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# Tips for Percussionists

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# Sub Please! With The Works Baby!

by Jeff Salem

**N**othing is more satisfying than sinking your teeth into a delicious submarine sandwich loaded with all your favourite toppings when you crave a sub sandwich. I guess a bandleader can look at requiring a sub drummer in the same fashion. They will want someone who is loaded with all the great toppings, such as learning the tunes properly, playing the gig great, showing up on time, wearing the right clothing, etc. Let's have a look at what makes a great sub drummer and all the steps at being able to be called for gigs on a regular basis as a sub.

In my 20 years of performing professionally, I have had a chance on several occasions to be hired as a substitute drummer performing with rock bands, tribute acts, wedding bands and duets playing hand percussion. I have found that following the topics and guidelines below, you will put a smile on any bandleader's face. Bon appetite!



**MATERIAL:** This is the most important step. When you accept a gig, find out the group's song list ASAP. Ask the bandleader if he or she would have charts, CDs, MP3s or live video and recordings of their songs. If they don't have charts, I like to make road maps of all the tunes especially when I am not familiar with them. Also, I like to mark down the tempos of the songs and bring my metronome on the gig just so I can use that as a reference for tempos. Many drummers do this even if they are not a sub. A good example showing the use of a metronome on a performance is the drummer Abe Laboriel Jr. performing with Paul McCartney on the "Live 8" DVD that was released last year. Abe has the metronome up against his ear when he is counting off the tune "Helter Skelter". So you can see this is very important that we play songs at tempos the artist wants.

**REHEARSAL:** Sometimes the artist will want to rehearse and this is a great way to break the ice before the gig and get to know the other musicians and work out all the details before the gig. Make sure you show up to the rehearsal prepared knowing the songs. If time doesn't allow for a full band rehearsal, I like to do a talk through about the songs, endings, beginnings and which member is going to cue me, etc. I have sometimes done talk through rehearsals over the phone.

**EQUIPMENT:** This is an important part that drummers sometimes forget. The appropriate equipment necessary depends on the type of gig you will be performing. You don't want to bring a 24-inch bass drum with six toms and a gong to an intimate restaurant gig where most of the tunes you will play are with brushes and the stage is about the size of your bed. I have different sized drum kits for different genres of music as well as for the size of the room I will be performing in. Some of you will only own one kit and that is perfectly fine just as long as you are aware of the gigs you accept and if you feel your equipment is right for the job and that includes having the right tools for the gig. As well, ask if you need to bring microphones. I usually have my own bass drum microphone that I bring on gigs. You should also have a good range of various stick sizes as well as brushes for different musical styles.

**ATTIRE:** Many drummers forget about the importance of this aspect of the gig. Most of us probably practice in track pants or shorts and forget how to play if a suit or Tuxedo is required. One band I work with uses different colours every night. When the bandleader e-mails me a title that just says "Black", that's the colour for the night, if "Blue" is in the title and I don't have any blue clothes, I will purchase them. So remember that when accepting a gig, you must accept all responsibilities for it and know that you might have to invest a little in it as well.

**LOCATION:** Always find out the exact address, directions and load-in requirements. Most large hotels do not like to see drummers hauling their gear through the front door as the bellboy is assisting a guest checking in. Ensure that you know of an alternate entrance to the stage if there is one available.

**RELIABILITY:** This is almost as important as the performance itself. Find out what time you have to be there and be on time! We are not all perfect and certain circumstances beyond our control will allow us to fall behind, such as traffic, weather conditions, etc. In a situation such as this, make sure that you have the bandleader's cellular number if they have one as well as the venue's telephone number to ensure that a message will be delivered.

**PERFORMANCE:** This is where it all comes together. Make certain that you are prepared for the gig and know all the material that is being performed that evening. Be confident and most importantly, have a great time!

*Jeff Salem is a freelance artist who performs with various bands and conducts drum clinics at local schools sponsored by Yamaha, SABIAN, Vic Firth, Latin Percussion(LP), Mountain Rythm, Evans Drum Heads, Real Feel Pads and the music store Drummer's Choice. Jeff is currently busy operating his own teaching school Jeff Salem's Music Studio. For more information, please visit his school's Web site at [www.jsmusicstudio.com](http://www.jsmusicstudio.com) and his personal one [www.salemtdrum.com](http://www.salemtdrum.com) or e-mail him at [jsalem@sympatico.ca](mailto:jsalem@sympatico.ca).*

# Interdependence/Ambidexterity

by Gregg Bowman

**H**ere's some practical advice to help you understand interdependence and ambidexterity and hopefully make your practice easier. Interdependence is the ability to play different rhythms simultaneously and somewhat independently of one another in a musical situation, or for coordination development. Drummers are always talking about improving their independence on the drums when in effect they are developing their interdependence.

Drummers who are able to perform or demonstrate totally independent and unrelated rhythms together at the same time are extremely rare. Most examples of this type of ability that we have seen in past performances have actually been interdependent rather than truly independent. There are many drummers known for their amazing interdependent abilities: Jim Chapin, Gary Chester, Vinnie Colaiuta, Terry Bozzio, Thomas Lang, Marco Minnemann, Carmine Appice, Mike Mangini, Billy Cobham, Virgil Donati, and there are many more. Some brilliant practicing methods/books have been developed by a few of these players to help us improve our own interdependent skills.

There does exist a relationship between interdependent rhythms. When time and note structures are mathematically broken down into very small increments they will then be able to be aligned properly and practically with rhythms being executed by the other limbs. Some of these rhythms are very complex (polyrhythms), but when broken down into smaller segments you can see how they interrelate with one another, and this will assist you when practicing. In our minds we need to be able to actually see and picture where our limbs need to be placed in relation to one another in order for us to practice our interdependence efficiently and receive good results for our time. Interdependence exercises must be practiced slowly and in a relaxed manner. You will only become frustrated if you attempt to practice them any other way. There is a saying I have been beating my students over the head with for years: "the slower you practice, the faster you get, sooner." Kind of trite I know, but it's true and will positively influence your progress.

To quote from Jim Chapin's famous book on jazz interdependence: "when practicing let your limbs fall into place without being forced." This is absolutely essential and will help you to gain solid development and mastery in interdependence. Gary Chester's books *The New Breed* and *The New Breed II* are great studies! The first book is a more practical direction and application. *The New Breed II* is very complex and is quite possibly a next-to-lifetime study. These are books that require discipline and the investment of time. Always well worth it. You can't rush interdependence.

I have been working on the development of my own book called *Practical Interdependence* and will use some examples from it in a future article, presented in an easy to understand and useable fashion unless I decide to present it in an entirely complicated and unmanageably complex way for the extremists! Hmm, if I make it simple I will have the extremists on my back and if I make it nutz I will have the normals on my back. Ok, it will be in Phoenician tablature, that way no one will understand it and I can relax. I am not the best person in the world to be talking about normal. Ask around. I think I just went off on another tangent. Where am I? Oh yeah ... I'm feeling the insatiable need to link ambidexterity in with



interdependence as they are both related. A little like aberrant mountain folk.

Ambidextrous control is the ability to play rhythms on the drumset using both sides of your body and, with practice, being able to lead from either side, right or left, at will in a musical fashion when the situation presents itself. Practicing to strengthen and gain control with your weaker side is a little frustrating at first, but if worked on slowly and methodically it will happen and your coordination will increase. It is possible for us to work on ambidextrous control without getting into heavy interdependence but not really the other way around. Working on strict interdependence will include ambidextrous movement. If this is confusing to you please e-mail me, and I will explain it in more detailed fashion.

