

A FRESH APPROACH TO THE  
**DRUMSET**



**A DRUMMER'S GUIDE TO:**

Rock Beats and Fills • Hand & Foot Technique • Coordination and Independence • Reading Music •  
Understanding Song Construction • R&B, Jazz & Latin Styles and more!

BY  
**MARK WESSELS**  
with **STANTON MOORE**



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# A FRESH APPROACH TO THE DRUMSET

BY MARK WESSELS *with* STANTON MOORE

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## *Introduction*

When I set out to write this book, my number one goal was to include EVERYTHING a drummer needs to lay a solid foundation for future success. As any experienced drummer will tell you, becoming a great musician always comes back to the fundamentals – whether you want to play rock, funk, jazz, country, metal or Latin music!

In my own teaching studio, I had 5 or 10 methods that I used with my students, each containing some nugget of content that made it indispensable. But the frustration I had was in the planning and pacing of all that material. Each aspect of what I taught – technique, independence, musicianship, reading, grooves, fills, styles – could easily take over if I wasn't careful. The question really wasn't what my students needed to learn, but how much – and when?

That's why it's taken many years to plan and write this book. The goal since the beginning has been to successfully mix the building blocks of fundamentals with learning to play in all of the essential styles. Also, I wanted to have hip sounding "music-minus drums" tracks on each lesson that immediately applied the fundamentals to having fun playing music.

As you flip through the pages, I hope that you'll see that it's not just for beginners! There's enough material and concepts here to keep you busy well into the advanced stages of your drumming career.

I think you'll find that working through this book will be fun, motivating and rewarding. I wish you the best on your musical journey!

– MARK WESSELS

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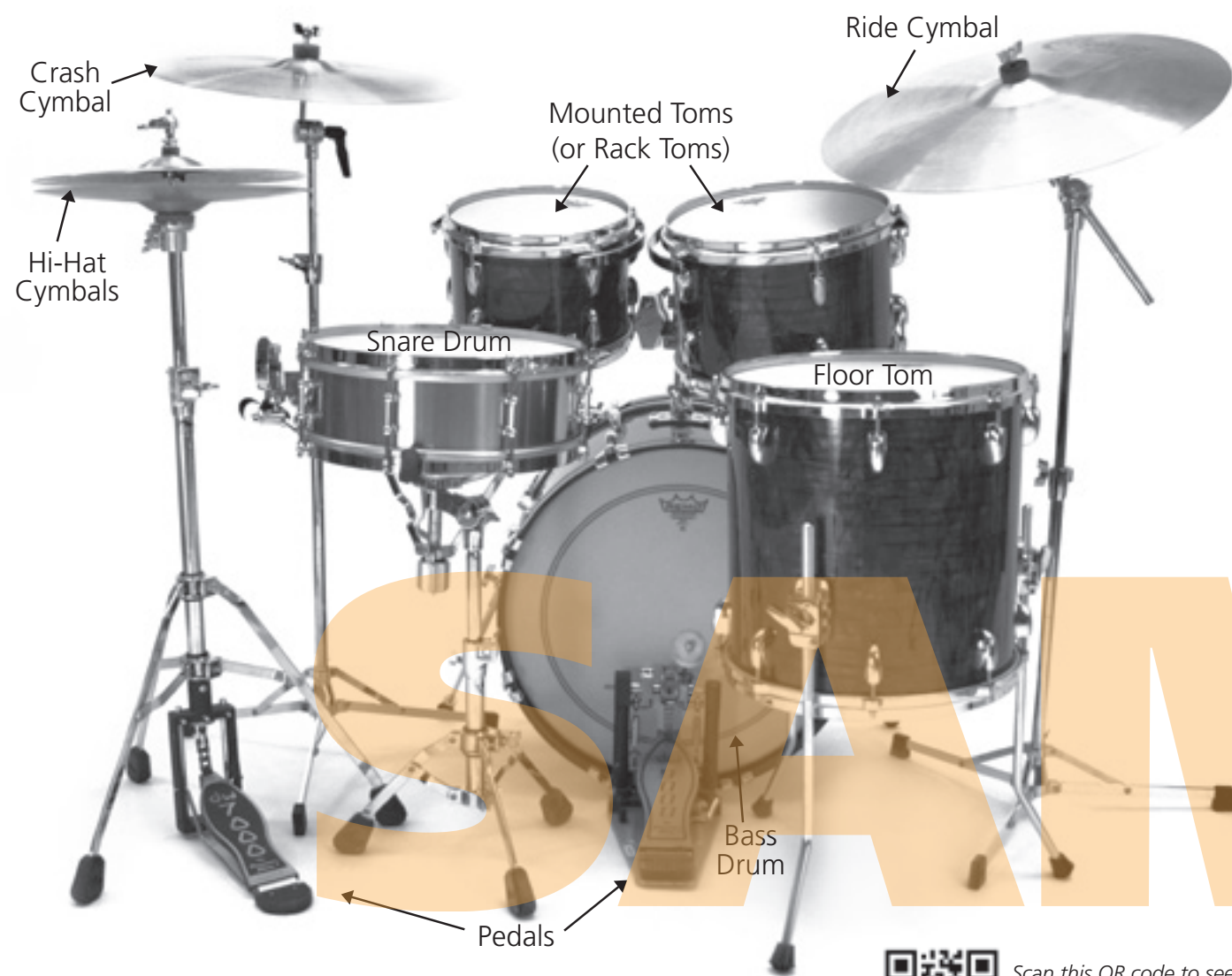
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# Learn About Your Instrument

