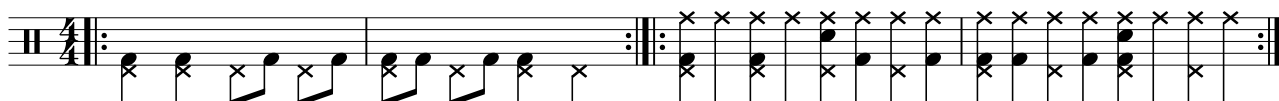
Something you might like to try is placing ghost notes in places they wouldn't normally occur. This can be a great tool for creating cool new patterns, but you could also try to complement a melodic line on the guitar, vocal or keyboard part by copying the rhythm around the backbeat with your ghosting. These exercises not only place the ghost notes in odd places, but also on different drums – this is a great tool to develop.

**EX 40** *Unorthodox placement***EX 41** *Ghosting with the Tom***EX 42** *Four-way independence*

## THE LEFT FOOT

Your hihat foot is great for keeping in time during grooves and fills, but also it can really fill your ride grooves out in the same way a tambourine, shaker or cowbell can – you can almost think of it as having the role of a percussionist. These exercises first work on splitting the feet up and then incorporating the patterns into grooves, while the last incorporates the technique of ‘splashing’ and closing the hihats with a heel/toe motion of your left foot.

### EX 43 *Splitting the feet (J=110)*



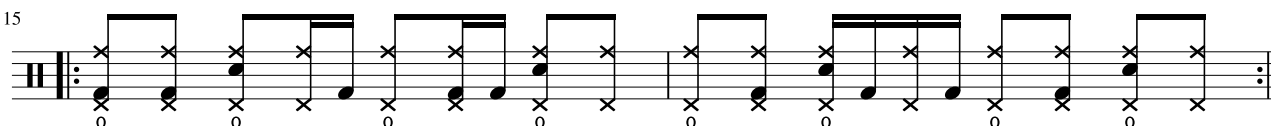
### EX 44 *Getting harder*



### EX 45 *Splitting the feet in 12/8*



### EX 46 *Right hand and foot unison groove*



The concept of limb rapport is that independence is developed to the point where you have more than just different patterns happening with your hands and feet – you can improvise with each limb freely and truly independently. This means thinking holistically about each pattern and how they complement and converse with each other, both with syncopation and dynamics. You should practice each exercise in this book at different volumes, but with these you should challenge yourself by trying each limb louder and quieter, independently for maximum benefit. These are meant to be very challenging, so remember to start where you're comfortable and speed it up just a few clicks at a time.

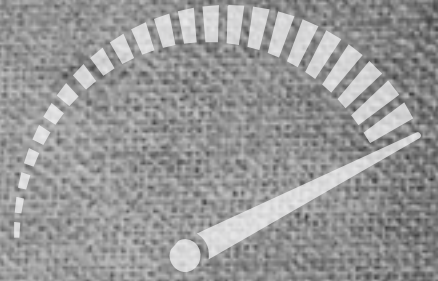
**EX 48** *Separating limbs* (♩=100)

**EX 49** *Samba kick* (♩=80)

**EX 50** *Irregular kick*

**EX 51** *Adding the left foot*





# CHAPTER THREE

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*SPEED*

Speed alone should not be a priority with your playing. As a matter of fact, quite often playing slowly can be just as hard, and some players tend to use speed to cover things like bad technique and a lack of creativity. The reason I have a chapter dedicated to speed is because some of the techniques involved can benefit all areas of your playing – sometimes it's good to have the option to go fast, too!

The biggest barrier most players face is not being relaxed when they attempt to play faster. When you think about the physics of it, when a drummer plays faster, their movements become smaller and more focused. When you apply correct technique, a good warm-up and the right amount of speed-building practise you'll find playing faster easier and easier, but if these important fundamentals are missing you can run the risk of injuring yourself.

## HAND ENDURANCE

Controlled speed in the hands will usually come from a combination of wrist and finger technique. At slower tempos it can be good to practice using only your wrists so you're fully conscious of when the fingers need to become engaged. Employ this method when practicing these exercises, and be sure to play them all at an even volume and then again using accents to 'pump' your hands and help your endurance. Use alternate sticking for each exercise, and make sure you keep pushing yourself to play them faster while staying relaxed (particularly exercise 53)

### EX 52 *Changing gears* (♩=90)

The musical notation for Exercise 52, 'Changing gears', is presented in three staves. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a double bar line. The second staff starts with a measure rest labeled '5'. The third staff starts with a measure rest labeled '8'. The notation features a variety of rhythmic patterns including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and dotted rhythms.