To start on your development of ambidextrous control the easiest way is to simply take any beginning or intermediate drum book/method, a good one to start with is *Realistic Rock* by Carmine Appice. Starting with the easiest exercises at the beginning, work your way SLOWLY through each exercise switching every R for a L, or L for a R, depending on which is your weak side. Obviously, if you own a double pedal it will be easier for you to switch bass drum limbs, but if you don't you will have to move the bass drum over into a more efficient position for your weak limb. You will, of course, need to move the hi-hats over as well. This is frustrating, I know, but this is what you need to do. It is imperative that you practice slowly and in a relaxed manner using proper form at all times. Practicing to gain ambidextrous control is another form of practice that shouldn't be rushed, as it can be very frustrating if you push yourself to excel too quickly.

Don't be lazy! Send me any questions that you have and I will do my best to answer them!

*Gregg Bowman has been very busy over the past months involved in high-end business endeavours and projects with Roger Nichols and Carmine Appice, as well as working on the formation of a Contemporary Christian R&B band with plans to tour the former Soviet Union. As well, Gregg has been working on two book projects for publishing and is soon to be genuinely labelled as "Carmine Appice's protégé." Gregg can be reached at [greggbowman@hotmail.com](mailto:greggbowman@hotmail.com) and looks forward to any questions or comments you might have. Website coming very soon...*

# Preparation

by Brent Fitz

I had the recent opportunity to join Alice Cooper as his drummer for some tour dates. Though I had to jump off tour from my current gig with Theory Of A Deadman, the guys were understanding of me taking the gig, and since it was only for a short fill-in, they welcomed me back to the tour. I want to share with you how I prepared for this experience...

My first step was obtaining all the songs I needed to learn for Alice: 27 to be exact (yikes!). That works out to over an hour and a half show non-stop. Did I mention that there wasn't much time, if any, to rehearse with Alice's band? I was expected to come in and nail it. I was in the middle of a tour myself, but luckily had a few days off (which I spent at home on my practice kit) getting the show together. I was able to get a copy of a recent live show from Alice's soundman. Since we're both Mac laptop users, he was able send me the needed songs using iDisk. Sure made it easier, considering he was on tour in Sweden with Alice, and I was somewhere on tour in the US. I also went online to iTunes and downloaded all the studio versions of the songs (most of which I already owned on CD, but wasn't at home to import them into my laptop). I started doing a little extra research by checking out YouTube (very useful) for some older video footage of Alice. I wanted to really study the drummers that had come before me, such as Neal Smith, a very innovative drummer. Check out this live footage of "Billion Dollar Babies": [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht6pSQNauNA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht6pSQNauNA).

One thing I'm adamant about is song tempos. I've been using a click track (Tama Rhythm Watch) for a long time both live and in the studio. I made sure to document all the studio tempos of Alice's original recordings, and then checked them to the live tempos – just for reference. That way, I knew where the songs were now tempo-wise, if different from the original recordings.

Since Alice's gig involves playing songs that I didn't originally record, I



took no license in changing a lot of drum parts, especially since they're classics! I always make a point of mapping out songs with some sort of chart (recommended), and include any specific beat patterns to refer back to as I practice along. Note: when I toured with Vince Neil (from Motley Crue) a few years back, I would often hear comments from fans that they thought it was cool that I played Tommy Lee's parts almost exact to the recorded versions. Hey, I'm a fan too, that's the way I'd wanna hear it! Check out some great drumming by Tommy on "Kickstart My Heart": [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDAGa3JLwIQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDAGa3JLwIQ).

The one thing that threw me for a bit of a loop was that I had to do a drum solo, having never done one before. There's a costume change for Alice in the middle of the show, so some time had to be filled in the set = drum solo. I kept thinking about how much I hate solos ... why? Usually drummers fail to keep the audience interested, that's why. My solo wasn't something I intended to actually practice, and I really didn't have much time anyway to put one together. But I thought it best to come up with four differently-themed beats, and then maybe

steal a few ideas from Neil Peart, but all in all, keep it simple and rhythmic. Here's some Neil Peart footage where I got some ideas from: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkNGne4ZWB4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkNGne4ZWB4).

It's important to note that before I leave for any gig, I make sure all business-related stuff is in order. You need to give all pertinent accounting info to whomever is in charge of paying you while on a tour (tour manager or accountant). We do get paid, right? They'll need your Social Insurance or Social Security number. They'll also need your passport number if you're crossing any border. I not only use my laptop for keeping track of all the songs I'm learning, but to access all my personal business using Quicken software. It's good for keeping track of receipts, and of course I try to pay all my bills online: cell phone, etc.

Last thing to take care of was getting all my gear in order: sticks, heads, cymbals, etc. I also informed all my music-related contacts about my being out with Alice. I think it's very important to always let everyone know what you're up to – which can only lead to more gigs, right?

*Brent Fitz is the drummer for the band Theory Of A Deadman. He grew up in Winnipeg, MB and currently resides in Las Vegas, NV. Brent endorses DW drums, SABIAN cymbals, Pro Mark drumsticks, Remo drumheads, DDrum electronics, and Hart Dynamics electronics. Visit [www.brentfitz.com](http://www.brentfitz.com), [www.groups.myspace.com/brentfitzfansite](http://www.groups.myspace.com/brentfitzfansite).*

# The Gretzky Effect

by Brent Fitz

**H**ero worship – we all need a little bit of it. I think it's important to strive to be more like our heroes, and they certainly don't have to just be musicians to have an impact on us as drummers and as people. Neil Peart, Jeff Porcaro, and Buddy Rich are three of my biggest drumming influences. Another one of my idols is Wayne Gretzky – not a drummer, but "The Great One" of the hockey world. I've always thought that sports figures and musicians are a lot alike, and it has nothing to do with wanting to become celebrities or anything related to that, but because of the years of physical and mental dedication both careers require before success can ever be reached. Unless of course, you want

way, was not only able to break all the NHL scoring records set by his hero, but also become the greatest hockey player ever. He changed the world of hockey in the same way The Beatles changed the music world. Gretzky was even lucky enough to have the opportunity to meet and spend time getting to know his idol in person, much like The Beatles got to hang out with Elvis at Graceland.