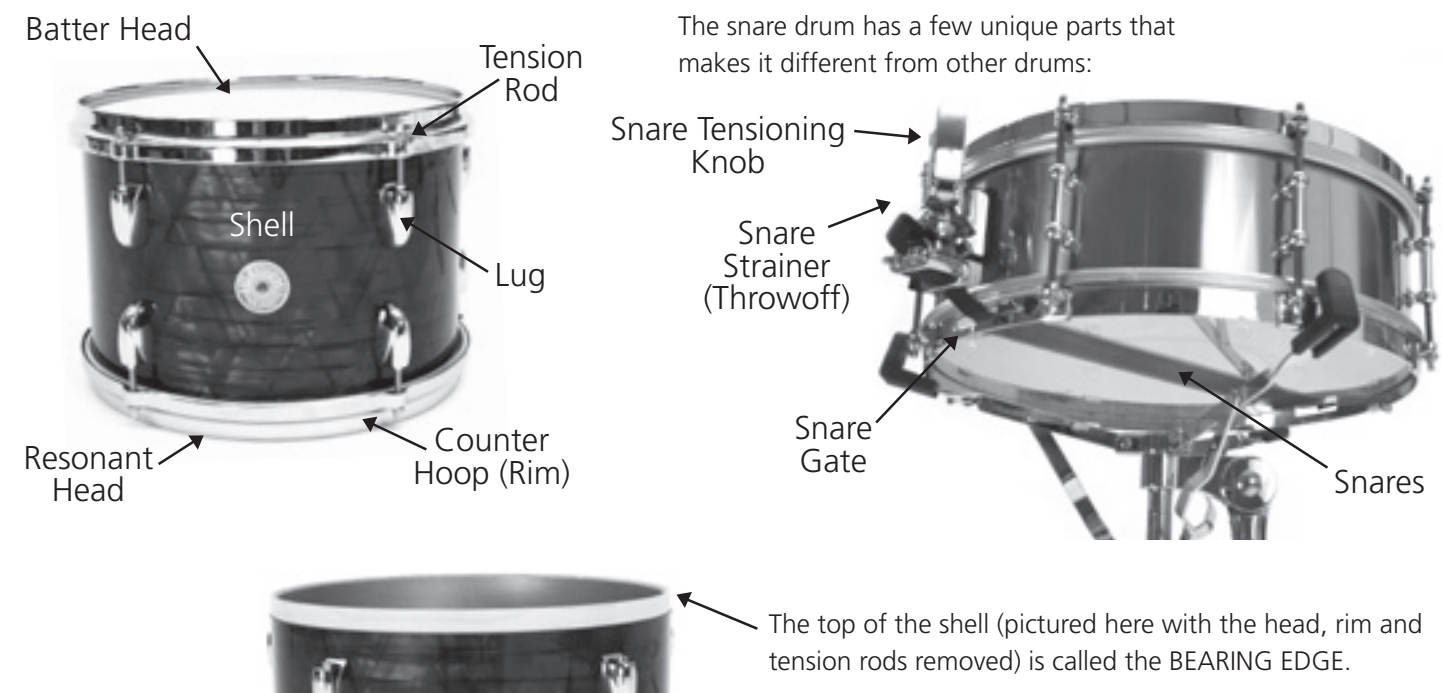


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## The Anatomy of a Drum

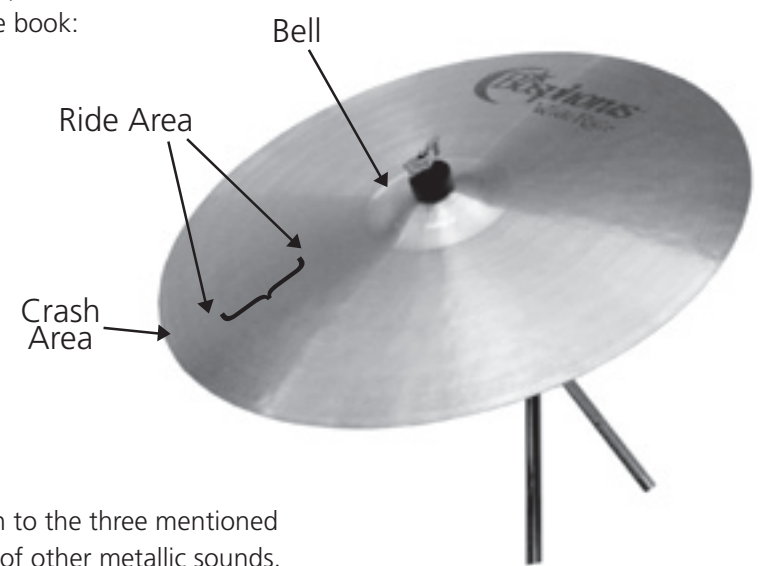
Most drums have many similarities in how they are constructed, even though the look of each component will vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. It's important to know all the various parts of a drum.