**EX 53** *Adding triplets*

Two staves of music. The first staff contains a sequence of eighth notes grouped into pairs, with a repeat sign at the beginning. The second staff contains a sequence of eighth notes grouped into triplets, with a repeat sign at the end.

**EX 54** *Adding feet*

A single staff of music showing eighth notes with 'x' marks below them, indicating a specific rhythmic pattern or foot placement. The staff begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line.

**EX 55A** *Fast groove*

A single staff of music showing eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. Below the staff is the rhythmic pattern: R L R L R L R L .....

**EX 55B**

A single staff of music showing eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. Below the staff is the rhythmic pattern: R L R L R L R L .....



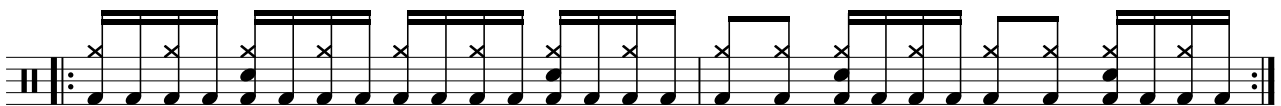
## FOOT ENDURANCE

The same principle applies here; you need to relax in order to play faster. The main difference that I've found is that it's harder to maintain control of the legs (being a bigger set of muscles) and a good way of combating that is by practicing the control required to play in as wide a dynamic range as possible. If you're having trouble, try to play the exercise slower and as quietly as possible.

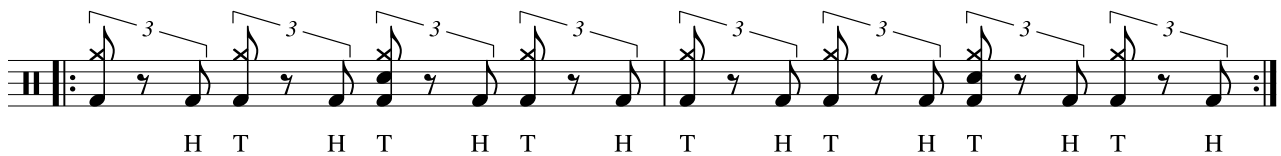
### EX 56 *Right foot solo* (♩=110)



### EX 57 *Kick drum groove* (♩=80)



### EX 58 *Heel toe speed* (♩=120)

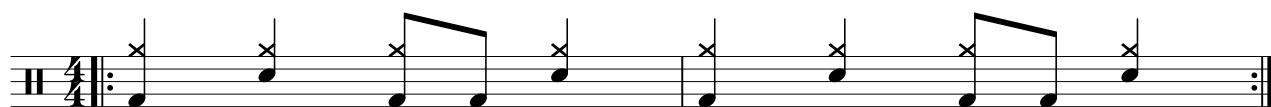


## FAST STYLES

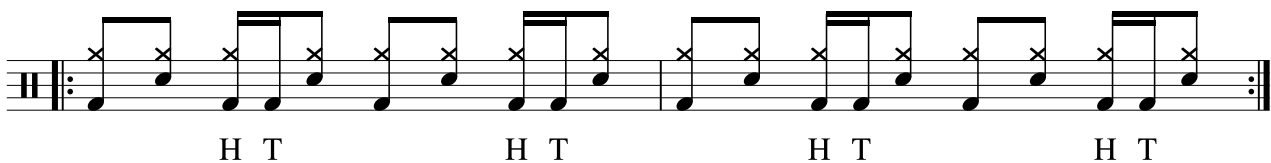
It's always good to practice drum ideas in context, which usually means playing them within a song. Some styles in particular are meant to be played faster than others, so here are a few variations of several of them to help develop your feel at higher tempos. The recommended tempos are not necessarily a good place to start, so feel free to slow them right down. It's just good to have an idea of what to expect!

Punk (2000s)– Made famous by bands such as NOFX, Millencolin, Less Than Jake and Pennywise to name a few, this style of drumming is usually played with a single pedal and can be very demanding on the right foot.

### EX 59 *Heel toe speed* (♩=150)



### EX 60A, 60B & 60C *Variations* (♩=200)



This is known as one of the consistently fastest styles, and a special technique is required in order to play for long sections at extremely high speed. You can hear these grooves in such bands as Dimmu Borgir, Slipknot, Origin and The Black Dahlia Murder. Some drummers prefer to play them with one foot, and some prefer with two. We'll use one foot for ex. 61 and then move to the double pedal for the rest.

When practicing patterns like this at faster tempos, remember to relax. If your shoulder is getting sore, it probably means you're flexing it and straining your arm – you should be using finger technique for these exercises for tempos of 210bpm and faster. Try using the heel up kick technique for this, something to note is that some players prefer to use the Heel/toe technique on both feet for the faster tempi. The 'gravity blast' (ex 65) employs the one-handed snare roll. Refer to the Special Tools section of Chapter 1 for this technique.