Gretzky has even taught me a lot about how to practice being good – at practicing. Maybe you can say he just practiced a little better than everyone else. It's all about work ethic. As a kid, he spent countless hours in his parent's backyard rink perfecting all the basics of hockey that his father taught him – and then continued working on them

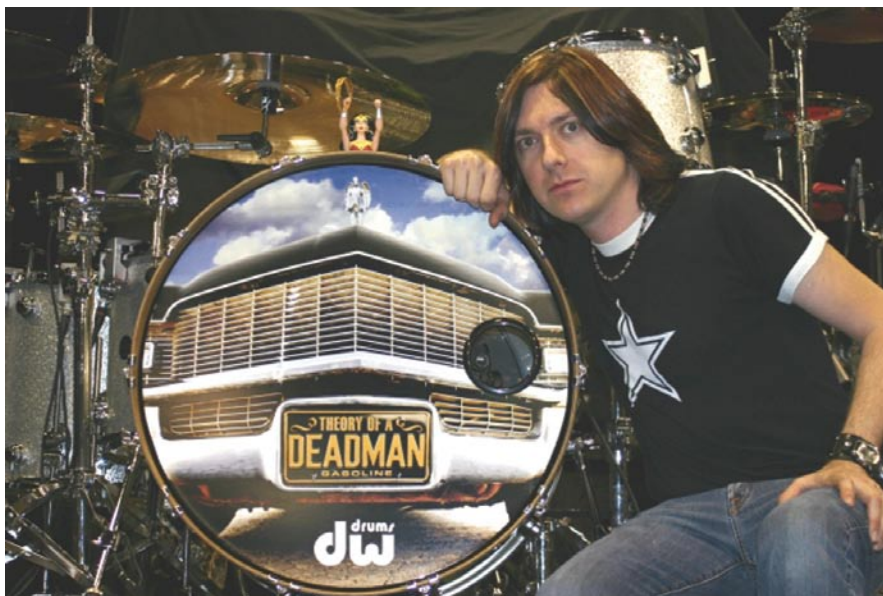
it is important how you play it. Gretzky was never considered the fastest skater, but still somehow would skate circles around all the other players. He simply practiced being a better skater. Also think about this: if you are reading a book and skim through the first few chapters and only read the last part of the book, well, you're likely going to have to read the book over again to understand what you've just read. Without completely reading it from start to finish, you're only cheating yourself. Even if you do read it from cover to cover, in order to really understand the book, you'll likely need to read it several times anyway to fully understand it. Having better fundamental understanding of music will only give you better knowledge and improve your musical vocabulary around other musicians.

There is a big difference too between practicing and performance. All of us need to learn to not confuse the two. Buddy Rich never did. Performance should take place **ONLY** after you've spent plenty of time perfecting what you intend to perform for an audience on a stage, or at a hockey rink, or wherever. You could pretty much say that Gretzky put on a legendary performance for audiences every time he skated onto the ice, much like seeing a talented musician in concert. And when you buy a ticket to go see that person entertain you with their performance, you expect them to hopefully perform to the best of their ability. How well they might perform at that particular time can be directly related to how well they have prepared with practice over many days, months, or years leading up to it. The bottom line is that the best musicians and athletes always stand out from the others, and it's usually fairly obvious, just like a great actor.

To me what's most inspiring is knowing there are plenty of young musicians and athletes, right this second, spending countless hours practicing to become more like their heroes everyday. And the one with the right determination is certain to become the next Great One.

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to be on *American/Canadian Idol*, then you're more likely to be a star overnight! Interestingly, I've met many guitar playing athletes, and plenty of musicians who are great golfers and hockey players. Maybe that has something to do with us all aspiring to be something that we're not; guess it's tough to say.

Though I'm a big hockey fan, I've never once thought about being a pro player. Music has always been my only focus. But as a musician, I still find inspiration in knowing that as a kid, Wayne Gretzky had such determination to be as good as his hero, Gordie Howe, and how, in a very gentlemanly

throughout his career. It's the same philosophy we can approach to drumming – to never stop learning the very basics of rhythm and time keeping. GREAT time keeping is something we can spend our entire lives trying to improve on. We always want immediate gratification when trying to learn something new, and practice is not about that, but is the only means to eventually obtaining that gratification. Just because you've spent five minutes learning to play a particular new beat, and now think you're ready to play it very fast or whatever, never forget that it's not important how fast you can play it, but

# Grooves in 7/8

by Jeff Salem

**G**reetings fellow drummers! In this column I would like to explore the world of 7/8 time grooves. Many popular rock bands like Rush, Dream Theater, Tool, and Led Zepelin have used 7/8 in their songs. Most drummers starting out are intimidated by odd time grooves. It's not as difficult as you think. Let's go through the process of understanding what 7/8 is and creating beats in this signature.

4/4 time represents four beats to the bar and the quarter note gets each beat or count (see A1).

This would be the same sounding beat if written in 8/8 time (see A2) the only difference would be how we count it. Here we would have eight counts in the bar and the 8th note gets each count or beat. If we want to convert this beat to 7/8, just drop off the last 8th note of the bar, then you have example A3. When you are counting in 7/8, be careful not to say the full number sev-en since this is a two-syllable word – otherwise, the results sound like 8/8. You're better to count like the following: one, two, three, four, five, six, sev.

Once you are comfortable with groove A3, try playing beats 1-6. These were popular 4/4 grooves converted to 7/8 by dropping the last 8th note of the bar, including any snare and bass rhythms that fell on the 8th beat. When you get a good feel for the groove, try applying accented hi hat patterns [e.g., a) to e)].

Things get sounding interesting with hi hat patterns d) and e). These are two-bar patterns with the hi hat accents phrased in 4/4 time. Start off slowly with these and you will enjoy the results once you are comfortable and the tempos are faster.

Hi hat pattern f) is quite unique, with the same phrasing idea of a 4/4 accent pattern going over the bar line.

Check out this idea in the song "Saint Augustine In Hell" by Sting, featuring Vinnie Colaiuta on drums. Next time we will work on fills and soloing ideas in 7/8. Have fun and e-mail me some songs you know in 7/8 time.

Cheers!

Jeff Salem operates Jeff Salem's Music Studio. For more information, please visit: [www.jsmusicstudio.com](http://www.jsmusicstudio.com), [www.salemdrum.com](http://www.salemdrum.com), or e-mail Jeff at [jsalem@sympatico.ca](mailto:jsalem@sympatico.ca).



## 7/8 Time Grooves

Jeff Salem

Drum Set

Convert to 7/8

A1 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + A2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 A3 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

hh S.D. B.D.

## 7/8 Grooves

1). 2). 3).

4). 5). 6).

## Accented Hi-hat Patterns

a). b). c).

2 Bar Pattern 2 Bar Pattern: Play just the accents

d). e).

2 Bar Pattern Apply these accent patterns to grooves #1 - 6

f).

Vinnie Colaiuta Groove on Sting's "Saint Augustine In Hell"

Bell of Ride Ride Cymbal

# The Care & Feeding Of Your Hardware

by Seppo Salminen

All drummers need to do a periodic check of their hardware and fix potential problems before the gig. There is the regular maintenance of parts (cleaning shells, oiling, changing heads, cleaning cymbals), and then there is the check-up thing ... kinda like your yearly physical – yup, it’s a bummer!



Check the beater itself: if it’s a moulded-on plastic beater head, no problem, but if there’s a nut to secure it, make sure it’s tightened properly, or better yet, replace it with a nylon insert locking nut – this won’t loosen off easily. You only have to lose the beater once and try playing with the shaft, or lack of one, to remember this. Next, check the

pedal linkages and all moving parts. If you use a leather or nylon strap drive pedal, be aware that these pedals are prone to wear and the straps can stretch and break. I use a DW5000 type double pedal with nylon straps. I like the feel of the “lobe” shaped cam of the old-school Gretsch Floating Action and Tama Flexi-flyers.

The strap will tend to wear at the point it bends around the cam and at the attachment point of the footboard. Both are not quickly noticeable as they wear on the inside of the strap. Nylon is not supposed to stretch but can, and the holes will elongate and may lower the footboard some. Changing the footboard height will also change its feel. Change

the straps regularly, keeping in mind the distance between the holes on the straps as they too can change.