## Cymbals

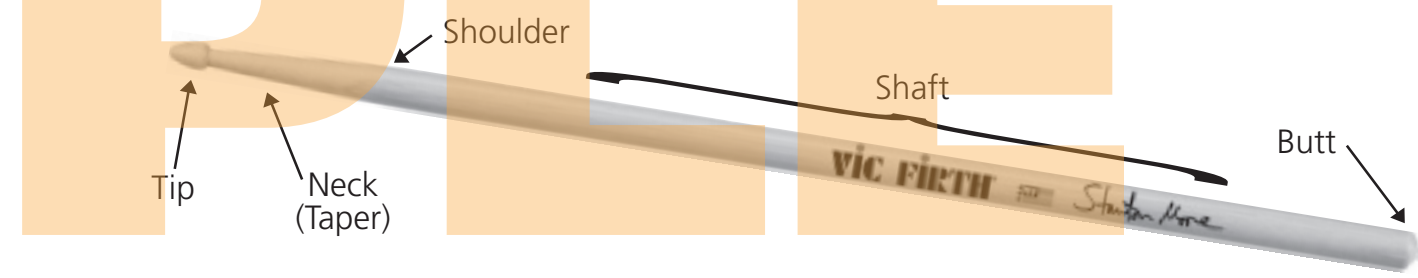
While the drums are the heart of the drumset, the cymbals provide the color. There are 3 general areas that we'll refer to throughout the book:

- RIDE:** The ride is the largest and heaviest of the three. Generally, you'll play time-keeping patterns on the ride cymbal.
- CRASH:** These are smaller, thinner cymbals that you'll use to "punch" parts of the music.
- HI-HAT:** The hi-hat cymbals come in pairs and you'll play them with either your foot (via the hi-hat pedal) or your hands.



There are many other types of cymbals available in addition to the three mentioned above – chinas, sizzles, splashes as well as a dizzying array of other metallic sounds.

## Drumsticks



Without a pair of great sticks, you'll have a difficult time learning to play the drumset. Two of the most popular drumset sticks are the 5A (for rock, country, jazz or Latin) and the 5B (for heavier rock styles). It's a good idea to start with one of those two models, then experiment with others based on your desired musical style and feel.

A perfectly matched pair of sticks will give you the best chance of success when learning to play the drums.

While a stick is the most common implement used to play the drums, it isn't the only tool available. Scan this QR code to learn about brushes, mallets and other great options!

## Hearing Protection



It's a fact of life that drums are loud, and if you play for any length of time you WILL damage your ears. For the health and safety of your hearing, it's highly recommended that you purchase some good ear plugs or isolation headphones to protect your hearing BEFORE you begin playing!

## Metronome

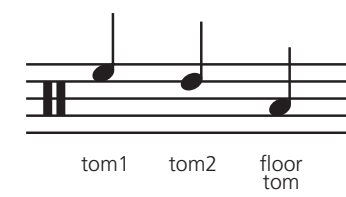
The most important role of the drummer is to provide a steady beat. A metronome is a device that gives us a steady pulse that we can use to develop better "time." If you're not playing along with a CD or play-along track, use a metronome whenever possible.



# The Toms



As you learn to play the toms, it's important to stay relaxed, using as little forearm motion as necessary. These exercises incorporate the first three RUDIMENTS around the snare and toms. Start slowly and practice with a metronome, striving for an even, relaxed stroke.



## Singles

## Doubles

## Paradiddles

## Extra PRACTICE

Practice each of the exercises above with foot "patterns" to help develop coordination and independence.

# Beats Using the Toms



\* RH moves from the ride to the floor tom

\* RH plays the 8th note ride on the floor tom

# Technique Focus: Multiple Bounce Roll

Learning to produce a multiple bounce on each hand is the crucial first step in learning to play a drum "roll."

In one motion, strike the drum and add a slight amount of pressure in the fulcrum to push the stick into the head. As the stick bounces, RELEASE the pressure to lengthen the bounce.

After you've developed long, sustained multiple bounces on each hand separately, play ALTERNATING bounces.

Start with slow 8th note bounces, making sure that the end of each bounce overlaps the beginning of the next.

# "JUNGLE DRUMS"



In the first half of this tune, you'll "ride" on the floor tom while you move the left hand around the other drums. The second half is played with the shaft of the stick on the ride cymbal for a trashy-metal sound.



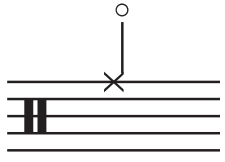
Music uses DYNAMIC MARKINGS to tell you how loud or soft to play. This tune uses two:

**f** - FORTE (loud)      **mf** - MEZZO FORTE (medium loud)

## Open Hi-Hat Sounds



To produce an open hi-hat sound, raise the left foot enough to open the cymbals, allowing them to vibrate against each other, producing a "sizzle." The open hi-hat sound is notated with an "o" above the note.