**EX 61** *Basic Blast* (♩=110)

**EX 62** *Two foot blast* (♩=200)

RF LF RF LF RF LF RF LF

**EX 63** *Variations* (♩=200)

RHLH RHLH .....

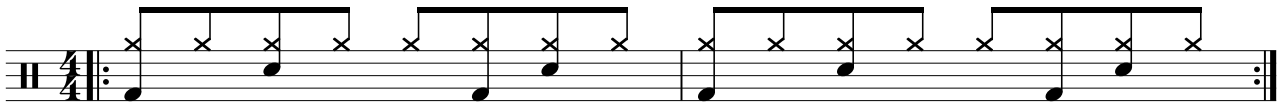
**EX 64** *Variations* (♩=200)

**EX 65** *Gravity Blast* (♩=140)

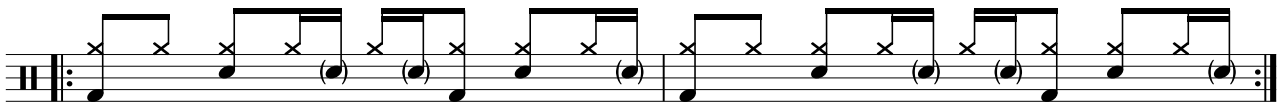
## DRUM AND BASS

Drum and Bass came about through DJs and producers speeding up breakbeats (such as the 'Amen Brother' break). You can try this by practicing ex 66 slowly at first and then speeding it up. The style was originally performed only electronically, but has since been emulated by many great drummers in bands such as Roni Size, Pendulum, London Elektricity, Nerve etc, and can be a lot of fun to play live. Producers tended to duplicate single beats within a bar which creates a 'skipping record' effect. Some people refer to the snare ghosting as 'chatters' in this style.

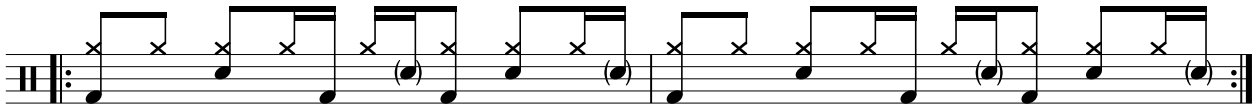
### EX 66 Basic DnB (♩=140)



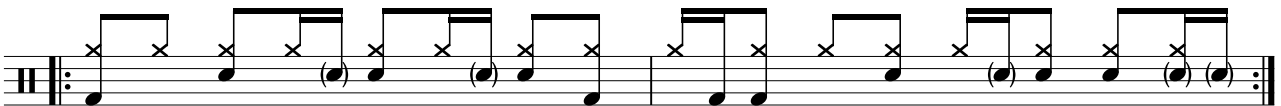
### EX 67A Variations (♩=170)



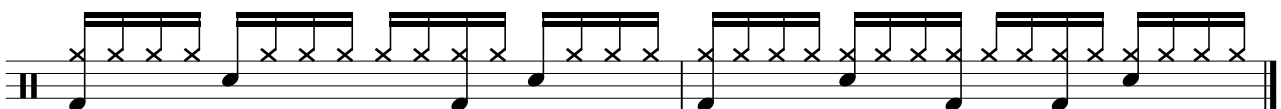
### EX 67B Variations (♩=170)