If you use a metal strap like those on the Ludwig Speed King’s, the metal wears at the point of attachment at the pin on the pedal and at the cam. These should be checked and replaced. If the linkage or pin goes during a gig, there is no quick fix here – get out the backup pedal. The chain “strap” is the least problematic I’ve seen. It has some of the flexibility of a nylon strap and the strength of a metal strap. Just check the bolts connecting the chain to the footboard and the locking clip of the top portion of the chain. Simple lubrication of the chain keeps its movement smooth.

The external tension spring is next. There is generally a triangular hoop that fits over a pulley and onto a spring. This is then attached via a locking bolt

(hopefully) at the base of the pedal. Watch the wear on the hoop, especially on older pedals. I’ve seen these things completely wear through. Also check for wear on the “hook” of the spring. This is where it connects to the tension adjustment and axle. This too can wear straight through. Also note that if you have an older pedal and spring, you should pack it lightly with a piece of felt. This will help eliminate any unwanted squeaking.

The last part to look at is the hinge of the footboard and heel plate. Remember that the pedal not only receives a basic downward motion, but can also receive a sideways push from your foot, adding some extra torque pressure to the hinge pin of the pedal. Loose hinge pins can not only add noise to the pedal, but can also add some extra sideways swaying movement causing a loose and sloppy feel to the pedal. Again, older pedals can suffer more quickly.

Next ... the hi hat stand. Springs and levers, springs and levers! The hi hat stand is the other piece of hardware taking some major punishment. As bass pedals have evolved, so have their counterparts. The hi hat in general has pretty much the same linkages and hinges as the bass pedal and thus will be prone to the same kind of wear. The main difference with the hi hat is that the spring mechanism is internal and not easily accessible in a pinch. Aside from the footboard components, always check the locking components of the stand at the height adjustment, and at the cup washer for damage or breakage. The hi hat clutch for the top cymbal is pretty basic and not too prone to breakage, but the locking wing nut can strip. Simple fix: always carry an extra hi hat clutch!

Shouldn’t you be more worried about that tempo and groove thing than if your gear will hold up?

*Seppo is an award-winning producer/engineer, drummer, and custom drum designer. He currently builds custom kits and snare drums at his shop, TRS Custom Drums, and is owner of RNM Productions, his project studio. He is currently working on a new instructional drum book.*

The most important concept is what I call “springs and levers.” These are the bass drum pedals and hi hat stand. You don’t need to be a physics major to understand the movement of these parts. Some companies are trying to go that way, but the simpler the design, the simpler to maintain and repair. If you can’t figure out how to fix or repair the broken part, then most drum shops can take care of it for you, or you can contact your friendly neighbourhood custom drum shop where all work is done professionally (shameless plug).

So ... bass pedals – many potential problems here. Check the pedal every time you set up and pack down. If your hardware is supplied, definitely look over the hardware a little more closely. This sounds simple enough, but first make sure the beater shaft is tightened down properly. Most companies now supply two key nuts for this: use ‘em!

# The Care And Feeding Of Your Cymbals

by Seppo Salminen

**W**elcome to Part II of this series on taking care of your gear. Caring for hardware and cymbals should be common sense, but, having said that, after 20-plus years of selling, repairing, manufacturing, recording, and teaching drums I've seen some crazy stuff. I've had kits supplied at various gigs where there have been some pretty bad repair jobs. I've been supplied broken hardware, and cymbal stands with no felts or cup washers at all. When on the road, or going to the studio, always carry a basic repair kit of felts, washers, cymbal sleeves, and wing nuts, etc. When you're hitting your cymbal investment of hundreds of dollars, you have to take care of them.

I've also had the luxury of not only being endorsed by two different cymbal manufactures, but have worked as a product specialist/clinician, and have seen the care and techniques used to manufacture these great musical instruments.

The two main areas of concern here are:

- The hardware associated with the cymbals.
- The cymbals themselves.

## Cymbal And Hi Hat Stands

The basic approach here is to make sure the cymbal is protected via felts and sleeves. Also, the cymbal shouldn't be overly tightened down and must be able to move freely when mounted on the cymbal and/or hi hat stands. If the cymbal is restricted when struck, the vibrations are inhibited and sound will be reduced. This can lead to over-playing, or hitting the cymbal harder to compensate, thus leading to metal stress and possible damage (been there, done it!).

Always check for proper insulation on the cymbal tilter rod. Some stands will include a combination plastic cup washer/sleeve, or a "Tama"-type nylon wing nut/sleeve. If not, the stand will have the normal metal cup washer, felts, separate sleeve, and wing nut. If

the sleeve is allowed to wear through and it's not replaced, a "sawing" action occurs when metal meets metal, and the "bell hole" of the cymbal becomes elongated. This is called the "keyhole" syndrome as seen on some vintage cymbals. Do not mount the metal cup washer upside-down, or use the oversized metal washer from your hi hat stand, or the oversized wing nuts from your cymbal stands. These can inhibit the movement of your cymbals and may actually cause damage to the bottom of the cymbal itself. The same rules apply to the hi hat clutch. Don't pinch the top hi hat cymbal too tightly between the felts. The bottom hat should sit evenly on the felt of the hi hat cup washer. Remember to tilt the bottom hat somewhat using the adjustment screw to avoid air-lock. If using Sound Edge hats, or you have holes in the bottom hat, this adjustment is not necessary.

## Playing The Cymbals

It's all about cymbal/player ergonomics:

- Mount the cymbals at an angle, never flat.
- Adjust the height as needed for proper playing.
- Use the proper sticks for the cymbals.
- Use the proper cymbal for the gig.
- Play or strike the cymbals correctly.

The edge of the cymbal is the most delicate part, and how you strike it has a lot to do with its longevity. Mounting flat is generally a no-no. It's fine for the stars that don't pay for their gear, but for the rest of us...

If you do mount flat, then adjust them to a lower playing height. This will get you somewhat on top on the cymbal. When in the studio, you'll probably want to get the cymbals higher to eliminate splatter or bleed, thus you'll want a greater cymbal angle to stay on top.

Cymbals are pretty easy to understand, you can use different stick thicknesses and beads, (wood, nylon, round, oval, etc.) to produce more ping,



or shimmer, or volume, but each cymbal has its own limits, and you'll never get more than its capabilities allow.

Thin, small crashes generally won't work for your screamo-heavy metal-hardcore music and 2B rock-knocker sticks, and the AAX Metal crash is probably not a good choice for your local jazz gig. But, the more varied the music, the more cymbals and tones you'll probably want. It's nice to have a wide section of crashes, rides, and hats to accommodate any studio or live gig, but if you're like most people, you may only have a basic set-up for all music types. So pick wisely.

Next, don't play "through" the cymbal; learn to pull back or glance off with a slight side-to-side motion.

These techniques produce the most musical crash sounds and are the least harmful to the cymbal. You can check out the various manufactures' websites to get more in-depth details.

*Seppo is an award winning producer/engineer, drummer, and custom drum designer. He currently builds custom kits and snares at his shop, TRS Custom Drums. He also runs his own project studio, RNM Productions. Seppo currently plays with The Penny Merchants and is working on his follow up Joe's Conscience CD, and an instructional drum book. Contact info is available at [www.TRSCustomDrums.com](http://www.TRSCustomDrums.com) and [www.RNMProductions.ca](http://www.RNMProductions.ca).*

# The Importance Of The Quarter Note ... Feel

by Chris McNeill

**T**he quarter note is the pulse that you have to internally feel through most music. Whether the tempo is fast or slow, if you are recording to a click track or playing along with any sequences or loops, the quarter note is essential for good time. It is also the key to great subdivisions and voicings around the kit. It could be anything from just hitting a cymbal on the downbeat or playing an insane lick or fill. Whatever it is you are playing, you must feel that quarter note.