The open hi-hat is usually played with the shoulder of the stick.

The following exercises will help you to learn the foot independence required to play open hi-hat sounds. Be sure that all the limbs hit precisely together on the closed (left foot) hi-hat.



1 a b c d

2 a b c d

3 a b c d

4 a b c d

## 8th Note "Combos"

Each one of the measures below can be played as its own beat by repeating it over and over – OR, you can come up with beat variations by combining different patterns. Don't forget to add open hi-hat sounds!

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

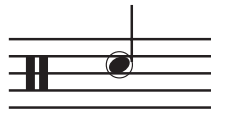
### Extra PRACTICE

There are lots of ways to expand on the "Combos" concept to create new grooves and feels. Experiment with your own ideas!



### Cross-Stick

A "cross-stick" is a snare sound that's often used to mimic a woodblock or clavé. Lay your left stick across the drum with the butt end hanging off about 3-4 inches. With the tip of the stick resting on the drum, lift the butt and strike the rim.



## "SP4 GAMES"



The "C" time signature is another way of notating 4/4 time. This is referred to as "common time."



(A) VERSE

(B) CHORUS

(C) VERSE

(D) CHORUS

## New Rudiment: Five Stroke Roll

The 5 stroke roll consists of two doubles and a downstroke, alternating from hand to hand. To begin, practice the 8th note "roll skeleton" in the first measure (1 & 2 3 & 4), then double the 8ths in the second.

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

Double strokes or double bounces are usually notated with a SLASH through a note.

The 5 stroke roll can also be played with MULTIPLE BOUNCES. Multiple bounces are sometimes notated with a "Z" through the stem.

R L R L R L

### Extra PRACTICE

Other roll rudiments you may wish to learn at this point are the 9, 13 & 17 Stroke Rolls. You can find a complete list of rudiments on page 102 in the back of the book.

# Syncopated Beats



Here are a few examples of beats that have a more "syncopated" feel than typical 2 & 4 backbeats. Try accenting the downbeats in the right hand hi-hat – or play with a quarter note hi-hat pattern.



"SYNCOPIATION" is an accent or emphasis on a note that is not usually stressed. Accenting the upbeat would create a syncopated feel.

# Syncopated Combos

You can come up with lots of syncopated grooves by combining measure (A) BEFORE one of the numbered patterns below, or by combining measure (B) AFTER one of the numbered patterns.

## Extra PRACTICE

Add open hi-hats, play quarter note ride patterns, or move the RH to the ride and play quarters with the hi-hat!

# Technique Focus: Single Hand Accent

You can apply single hand accents to the STICKING PATTERNS on page 18 to create syncopated rhythms and fills.

# "SYNCO de MAYO"



This tune includes a "Bridge" and "Outro." Read about these important song form elements in the Glossary on page 105.



The bell of a cymbal is often notated with a triangle shaped note head. In a "Latin" sounding tune, you can also substitute a cowbell for the ride bell.

# Syncopated 16th Note Beats

Adding left hand accents on the alternating 16th hi-hat pattern can create syncopated variations on the beats that you've learned in the previous lessons. To get a more syncopated sounding groove, keep the hi-hat soft and



snare drum accents loud. It may be helpful to practice with both hands on the snare drum so you can focus on playing strong accents and soft inner-beats.

**Extra PRACTICE**

To create hundreds more grooves like this, use an alternating 16th note ride pattern on the "16th Beat Combos" on the previous page.

To add a new sound to your syncopated 16th note beats, try moving your left hand to the snare drum. Also, try playing 8th note hi-hats with your left foot.

# 16th Open Hi-Hat Combos

Practice each of these patterns slowly until each limb hits precisely at the same time on the left foot closed hi-hat.

After you're comfortable, add each hi-hat combo on count one of these simple beats – then create your own!

# Technique Focus: Independence

Here are two new ways to apply the STICKING PATTERN exercises to continue to develop independence between your hands and feet:

**1** Play the sticking pattern between your hi-hat and snare. Add the bass drum in unison with your RIGHT hand.

**2** Add the bass drum to the LEFT hand notes.

**Extra PRACTICE**

For more practice, alternate between the two exercises – bass drum along with your right hand one time, then along with your left the second (without stopping between patterns).

Add your left foot on all the downbeats – or just the 2 and 4 back beats.

# Syncopated Fills



You can combine an almost infinite number of 16th/8th rhythm combinations to come up with your own syncopated fills. Here's a few 2 count examples to get you started.

# Style Essential: 16th Note Funk



Keep the hi-hat soft and relaxed and line up the snare and bass drum notes with the 16ths. The groove in the B section moves the right hand to the ride bell and the left hand to the snare to create a busier feel. You can also try adding left foot hi-hats playing quarters or 8ths.



### 8th Note Triplets in Quarter Time

An 8th note triplet is defined as "three 8th notes in the space of two."