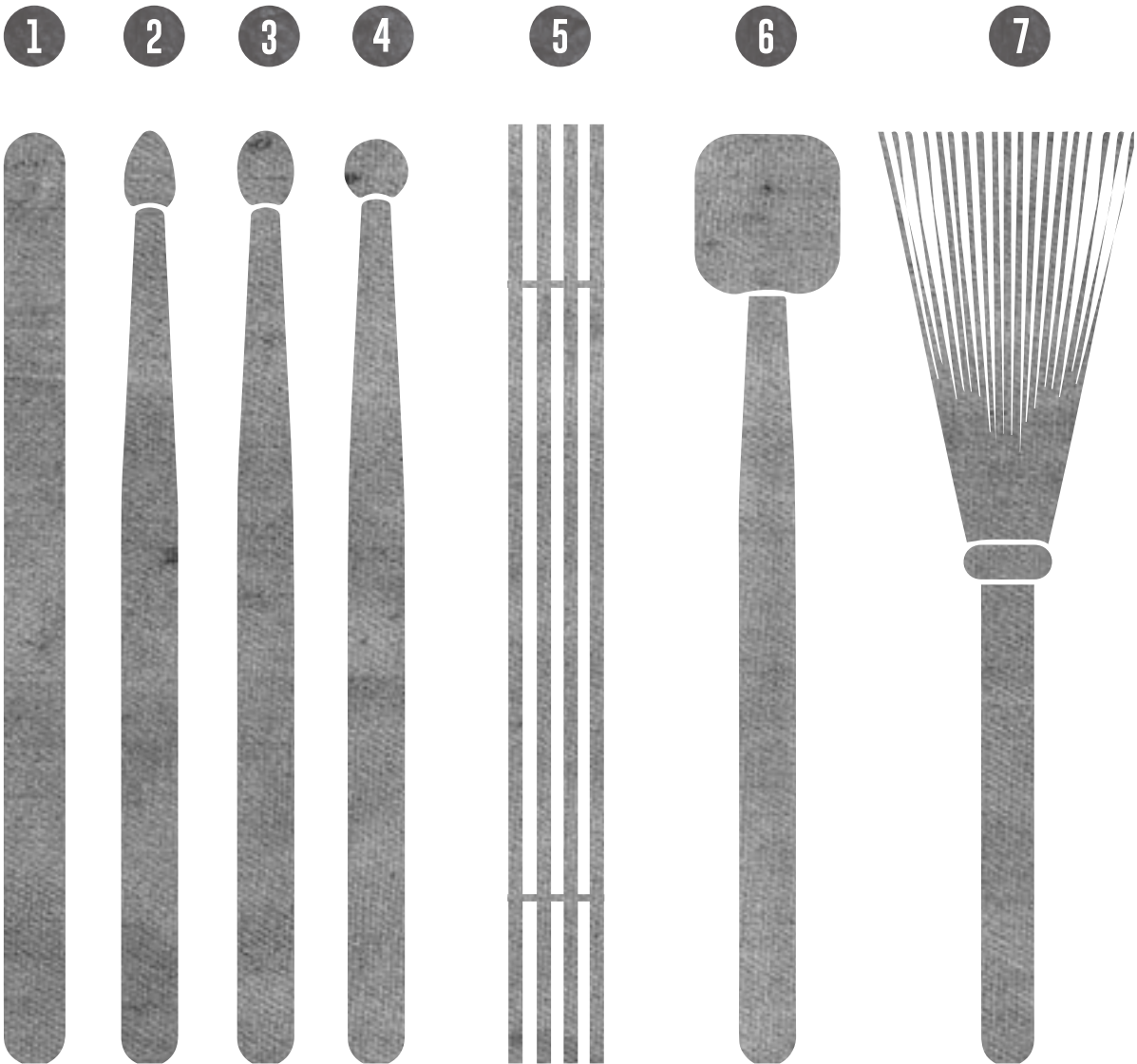
### EX 68 Glitchy (♩=170)



### EX 69 16th note groove (♩=200)

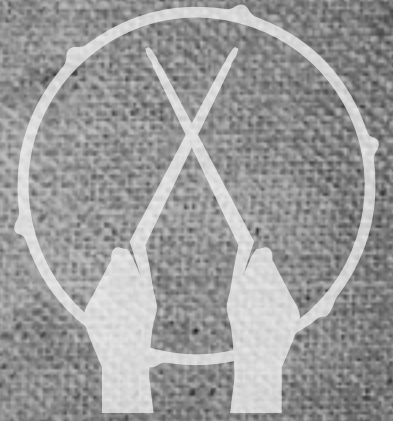


R L R L R L R L .....



- 1: TIMBALE STICK
- 2: TEARDROP TIP
- 3: ACORN TIP
- 4: BALL TIP
- 5: MULTI ROD STICK
- 6: MALLET
- 7: BRUSH





# CHAPTER FOUR

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*CLASSIC FEELS*

Part of improving as a drummer means learning from and playing with other musicians, and if you want to feel comfortable in the rehearsal room and onstage it's important to have some handy go-to patterns memorised. While these grooves only scratch the surface of the styles, they contain the important specific elements which make them most recognisable. Refer to the recommended listening page to hear some great examples, but if you have time you should research these styles as well – Almost every influential drummer you can think of has derived a lot from them.

I should also note that one of the hardest styles I've found is jazz. There are many books and articles on the subject, and it is the most demanding technically and musically. The jazz vocabulary is virtually endless, and a huge range of dynamic capability is required. In saying that, I get a lot of enjoyment from playing any style, and the thing to remember is that apart from keeping time, you're there to have fun!

Check out the downloadable playalong tracks from [themodernbeatofficial.com](http://themodernbeatofficial.com) and put your playing to the test!