I find some drummers that learn songs note for note are kind of copying or mimicking what they hear, but are missing the boat on that quarter note feel. This applies to other instruments as well. Sure, they may be playing the parts technically correct or exactly as the music calls for, but without a strong quarter note internal feel there is nothing to anchor them in time and to the feel of the music itself. With today's technology, a good test is to record yourself to a bunch of different cool loops, load your track into any program like Pro Tools or whatever you use, snap it in, and then you can easily see and analyze how on or off you are to the grid or click track or quarter note. You will be surprised, but this gives engineers and producers a lot of work correcting those in front of, behind, or rushed drum takes!



Anyway, my point is that it is not only vital to understand the importance of this related to time, it is imperative to feel it. A lot of young drummers will sometimes be left out in original bands when it comes time for big budget recordings. This is usually due to a weak quarter note feel or an inability to understand time, and they are then replaced by session musicians or programming. Feel is something that can not really be taught or learned; it's a natural thing, like a deep groove, like the roots. Bob Marley, John Bonham, Steve Gadd – some people have it; some do not.

If you ask other musicians that play with these types of players, they will say it is effortless and so easy to play along with them. This may sound strange, but it is like the drummer is not really there. Now, mind you, there are certain feels over that quarter note that might be behind and lazy, or punk, hyper, or on top. Either way, it all still boils down to a strong sense of time. I guess the best way to understand it, again, is by listening to everything from slow Zeppelin blues tunes to back-phrased hip hop.

One last thing – a bit off topic – is the respect I have for killer DJs. The sense they have of rhythm, re-mixes, scratches, and keeping people dancing all night on the dance floor is, again, simply making people tap their foot to the quarter note.



*Chris McNeill has performed and recorded with many of Canada's chart-topping artists including Amanda Marshall, Amy Sky, Alannah Myles, Barlow, Von Groove, Carole Pope, Snow, Randy Bachman, Platinum Blonde, and most notably Alan Frew and six-time Juno Award winner Glass Tiger. He endorses SABIAN Cymbals and Monolith Drums.*

# Let's Get Funky

## Creating Linear Beats

by Jeff Salem



**G**reetings fellow drummers! In this article, I would like to show you a unique way of creating your own funky grooves using the "linear" concept. Linear beats are patterns played in which no limbs line up; in other words, at no point will you have two or more voices played together. What I have put together for you is what I call the "Linear Alphabet" in 16<sup>th</sup> notes. The 64 patterns on the right are all the possibilities you can play in four 16<sup>th</sup> notes between the bass, snare, and hihat with at least one hihat being played in each pattern. A)-F) are some of my own grooves in 4/4 time I created by combining any four of the 64 patterns. Notice on beat F) I have added the bass drum on beat one with the hihat to give a different feel. Also, you can drop out certain 16<sup>th</sup> notes, creating rests as you see in beats C), E) and F). Try playing the hihat part on the ride cymbal, cowbell, or tom. Many great drummers like Steve Gadd, David Garibaldi, Rick Gratton, and Gary Chaffee (the list can go on) use this concept. Try adopting this idea into your playing – it will add some creativity and variety to a song.

One Bar Linear Beats in 4/4 Time

Jeff Salem operates Jeff Salem's Music Studio. For more information, please visit: [www.jsmusicstudio.com](http://www.jsmusicstudio.com), [www.salemdrum.com](http://www.salemdrum.com), or e-mail Jeff at [jsalem@sympatico.ca](mailto:jsalem@sympatico.ca).

# A Brazilian Primer

by Mark Kelso



I have been in love with the music and rhythms of Brazil ever since drummer/percussionist Memo Acevado came to my high school and did a clinic on Brazilian drumming. The sounds of the Bossa Nova, Samba, and the Partido Alto, among others, became my new favourite drum grooves, and I spent countless hours trying to master this new style of music. Twenty-five years later, I still find myself working its subtleties. Hopefully I can inspire you to seek out and learn a little (or a lot) about the amazing rhythms from this beautiful country.

As with any type of music, the best and most important way to learn something new is to LISTEN to that style of music. If you develop your ears well enough, you will hear the music first, the drum and percussion rhythms second, and finally the FEEL of the Brazilian groove. The first two items can be learned fairly quickly, but where many drummers struggle is with the last part – the FEEL. I once heard this description of the Brazilian groove: North American music is like a ball rolling across a flat surface whereas Brazilian music is like an egg rolling across the same flat surface. There is a certain non-quantized “lope” to the Brazilian feel and that plays a huge part in what makes people want to instinctively dance

when they hear it. Sure, we drummers can read the rhythms in a drum book easily enough, but, again, I stress that you must listen to the music to understand the proper feel and correlate it with what you are reading rhythmically. Without the right feel, you run the risk of playing something wrong and not even being aware that it’s incorrect.

Let’s start with the most common (and poorly misunderstood) Brazilian rhythm: the Bossa Nova. Loosely translated as “new thing” or “new style,” it gained popularity in North America during the 1960s. It’s more or less a Samba rhythm (of which there are many) slowed down. The standard written rhythm can be seen below.



Right away we can see that it’s a 2-bar pattern that functions much like the clave does in Cuban music (although technically speaking, the clave concept does not exist the same way in Brazilian music). The groove should be played lightly and smoothly, keeping the hi-hats nice and tight sounding. Be careful not to play the bass drum too loud or to accent beat “one” too much either. Listen to Erivelton Silva with Rosa Passos (my favourite Bossa singer) to hear just

how hip the Bossa can be. Once one becomes accustomed to various other hand percussion parts, it’s easy to find many optional cross-stick rim patterns to use as well. At a faster tempo this pattern can also be used to play Samba, which we’ll get to next.

The Samba is an exciting and powerful rhythm, and when played properly, can incite even the less-inclined to get up and dance. This rhythm is known as “Samba Telecoteco.”



Once you get the co-ordination between the hands worked out, you can start to imply a subtle accent on beat “3” on the bass drum if you’re counting in cut time (or on beat “2” if you’re counting in 2/4 time). This really helps the authenticity of the groove. The Samba can be played with a soft approach like the Bossa or more aggressively depending on the song. All limbs should be locked together – no flaming between

limbs! Remember to listen to some Brazilian artists’ music to help the groove. Two fantastic references are Sergio Mendes’ “Brasileiro” and Caetano Veloso’s “Livro.” Some other artists to check out are Gilberto Gil, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Carlinhos Brown, Joyce, Marcos Valle, and Guinga.

I hope you enjoy these rhythms and I look forward to bringing you some more next time.

*Mark Kelso is the head of the Percussion Dept. at Humber College. He has recorded over 150 CDs and he has played with Herbie Hancock, Randy Brecker, Dave Grusin, Paquito D’Rivera, Hilario Duran, Montuno Police, Jovino Santos Neto, and many others. More info can be found at [www.groovydrums.com](http://www.groovydrums.com).*

# Hip-Hop Drumming 101

by Keith Harris

**W**elcome to hip-hop drumming 101. Drums are the foundation of any musical group, regardless of the style. The drums keep the band together; they set the mood of a song or performance, bring the energy up when the occasion calls for it, and keep it cool when it's appropriate. My goal here is to break hip-hop drumming down into three basic steps.