In quarter time, 8th notes subdivide the beat into two parts (there are two 8th notes per count):

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

8th note TRIPLETS would subdivide the beat into THREE parts (three 8th notes per count):

1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a

Practice this exercise to learn to space 8th notes and 8th note triplets evenly:

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a

### Style Essential: The Shuffle

The Shuffle, like the 2 beat, is a groove rhythm that has been adapted to many musical styles. The shuffle rhythm is built upon the 1st and 3rd note of a triplet:

Practice this exercise on your right hand, then with the left. As you speed up, "whip" the wrist for the accent.

### Shuffle Grooves

The key to playing a great shuffle is in the feel – not the notes! The only way to master this style is to spend time listening to great shuffles by the masters! Shuffles by the legendary B.B. King are a great place to start.

### "T-BONE SHUFFLE"

A melody (2xs) B guitar solo (4xs) C melody (2xs)

### Technique Focus: Swing Sticking Patterns

To reinforce the shuffle rhythm, try playing all the sticking pattern exercises you've learned with a swing feel.

For example, a paradiddle sticking becomes:

R L R R L R L L

### Style Essential: Texas Shuffle

The Texas Shuffle uses a dotted 8th/16th rhythm instead of a triplet. This "delayed" double beat gives it a more laid-back feel than a typical triplet shuffle. Work towards getting a tight spacing of the double beat, with as loud of a backbeat rimshot as you can on the whip stroke! Listen to the music of Stevie Ray Vaughn for some great Texas Shuffles.

intro melody guitar solo (2xs) melody 10 more

### Style Essential: Rock Shuffle

A rock shuffle is usually played with a heavy quarter note ride, with the bass drum and snare implying the shuffle rhythm. The ghost note after beat 1 and 3 provides a busier feel to the groove, which helps to propel the motion.

### "ZZ SHUFFLE"

(Guitar) Groove Play 4 A Play 16 B Play 16 1, 2. (Guitar) Fill Groove 3.

## More Complicated Ensemble Figures

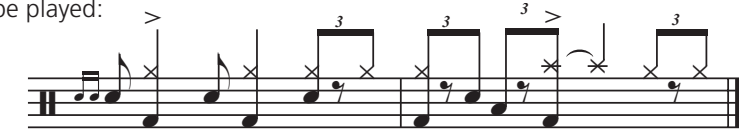


Providing a setup for an ensemble entrance is just one of the drummer's roles in a jazz setting. Usually a chart will also include important ensemble figures as well. It's the drummer's job to "catch" these figures – by either comping under the ride (with the snare and/or bass drum for example), or by playing fills to set up and 'punch' syncopated figures.

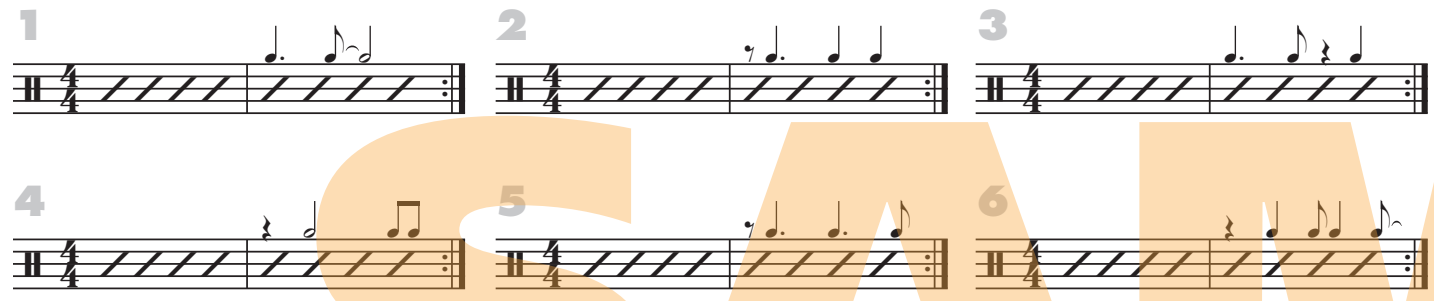
For example, this figure:



Might be played:



A drummer can choose to catch just a note or two of the figures or play driving fills around all of them – it all depends on the dynamics, orchestration, feel and style of the music. Practice catching these figures at various tempos and dynamics:

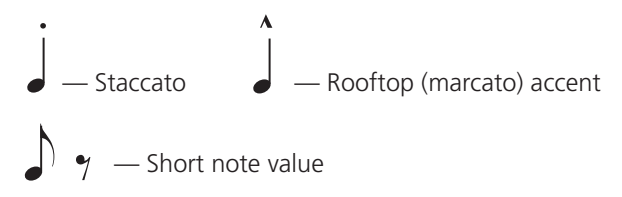


### Ensemble Articulations

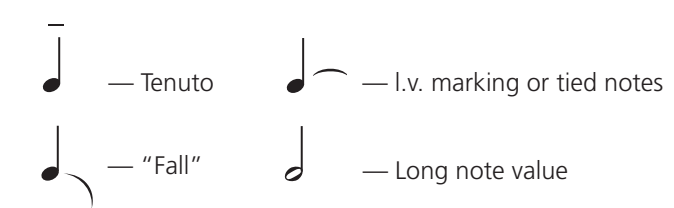
A good jazz drummer will try to match note lengths (articulations) and sounds of the ensemble with the sounds on the kit. If the ensemble plays a short, "staccato" articulation, the drummer should match that note length (playing a rimshot, drum or choked cymbal). Long note lengths will be played with long sounds (cymbal crashes). Low and high sounds can be orchestrated on the kit as well.