## BLUES/SHUFFLES

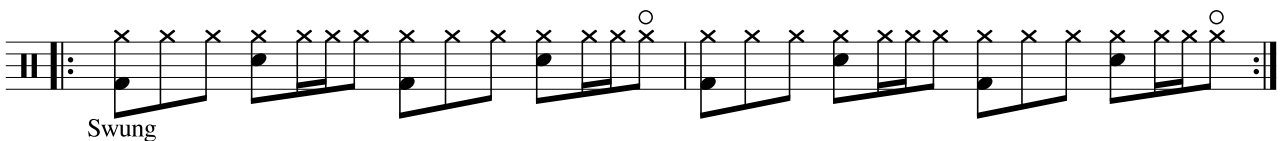
### EX 70 Blues patterns (J. =110)



### EX 71 Blues patterns (J. =110)



### EX 72 Slow blues (J. =60)



# FUNK

## EX 73 *Bouncy hi-hat accent* (♩=90)

## EX 74 *Swung* (♩=90)

## EX 75 *Ghosting* (♩=70)



LATIN

EX 76 Bossa Nova (♩=90)

Musical notation for EX 76 Bossa Nova (♩=90). The piece is in 4/4 time and consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The melody is composed of eighth notes, with accents (>) placed over every other eighth note. The piece begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

EX 77 Mozambique (♩=100)

Musical notation for EX 77 Mozambique (♩=100). The piece is in 4/4 time and consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The melody is composed of eighth notes, with accents (>) placed over every other eighth note. The piece begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

EX 78 Songo (♩=100)

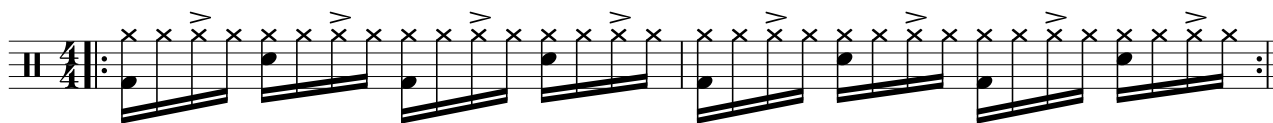
Musical notation for EX 78 Songo (♩=100). The piece is in 6/8 time and consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The melody is composed of eighth notes, with accents (>) placed over every other eighth note. The piece begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

EX 79 6/8 AfroCuban (♩=115)

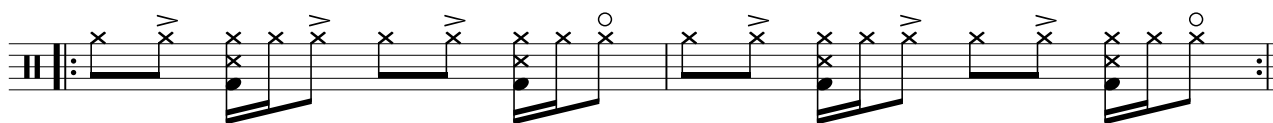
Musical notation for EX 79 6/8 AfroCuban (♩=115). The piece is in 6/8 time and consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The melody is composed of eighth notes, with accents (>) placed over every other eighth note. The piece begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# REGGAE

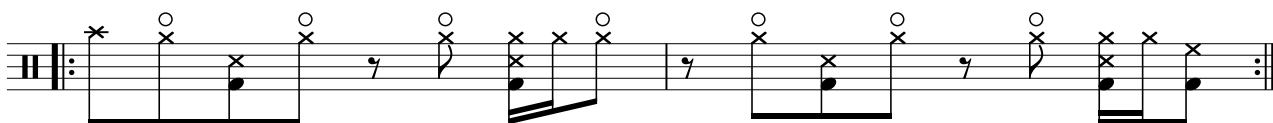
**EX 80** Reggae backbeat (♩=80)



**EX 81** One drop (♩=80)



**EX 82** Early ska (♩=140)



**EX 83** Steppers (♩=140)



ROCK

EX 84 *Beat 101* (♩=100)

Musical notation for EX 84: A 4/4 drum pattern. The bass drum (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The snare drum (top staff) plays on the second and fourth beats. The pattern repeats every four beats.

EX 85 *Moeller right hand* (♩=110)

Musical notation for EX 85: A 4/4 drum pattern. The bass drum (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The snare drum (top staff) plays on the second and fourth beats with accents (marked with 'v'). The pattern repeats every four beats.

EX 86 *The gallop* (♩=120)

Musical notation for EX 86: A 4/4 drum pattern. The bass drum (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The snare drum (top staff) plays on the second and fourth beats with accents (marked with 'v'). The pattern repeats every four beats.

SWING/JAZZ

EX 87 *Basic swing* (♩=110)

Feather the kick drum

Musical notation for EX 87: A 4/4 drum pattern. The bass drum (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The snare drum (top staff) plays on the second and fourth beats with accents (marked with 'x'). The pattern repeats every four beats.