## STEP 1: LEARN TO KEEP THE GROOVE

First and foremost, hip-hop is established off of a groove. That being said, it is extremely important to establish and know the groove and tempo inside out for the song you're playing. This would essentially be playing in the pocket and learning the grooves to the songs – not just “interpreting” the grooves to the song, but actually learning how the parts are played. A lot of players will get caught trying to “fake it.” What I mean by “fake it” is adding their own personal splash in without first technically learning the basics.

Another way players will fake it is by playing really loud. Everything in hip-hop doesn't have to be on volume 11. It's important to have dynamics and depth. You don't want everything to be: “Hey, you're screaming at me!” Drumming is a lot like having a conversation. You start by just talking, and as your conversation intensifies, then it gets louder and more animated. It's the same when you are drumming. You start off with the basic beat and it gradually intensifies in volume and creativity. It's a balance because sometimes it's appropriate to flare up or fill. It goes back to being aware of the people you are playing with, and reading what the situation calls for.

## STEP 2: LEARN TO KEEP TIME

Learning the basics essentially means executing the exact beats, or, for example, hitting the drums to the exact sound for a particular song that you are playing. All of the different types of skills and techniques to maintain the beat come into play when you're drumming to hip-hop music. Our number one job as a drummer, regardless of musical style, is to keep good time. In the end, that is our function – to play with click tracks, and learn how to execute dynamics.

## STEP 3: LEARN TO PLAY YOUR PART

The next basic component of hip-hop drumming is playing your role. For example, when I'm playing with The Black Eyed Peas, I need to be able to follow what's happening on stage on a moment's notice. During a performance, you have to be vigilant of what's happening on stage in front of you, not just in your own world of drums. I am constantly looking at my bandmates to see what they are doing. I'll look over at the bass player and follow him, then the guitar player will do something cool, and I'll feed off of his energy. Fergie's down in front doing her thing and really hyped, so I've got to follow her lead and build the hype – maybe just hit harder. When she pulls back, I need to follow her lead and come back with my intensity to match her performance.



The band trusts me to fill when needed. It becomes a part of the live show that the audience welcomes. We are all entertainers, so you have to do some things that bring entertainment value to the overall performance. To achieve this, I'll do something cool like a really fast roll and stand up when I hit the crash – it's all showmanship. There are many variables that are always going on in real-time that you have to be on top of, and the key is to always stay focused on what's going on around you while still staying on top of the basics and still maintaining the beat.

Once you've secured these three basic steps, then you can add your own individuality to what you are doing because your bandmates can trust you to do your part. Finally, the best advice I can give any up-and-coming musician is to have someone who inspires you and to who's level you can strive to achieve. For me, that person has got to be Questlove from The Roots. In my eyes, he is the godfather when it comes to drumming.

Drummers must remember that the drumkit is an instrument that speaks. It's not just for chops and playing the fast rhythms – you can speak volumes with grooves, and that is what hip-hop drumming is all about.

*A writer, musician, and producer, Keith Harris is best known for his drumming chops that round out the sound of the multi-platinum selling, Grammy-winning band The Black Eyed Peas. In addition to his work with The Black Eyed Peas, Harris has worked with some of North America's most talented recording artists including Mary J. Blige, Christina Aguilera, Jully Black, Earth Wind & Fire, and John Legend.*

# Ostinato Man

by Jeff Salem

**A**n ostinato is a musical phrase repeated over and over in a composition. In this article the hi-hat/ride pattern will be the repeated rhythmic phrase.

I remember feeling on top of the world early on when I was able to lift a beat from a favourite song and play along with the track. After much repetition, I realized that something didn't feel right. I listened back to the song and noticed that I was playing the correct snare and bass drum part; however, my hi-hat or ride part didn't feel right. This was usually the case for most songs I started to learn. The conclusion I came to was that I had no dynamics in the groove, especially on the hi-hat or ride cymbal, which made the beat NOT GROOVE.

Listed below are 13 various hi-hat/ride ostinato parts (A-M) that can be added to any quarter-, eighth-, and sixteenth-note bass/snare drum beats. These 13 variations are based on six common hi-hat/ride ostinatos. Apply these patterns to the 15 bass/snare grooves below. Play all the accented hi-hat notes on the edge of the hi-hat with the shoulder of the stick and the unaccented notes on the top of the hi-hat with the tip of the stick. When playing on the ride cymbal, apply the accents on the bell and the unaccented notes on the ride surface. Start off slowly at 60 bpm and listen closely to how each ostinato changes the feel of the groove. I have left accents out on the snare so that you can experiment with placing them as well as inserting ghost notes in places that feel comfortable. Have fun and try these out with your own grooves.

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## Hi-hat/Ride Cymbal Ostinatos

Jeff Salem

Hi-hat or Ride

A B C D E

F G H I

J K L M

## Common Bass and Snare Beats

1). 2). 3). 4). 5).

6). 7). 8). 9). 10).

11). 12). 13). 14). 15).

Snare  
Bass

# Afro-Cuban Batá Rhythms Adapted to Drumkit

by Steve Mancuso

**S**antería, also known as La Regla de Ocha (the rule of the orisha), is a belief system that originated in Cuba from the interaction of the traditional religious practices among Yoruba slaves, other African religious practices in Cuba, and European Roman Catholicism. The orisha worship of the Yoruba – orisha being the name of their deities – made its way to the Americas via the transatlantic slave trade, which, in the case of the Yoruba, was most intensive in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the religious ceremonies of Santería, music plays an important role in establishing its community's relationships to the sacred and social aspects of its musical and religious tradition. Santería's most respected ceremony is the **toque de santo**, a liturgical festivity for the orisha, or nature divinities, using the **batá de fundamento** (consecrated or baptized drums). This religious party, which features music, can also be referred to as a **toque, tambor, bembé, or güemilere**, depending upon the instrumental ensemble being used.

These sacred batá are double-headed, quasi-hourglass-shaped drums, with one cone larger than the other, both in length and diameter. The drums are generally believed to be "owned" by the orisha Shango (the batá contour is said to symbolize Shango's thunder axe). The Cuban batá ensemble is made up of three drums: **iyá** (mother drum), **itótele** (or **omelé enkó**, "the one who follows"), and **okónkolo** (or simply **omelé**, "the strong child"). The sacred batá are believed to be an emissarial connection between the earth and heaven, the human and the divine, the physical and the spiritual. More specifically, these consecrated drums are believed to communicate with the noumenal realm and facilitate the possession of devotees by the orisha.

The batá rhythm we will be examining and adapting to the drum-set, **iyesá**, is derived from an ethnic group known as the **Iyesá** people, who maintain their unique religious and musical traditions predominantly in the port province of Matanzas, located on the northern shores of the island of Cuba. The Iyesá, who are of African descent – a Yoruba ethnic subgroup from southwestern Nigeria – over time synchronized their traditions with the Lucumí (in Cuba the Yoruba came to be known collectively as Lucumí), and the batá drummers appropriated this 4/4-meter toque (rhythm) known as Iyesá. This generic toque Iyesá, which accompanies the songs of many orisha, is commonly played during the third phase of the toque de santo, known as the güemilere or **iban balo**, and may last several hours. Below is a transcription of the Iyesá rhythm showing the basic pattern played by each batá drum. The syllables written below each note are spoken to represent the sounds produced on the batá.