Here are some examples of articulations that may be notated in ensemble figures in the drum part:

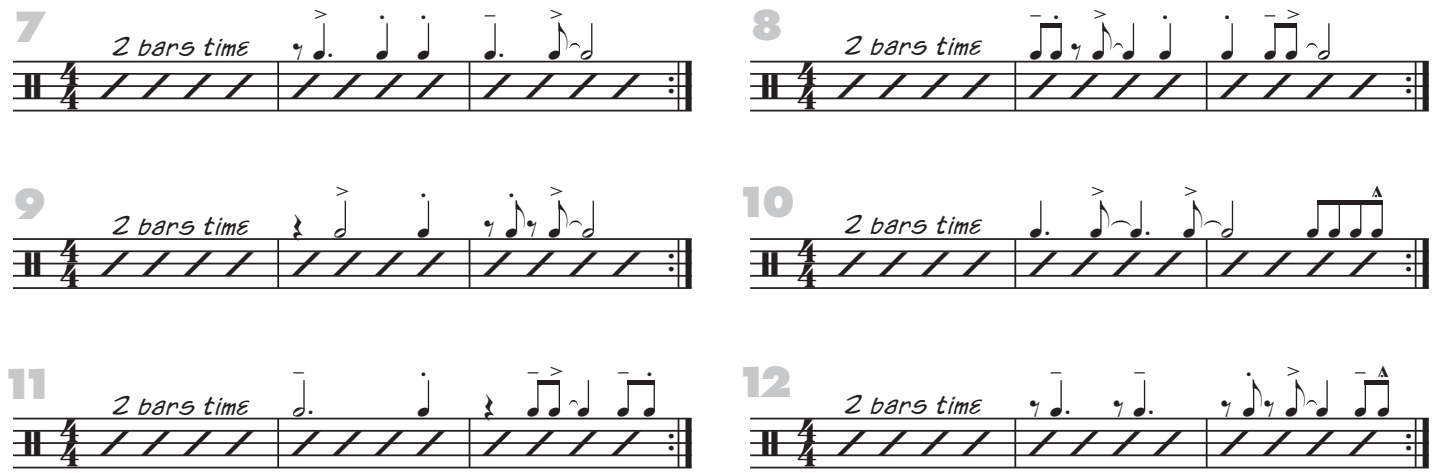
#### Short articulations:



#### Long, sustained articulations:



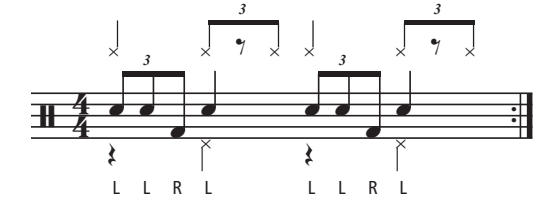
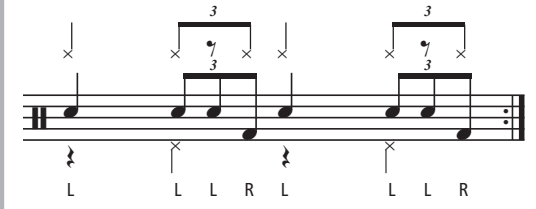
Practice singing these ensemble figures with the correct articulation before you work on catching the rhythms:



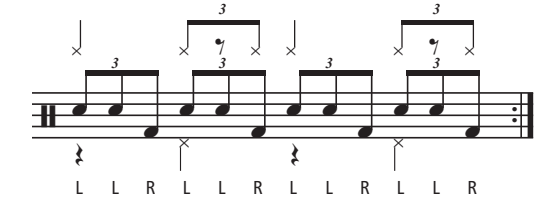
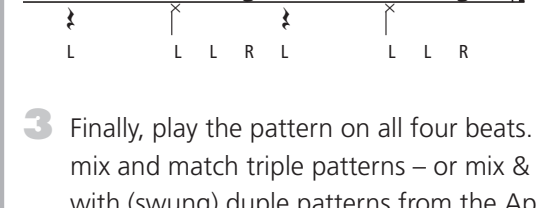
### Technique Focus: Sticking Patterns

Apply the triple sticking patterns from Lesson 21 to the jazz ride – substituting the right hand for the right foot.

1 First isolate a sticking pattern on count 1 and 3.



2 Next, move the same pattern to count 2 & 4.



3 Finally, play the pattern on all four beats. After you're comfortable, mix and match triple patterns – or mix & match triple stickings with (swung) duple patterns from the Appendix on page 98-99.