EX 88 *Basic jazz groove*

Musical notation for EX 88: A 4/4 drum pattern. The bass drum (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The snare drum (top staff) plays on the second and fourth beats with accents (marked with 'x'). The pattern repeats every four beats.

EX 89 *Snare comping*

Musical notation for EX 89: A 4/4 drum pattern. The bass drum (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The snare drum (top staff) plays on the second and fourth beats with accents (marked with 'x'). The pattern repeats every four beats.



# CHAPTER FIVE

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*ADVANCED SOUND*

This chapter contains things you should consider learning if you really want to push yourself. As I mentioned in the introduction - flashy stuff (while fun to practice and play) isn't necessarily the best thing to do in a gig situation. If you're going to work on this stuff, make sure the other stuff doesn't go ignored, so your playing can progress in all areas. Something to remember - the flashiest drummer in the world will have trouble getting hired if he can't lay down a beat! And the better you can play that beat the more fun you, your bandmates and your audience will have.

## FILLS

A drum fill is essentially a short pattern or gap in the groove which can introduce the start or end of a section. Some drummers focus on fills before more important things (like time). I used to tell students not to do this, but now I think it's just all part of wanting to explore the instrument and encourage it during personal practise. While they can sound pretty cool, fills can be a time-trap, and we can all be guilty of slowing down or speeding up either before, during or coming out of a fill. A good way around this is to always practice your fills with a metronome. Be very strict on yourself when practicing them and, if you can, record yourself so you can pick up on any bad habits.

Now that I've explained the main function of a drum fill, it's safe to say there really are no limits to what you can do, and this is a great way to express your musical individuality within a song.

Rather than copying and pasting a whole lot of patterns, we're more looking at concepts to try.

## RUDIMENT FILLS

This is a great way to apply rudiments after you've been practicing them.

### EX 90 *Inverted sticking paradiddle* (♩=110)

### EX 91 *Same thing in triplets*

### EX 92 *The six stroke roll*

**EX 93** *Two six stroke rolls*

R L L R R L

**BRIDGING** – It’s a good idea to keep fills short, but if you’re looking for a way to lengthen them or flesh out a solo, here are some good ideas to commit to memory. I look at them like a way of taking a breath before you execute the next idea. Make sure your buzz rolls are nice and even before trying ex 100 and 101 and don’t forget to refer back to the ‘Special Tools’ section of the video to properly go over the technique.

**EX 94** *The left hand double*

R L L R L L....

**EX 95** *Three over four*

R L L R L L....

**EX 96** *Using in a fill*

R L L R R L R L R L L R L L R L R L

**EX 97** *Paradiddle first inversion*

R L R R L R L L.....



**EX 98** *With the left foot*

R L R R L R L L...

**EX 99** *Using in a fill*

R L L R R L R L R R L R L L R L R

**EX 100** *Buzz rolls*

Buzz rolls

**EX 101** *Using in a fill*

## SPLITTING VOICES

This style of fill has become very popular with the advent of modern gospel music. It's a linear style of fill (meaning only one thing is struck at a time) and usually incorporates the kick and hands playing syncopated groups of three or four 16th notes. Again, it's very important to practice these with a metronome. These exercises can be difficult as we'll be using the left foot to reference the time. As a sidenote, this kind of fill can sound especially cool when you experiment with playing groups of three notes in a 16th note rhythms and groups of four notes in triplet rhythms, (as in ex 106) and changing where you start and finish the fill (as in ex 107).