## Iyesá

$\text{♩} = 100$

2-bar entrance: | Iyesá main rhythm:

Clave

Shekere

Okónkolo

Itótele

Iyá

ki kling ki kling ki kling kling ki la la kip la la kling ki la la

ki la ki la ki la ki la

la kling ki la la ki la kling ki

## Practice Suggestions

**Step 1:** Clap the clave while singing aloud the basic pattern played by each batá drum. One of the keys to understanding Afro-Cuban music is to hear, feel, and phrase rhythms against the clave. This exercise will help develop clave independence.

**Step 2:** Adapt each part to the drumkit, allocating the low tones to the bass drum and high tones to the snare drum. The clave will be played on the hi-hat with the corresponding foot, and the shekere pattern is played on the ride cymbal. Notice the press tone played on the floor tom.

Okónkolo adapted to Drumset:

1.

Itótele adapted to Drumset:

2.

Iyá adapted to Drumset:

3.

**Step 3:** This example adapts and orchestrates all five voices of the Iyesá rhythm on to the drum-set, which gives the impression that the complete batá ensemble is playing. The hi, mid, and floor toms are utilized to represent the batá trio, while the ride cymbal and hi-hat are employed for the shekere and clave. Be patient and practice this pattern very slowly at first. The coordination involved is quite advanced, but with proper practice you will feel yourself gaining technical command of your limbs, and in due course you will be able to execute the rhythm comfortably. Also, notice the 2-bar entrance, which is the standard intro and fill utilized when playing the Iyesá rhythm.

2-bar entrance

4.

# Odd-Number Groupings

## PART 1

by Barry Romberg

One thing I always try and get across to my students is the concept of using odd-number groupings while playing in 4/4 to begin phrasing over the bar lines. The key to these concepts is internalizing the sound of these rhythms (the juxtaposition of 3-, 5-, and 7-beat phrases) in relation to 4/4. Because the rhythms themselves are based on odd numbers, they resolve in three, five, and seven bars, respectively, as we will soon see. The trick is to hear and play them in 2-, 4-, or 8-bar phrases against 4/4 so they can be utilized to create tension and can result in some really cool musical ideas, or, in the wrong hands, be a recipe for disaster. These concepts can be learned away from the drums. It's more about the understanding and internalization of the sound – then you can worry about how to phrase them on your instrument.

Here's a good place to start:



This figure will resolve in three bars, but I wrote it out so that the first bar is repeated to get the 4-bar phrase. Essentially, you're playing three while you're playing in four. Here are a few things you can do with this idea (ride cymbal plays throughout):

- Play the jazz ride cymbal pattern with the hi-hat on two and four and play the 3-beat figure with your left hand.
- Play the figure with your bass drum.
- Play the figure with the bass drum and fill in the eighth notes with your left hand while still maintaining the ride cymbal.
- Do the same thing in straight eighths as well as with the triplet feel.
- Now reverse it – everything the same but play the figure with your left hand and fill in the eighths with your bass drum.

Now that we've dealt with some drum independence ideas, let's address the melodic line. Here's what it looks like with an eighth-note flow:



- Since you're playing eighth notes grouped in threes, you could play alternate sticking RLRL RLRL, etc. and accent the figure – essentially a hand-to-hand triplet sticking on an eighth-note grid.
- You could use the sticking RLL, keeping your left hand on the snare drum and moving your right hand around the kit.
- Play the entire line on the snare drum and add the bass drum on the accents along with the hand accent.
- Now, move your right hand to the cymbal with the bass drum in unison and play the accent pattern – left hand moves around drums.



- Play double-stops with the hands on accents and fill in eighth notes with the bass drum.

Experiment with starting the phrase at different places on the timeline: for the 3-beat figure, the first bar starts on one, the second bar starts on the "and" of one, and the third bar starts on beat two. You could also start it on beat four, or the "and" of three, or any of the eight eighth notes in the bar. You could also play a backbeat groove and play the 3-beat figure with the bass drum.

*After 38 years at the drums, Barry Romberg has worked with some of Canada's finest musicians, lead his own groups, accompanied international artists, and has been featured on over 60 recordings, including 13 as a leader/co-leader. He continues to freelance on drums, compose, and teach. Besides leading Random Access and The Random Access Large Ensemble, Barry is a member of groups led by Kirk Macdonald, Lorne Lofsky, Michael Occhipinti, Al Henderson, and David Buchbinder.*



# Odd-Number Groupings

## PART II

by Barry Romberg

*After 38 years at the drums, Barry Romberg has worked with some of Canada's finest musicians, led his own groups, accompanied international artists, and has been featured on over 60 recordings, including 13 as a leader/co-leader. He continues to freelance on drums, compose, and teach. Besides leading Random Access and The Random Access Large Ensemble, Barry is a member of groups led by Kirk Macdonald, Lorne Lofsky, Michael Occhipinti, Al Henderson, and David Buchbinder.*

**D**on't forget to think of this rhythmic concept in terms of sixteenth notes as well.

As for the 5-, 7-, and 9-beat phrases, the easiest way to think of it is: two down, two up for 5-beat; three down, three up for the 7-beat; and four down, four up for the 9-beat.

**WHAT?** A picture's worth 1,000 words. Here is the 5/8 over 4 phrase: two downbeats, two upbeats, and a rest which completes the phrase, which will take five bars to resolve, just as a 3-beat figure takes three, and a 7-beat takes seven.



9



13

Again, you want to practice this phrase in terms of a 4-bar phrase. A good way for drummers to hear it is to play the jazz cymbal ride pattern and play the figure with your left hand. Also, play a bossa nova groove and substitute the 5- or 7-beat pattern for your left hand part – with the bossa, you really hear the 5 & 7 over the 4 thing.



14



Now, go back and practice all the stuff I suggested with the 3-beat figure and do it with the 5 and 7's, both in terms of independence and the melodic line. Play the accent pattern with your right hand, then fill in all the eighth notes that aren't there with your left hand. For example, the sticking for 5 would be RLRLR with the accent on the right hand and the sticking for 7 would be RLRLRLR with the accent again on the right hand. If you were to put these patterns on the triplet grid – that's where the real action is, but we'll save that for another day. Practice these ideas as you play along with records, which is a great way to learn this stuff. Do a lot of listening. Check out the way Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner play 3-beat figures behind Coltrane; check out Bill Stewart, who utilizes all of these concepts to the max; and check out some of the stuff Jeff Watts, Ari Hoenig, Antonio Sanchez, Jim Black, Ted Poor, Trilok Gurtu, and Karim Ziad are doing. Have some fun with this stuff, and if you want to keep experimenting with some cool polyrhythmic ideas, I urge you to check out Paul Delong's new book. It takes Pete Magadini's concept from his book *Polyrhythms* to a whole new level – highly recommended. Enjoy!

## Clave by Aldo Mazza

**C**lave, which literally translates as “key” in Spanish, is one of the most important musical figures, phrases, and structures in music. It could take up volumes to cover the topic in depth, so for the purpose of this article, I will look at the clave in popular Cuban music and one application on the drumset.

The clave can be summarized as a five-note phrase played over two bars. These five notes are placed in a structure which can comprise of two notes in the first bar and three notes in the second, giving us a 2/3 clave. We can reverse the order of the structure, in which case it would become a 3/2 clave. There are diverse claves and this mainly depends on where the notes are placed in the bar. Here is the traditional Son 2/3 clave:

### Example 1

Now, by moving one note on the “three” side and playing it on the “and” of four rather than on “four,” we create a different clave called Rumba 2/3 clave. This is a little more edgy and modern.