### Jazz Chart Reading: Small Group



The chart below contains many common elements to a small group setting: An intro, the "head" (the melody), and an open solo (where one or more musicians may take a solo). In the head, decide whether to "catch" all the figures, just the accents or none at all – it completely depends on the intensity of the group and your personal style!

#### Medium Swing

*mf* (pno. solo)

*f*

*mf* (fig. 1st x only)

(8) *D.S. al Fine*

(8) *(cresc. 2nd x only)*

**D.S. AL FINE** Repeat back to the Segno (sign) and play to the **Fine**.

## Style Essential: Jazz Waltz

The Jazz Waltz is played with a triplet subdivision in 3/4 time. The ride does not follow a set rhythm, but freely improvises – often as a steady quarter note pulse, with added upbeat



8ths in various places in the bar. Practice these waltz ride patterns with the play-along tracks, then freely combine them until you can improvise your own ride pattern.

After you're comfortable with the ride, you can add hi-hat chicks – improvising between any combination of beat 2 and 3. Start by playing each of these separately with the ride patterns above, then begin to experiment with various combinations.

### Extra PRACTICE

Experiment with left foot hi-hat "splashes" in the place of the regular "chick" sound. To play a hi-hat splash, flick the pedal with the toe and immediately release the pressure so the cymbals are allowed to ring.

A typical bass drum pattern in the jazz waltz emphasizes the first beat of the bar. Try adding these bass drum patterns to the ride and hi-hat combos above:



Finally, you can add comping rhythms in the left hand. Here are a few examples:

### Extra PRACTICE

You can also apply the comping patterns from Lesson 26 in a jazz waltz by omitting the 4th beat of each measure.

## "SPRINGTIME WALTZ"



Keep the feel relaxed and light on this jazz waltz. Experiment with various ride and hi-hat patterns, but always keep the feeling in three.



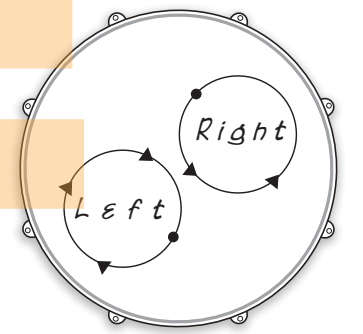
D.S. AL CODA Repeat back to the Segno. When the CODA sign is reached, jump to the coda at the end.

\* After the 2nd time, repeat back to the SIGN (S) at B, play 12 bars, then jump to the CODA (C) on the last line.

## Technique Focus: Brushes

While brush playing can take years of study, every good drummer should at least know the basics in order to play jazz ballads.

- 1 Start by slowly sweeping the left hand in a clockwise circle pattern until you develop a smooth, legato sound. Use a full arm motion with no wrist turn.
- 2 Set a metronome on 50. Start in the 4 o'clock position and repeat the circle pattern with one rotation per beat. Experiment with "pushing" the brush into the head on each downbeat slightly, creating a smooth legato pulse.
- 3 Repeat steps 1 and 2 on the right hand, using a COUNTER-clockwise motion. Push the brush into the head at the 11 o'clock position to create a pulse. Put the hands together, moving in opposite directions. Think of both hands coming towards the body on each beat.
- 4 The right hand can play rhythmic pulses (such as the standard jazz ride pattern) by either pushing the brush into the head or by lifting it off the head and gently tapping. Experiment playing various rhythm patterns with the right – while always maintaining a consistent, legato sweeping motion in the left.



## Style Essential: Jazz Ballad



In a jazz ballad, the drummer is responsible for creating a hypnotic brush groove – usually with a light 2&4 hi-hat. You can add color to the sound by playing hi-hat splashes with the left foot, or by using brushes, sticks or mallets to play swishes or rolls on the cymbals. Never lose sight of your fundamental role as the drummer: to lay down a relaxed, legato groove.

## Brazilian Styles: Bossa Nova



The smooth, lyrical nature of the bossa nova was popularized in the 1960's. While still rhythmically active, the drumset in the Bossa Nova is much more subdued than in other Latin

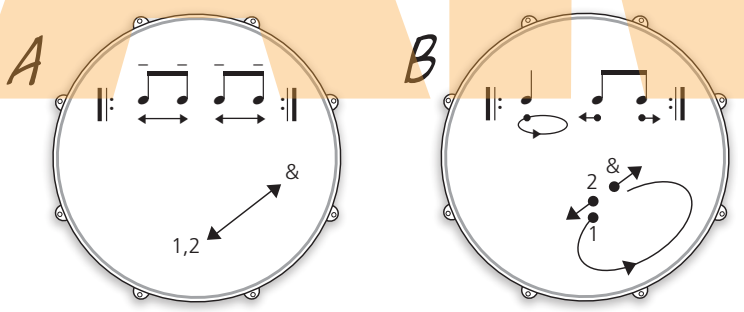
styles. Antonio Carlos Jobim, who was one of the most prominent Bossa Nova composers at that time, wrote one of the most recognizable bossas: "The Girl from Ipanema."

The bossa nova has an easy 4 feel, with a light hi-hat and repeated bass rhythm. Also practice with the ride cymbal, adding light 2 & 4 hi-hat chicks.