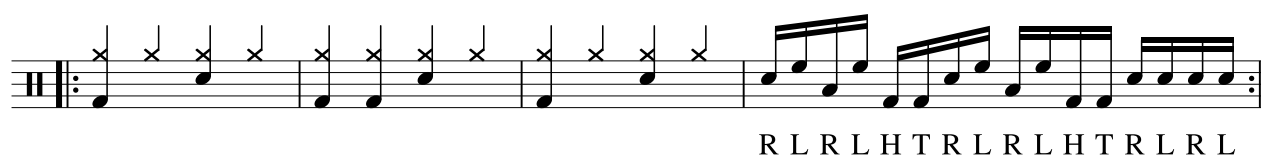
### EX 102 *Hand/foot combination*



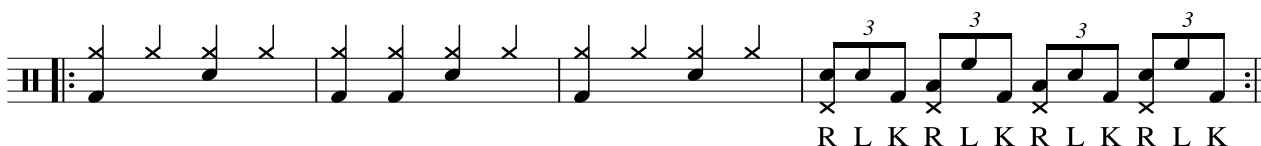
### EX 103 *Using Heel/toe*



### EX 104 *Splitting the hands*

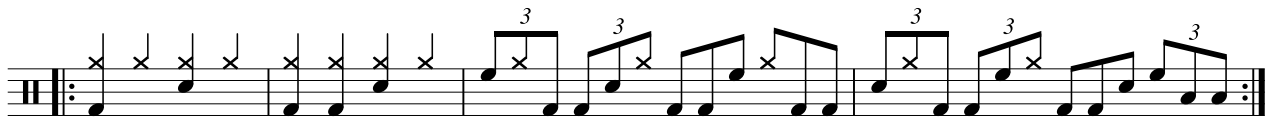


### EX 105 *Split triplets*





**EX 106** *Groups of four in triplets*



Musical notation for EX 106, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a repeat sign. The notation consists of four measures. The first two measures contain eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. The last two measures contain eighth notes with '3' above them, indicating triplets. The notes are: Measure 1: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth; Measure 2: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth; Measure 3: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth; Measure 4: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth.

RLHTRRLHT<sup>3</sup>RLHT<sup>3</sup>RLHTRRLHT<sup>3</sup>RLRL

**EX 107** *Starting before the beat*



Musical notation for EX 107, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a repeat sign. The notation consists of four measures. The first two measures contain eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. The last two measures contain eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. The notes are: Measure 1: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth; Measure 2: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth; Measure 3: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth; Measure 4: quarter, eighth, eighth, eighth.

HT RLHTRHTRLKRLKRLH T

# POLYRHYTHMS AND ODD METERS

## POLYRHYTHMS

A polyrhythm is any instance where more than one meter is being played simultaneously. There are lots of ways to do this, but we'll be looking at what I would consider one of the more musical applications – playing odd time phrases over a 4/4 meter. While this has been happening for a long time in jazz and latin music, over the last couple of decades it has become more popular in heavier music, thanks to bands such as Meshuggah, Mnemic, Cloudkicker and Periphery. What we'll be striving for is playing a polyrhythm but feeling 4/4 as our main pulse.

Like a lot of things in this book, we just scratch the surface of this technique. Working at it will improve polyrhythmic independence and your overall sense of form within a structure. The first set of exercises (108-111) looks at playing the first of every three 16th notes within a four-bar phrase (3 over 4), while the second set (112-116) looks at playing the first and third 16th note of every five (5 over 4), and then gives some variations.

Try to come up with your own variations with groups of 5, 6, 7 and even 9, and apply them using the same methods.

### EX 108 *Three over four*

Do the same four phases with 5 and 7

R L R L R L R L....

### EX 109 *Variation 1*

### EX 110 *Adding a backbeat*

**EX 111** *Eight notes on the right hand*

**EX 112** *Five over four (notes 1 and 3 of every five are accented)*

17

R L R L R L R L R L....

19

**EX 113** *Variation 1*

**EX 114** *Adding a backbeat*

**EX 115** *Quarter notes on right hand*

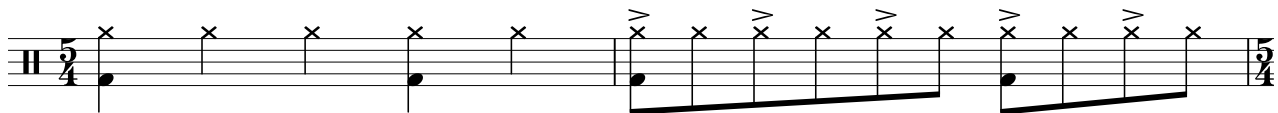
**EX 116** *Variation 2* (♩=120)

## ODD METERS

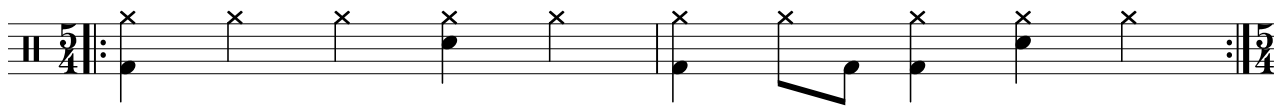
Playing in an odd meter is playing in any time signature that has an odd number in each bar, such as 5/4 or 7/8. The fact that 3/4 is used quite commonly (waltzes etc) means that it isn't typically referred to as an odd meter.