### Example 2

This clave can be played on the clave instrument (two small wooden sticks struck together), by one player on a wood-block, a bamboo log, or a mounted jam block, or it can be played “cross stick” on the snare with one hand while the other hand plays the cascara rhythm.

### Example 3

This is the way the timbale player would play it in a typical salsa rhythm section. Modern drumset players take it a step further by incorporating the various parts of the traditional section and creating a complete groove. In the following example, play the “cascara” rhythm with your right hand (left hand if left-handed). The other hand plays the clave on cross stick on the snare. Hi-hat plays two and four and the bass drum plays the “and” of two and the four. To let the groove feel more open, we leave out the four on the bass drum.

### Example 4

( ) = OPTIONAL B.D.

In conclusion, I cannot stress enough the importance of the place of the clave in popular Cuban music. It is not simply a rhythm upon which the music is played, nor is it a “guide” for the musicians to lean on. The composition not only incorporates the clave, but melodies are “one” with the clave. All improvisation, both rhythmic and melodic, is done around the clave. Think of it as the other element aside from the “changes” and song “form” which each and every musician has to know and consider. When we have a closer look at the clave, we conclude that it is not only a rhythm in the music – it is natural, seamless, and often invisible, but definitely omnipresent.



Aldo Mazza is an internationally-recognized drummer-percussionist, recording artist, clinician, composer, and educator. A member of Repercussion, he is also Founder and Artistic Director of KoSA International Percussion Workshops. Visit: [www.kosamusic.com](http://www.kosamusic.com) & [www.aldomazza.com](http://www.aldomazza.com).

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by Chris Lesso

# NEW-SCHOOL DRUMMING

## Looking Forward To The 21st Century Rhythmist

**T**he drums are still a very young instrument. Before you read on, can you guess how old? I was surprised to learn even after a few years of playing that the drumset as we know it is still less than 100 years old. This instrument is constantly evolving; I want to be on the cusp of new ideas, not just mindlessly recycling the past. This is an investment into your future; changes you make today will pay off in time. Try some of these ideas in this article, and then make up your own. Think outside the box. Remember: "there are no rules, only possibilities."

### Ambidexterity/Open-Handed Playing

Open-Handed playing: a style of playing drums where you don't cross your hands. This is the future of drumming! First, look at how crossing the arms evolved on the drumset, then ask yourself: Why do drummers still do this? Does it make sense? When I was starting, I never asked this question; that was just "how you do it." Question everything!

You've probably heard the saying "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link," or to us drummers, the "weakest limb." If you play one bar of an eighth note rock groove, you have just played eight right hands and two left hands. (And that's only one bar, never mind an entire song! Or set of songs! Or tour! Or... you get the point!) That ratio of eight to two is way out of balance, and will only make your already weaker hand worse over time. So many possibilities and ideas open up when playing open-handed.

### Tilting The Snare Forward

This makes sense if you think of the drum as a natural extension of the arm. If you look at African djembe players, Cuban conga players, or Indian tabla players, they all have the drum tilted away from the body. This allows for a more natural rebound, which expends less energy when you play and also makes rimshots really easy to execute. This is becoming more and more common. Try it!

### Your Set-Up

This is about making your set your ally. First, find the most relaxed (but energized) natural position for your body – spine straight, shoulders relaxed, and forearms parallel to the ground. Use mirrors and a great teacher to get feedback – this is necessary for growth. Close your eyes and imagine the most comfortable place for the pieces in your kit, then place them there no matter what it looks like. There is no "right way" – only what works best for you.

### Attitude: Your Mental State

More and more drummers are getting into meditation and yoga, or reading books like *The Secret* and getting positive thoughts and energy running through their hearts and minds. Remember, the kind of person you are is the kind of artist you'll be. If you are positive and have lots of energy, this will come out through the drums. Think of the drums as a character mirror.

Try playing the simple grooves of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" or The Black Crowes' "Hard to Handle." Get inspired by the original, record yourself, and hear how much attitude comes shining through your instrument.

### The World Beat: A Melding Of Styles

More than ever, drummers today need to know all styles – from disco to drum and bass. Getting the most from any language will lead to maximum creativity; the more words we can draw upon, the more we can express. Here's an open-handed groove I came up with that's a mix of funk and hand-drumming styles:

#### NOW AND ZEN

CHRIS LESSO TRANSCRIPTION

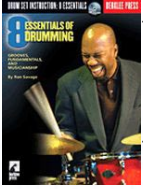
BY: TONY SPRINGER

LEGEND

5 C Cymbal HH TOM 1 TOM 2 SNARE FLOOR TOM SD

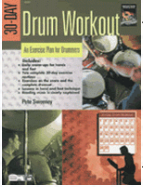
In the words of Bruce Lee, "take what is useful and discard the rest." Try one or all of these ideas, and incorporate into your playing whatever you find useful. This is all about stealing ideas from the best, and pushing this art form forward. Work hard and keep it fun!

# RECOMMENDED READING



## **8 ESSENTIALS OF DRUMMING BY RON SAVAGE**

Become a well-rounded drummer with sound technique, solid time, and expressive musicianship by mastering eight essentials.  
<http://musicbooksplus.com/essentials-drummingb-p-11535.html>



## **30-DAY DRUM WORKOUT BY PETE SWEENEY**

Jam-packed with two complete 30-day exercise routines, the *30-Day Drum Workout* will increase your coordination, stamina, finesse and sense of time.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/b30day-drum-workoutb-p-3480.html>



## **A FUNKY PRIMER FOR THE ROCK DRUMMER BY CHARLES DOWD**

*A Funky Primer for the Rock Drummer* is a best-selling, progressive encyclopedia of rock/funk patterns for all tempos.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/funky-primer-rock-drummerb-p-3477.html>



## **ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS DRUMS DVD**

This easy-to-follow drum DVD tutor will take you step by step from first day exercises to playing along with a professional backing track.

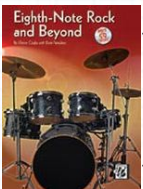
<http://musicbooksplus.com/babsolute-beginners-drums-dvdb-p-4594.html>



## **BASS DRUM SECRETS DVD BY JARED FALK**

This training pack was created for drummers interested in taking their single and double bass drumming to the next level.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/bbass-drum-secrets-dvdb-p-7147.html>



## **EIGHTH-NOTE ROCK AND BEYOND BY GLENN CEGLIA WITH DOM FAMULARO**

This exercise book for beginning drummers contains popular rock beats that are broken down into clear and easy variations of eighth- and sixteenth-notes.

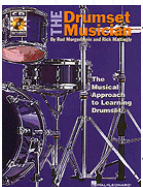
<http://musicbooksplus.com/beighthnote-rock-beyondb-p-9663.html>



## **THE DRUMSET CRASH COURSE, TUNING EDITION DVD BY RUSS MILLER**

Russ Miller explains how to tune the entire drum kit along with discussions and demonstrations of several tuning methods and options.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/bthe-drum-crash-course-tuning-edition-dvdb-p-5292.html>



## **THE DRUMSET MUSICIAN: THE MUSICAL APPROACH TO LEARNING DRUM BY ROD MORGENSTEIN & RICK MATTINGLY**

This beginning- to intermediate-level book contains hundreds of practical, usable beats and fills.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/bthe-drumset-musician-musical-approach-learning-drum-p-718.html>

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