The left hand in the bossa nova primarily plays a standard cross-stick pattern, although it can vary the rhythms – similar to jazz comping. Start with these two standard left hand patterns, then begin to experiment by improvising other rhythms.

Because the bossa nova is a light, subtle groove, it's also common to play with a brush in the right hand.

You can produce a legato, swishing 8th note ride by moving the brush back and forth (fig A), or you can create a pseudo shaker sound by tracing a small circle on counts 1 & 3, with glancing sideways strokes on "2 & and 4 &" (fig B). When you're comfortable with the brush motion, add the LH cross-stick and bass drum.



### "Bossa Breeze"



### Technique Focus: Independence

You can apply the STICKING PATTERNS on page 18 to the bossa nova foot pattern. Work through each pattern slowly, making sure that the limbs hit precisely together.

## Brazilian Styles: Samba



The Samba is most closely associated with the Carnival festival in Rio held each year the week before Lent. Since a group (Escola de Samba) in the parade can have hundreds of

musicians, the Samba is a much heavier rhythmic, percussive style than the bossa nova. In the samba, the drumset is used to replicate the sound of traditional instruments.

While there are many types of samba styles – from light, almost "bossa sounding" styles to parade style Batucadas, the common element is formed from a definite 2 feel. The Surdo (bass drum) emphasizes this feel with an open tone on 2.

The right hand mimics a Ganza (shaker) part with either straight 8ths on the hi-hat, or (in the case of faster sambas) a quarter/8th pattern.

The left hand can play a variety of Caixeta (wood block) rhythms beneath the shaker/surdo part. In slow to medium tempo sambas, the left hand typically plays a cross-stick. In faster sambas, the left can improvise on the snare.

Since there are such a large number of instruments in the Bateria (percussion section), the drumset player has a lot of freedom to improvise various ride and hand-to-hand sticking patterns. Here are a couple of examples:

### "Escola de Samba"



This tune has a medium tempo samba feel. Stay relaxed and keep a light two feel throughout.

# APPENDIX

Reading

## ISOLATED RHYTHMS

A B C D  
E F G H  
I J K L  
M N O P

## READING EXERCISE

## 2 SURFACE READING

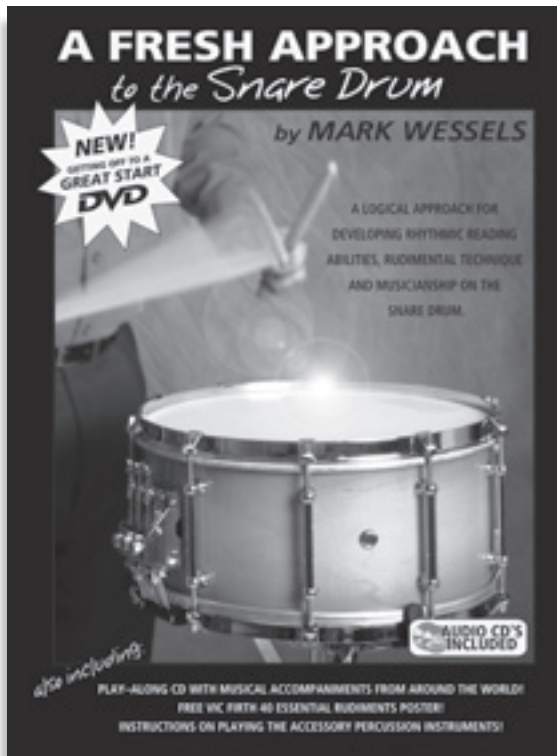
## ISOLATED RHYTHMS

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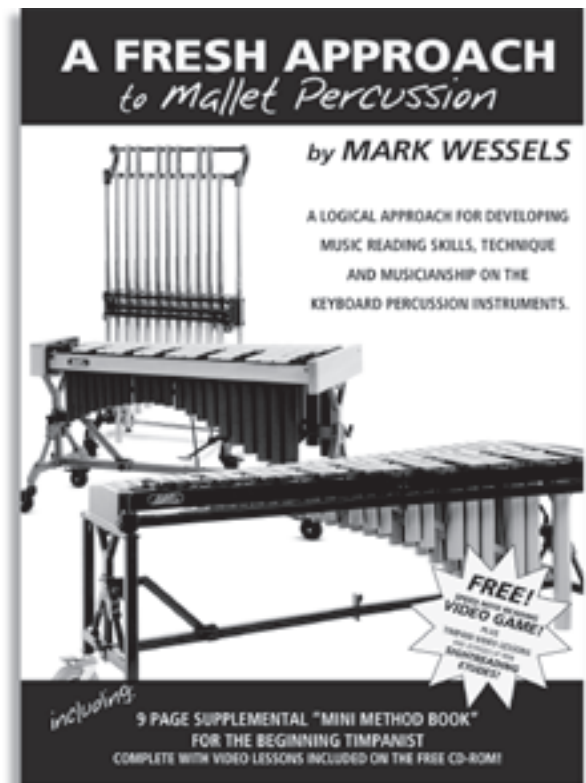
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