They're not common (particularly in pop music) and for this reason they're not considered especially vital for many drummers. I personally think that while it's often not a particularly musical approach to write a part in an odd meter for the sake of it, they can be quite fun to play, and some interesting patterns can be applied to the grooves which make for challenging practice.

### EX 117 *Basic 5/4* (♩=140)



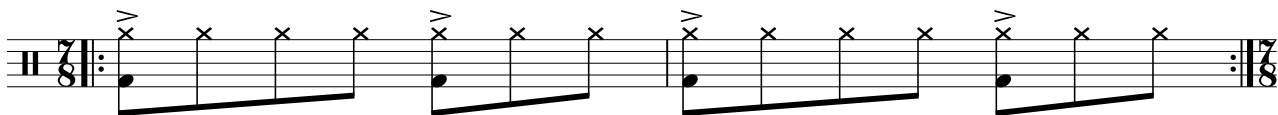
### EX 118 *Variation 1* (♩=140)



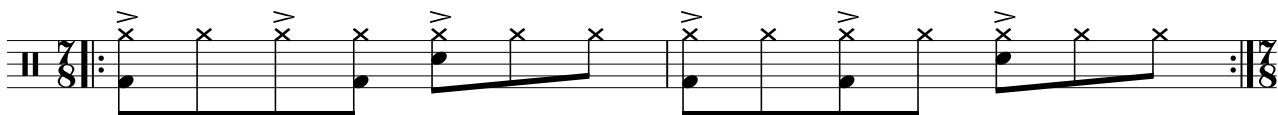
### EX 119 *Variation 2*



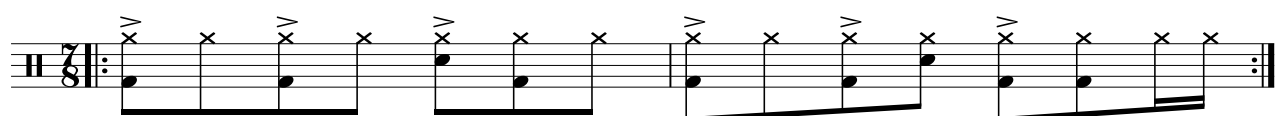
### EX 120 *Basic 7/8*



### EX 121 *Variation 1*



### EX 122 *Variation 2*



The term 'groove' can informally mean two things when referring to drummers. The first is what you'd call a particular beat i.e. "Play that groove from Rosanna" and the second is how good a drummer can make that beat sound i.e. "She's got such great groove, I love jamming with her!". The term 'focused groove' refers to the latter meaning.

Typically, good groove comes down to three things; a developed sense of time, the subdivision within each beat (let's call that microsubdivision), and dynamics between each of the limbs.

We've been addressing the issue of time since you began this book – it can be helped by practicing every exercise with a metronome. Assuming you're going to keep doing that, let's move on to the next two points.

Micro-subdivision is the method of playing in time while fractionally moving individual notes within each beat. Sometimes this can give the impression you're either speeding up or slowing down, but you're really doing neither. Most people refer to this as playing either forward or back on the beat. Another effect you might observe is for the beat to sound slightly 'wobbly'. Some drummers who tend to play in this style are Daru Jones, Chris 'Daddy' Dave and George 'Spanky' McCurdy. Many producers utilise the ability to move programmed drumbeats in microsubdivisions too – listen to J Dilla and Flying Lotus for some good examples.

An excellent way to develop this sense is to start by practicing with the metronome playing every 16th note beat. Record yourself if possible, and then listen back - if you're playing any notes not exactly with the metronome then you need to go over the pattern again. When this starts to get more comfortable (it may take a while) you can intentionally place some beats a little out from the click i.e. you can try to play the snare backbeat a little later, between beat 2 and the second 16th note. Repeat this exercise until the space between the 16 notes feels bigger and bigger. You can apply this method of practise to each of the following exercises. They aren't especially technical, this is because you need to improvise with one limb at a time. When you do this, you need to make absolutely sure the other three limbs remain steadily in time with the metronome.

When it comes to inter-limb dynamics, you can improve by varying both volume and rhythm while improvising on each individual limb. As before, you need to record and check back to make sure your volume is unaffected on the other limbs. The variations are prompted in the first four exercises, but again make sure you apply the same method to all of them.

**EX 123** *The Money beat* (♩=80)

adlib with right hand

adlib with right foot

adlib with left hand

**EX 124** *16th note money beat*

**EX 125** *Including the left foot*

**EX 126** *Improvising within a groove* (♩=100)

I hope you've enjoyed reading what I have to say – make sure you subscribe to our youtube channel and website [themodernbeatofficial.com](http://themodernbeatofficial.com) so you don't miss out on any other lessons!

Bye for now

**TOM PIERARD**



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