

Ralph Humphrey

Ralph Humphrey has enjoyed an extremely active career as both a performer and teacher. He received his B.A. degree from San Jose State College and an M.A. degree in music performance from San Fernando State College.

His professional experience includes five years with the Don Ellis big band and several years with Frank Zappa's "Mothers of Invention".

As a free-lance and studio drummer in Los Angeles he has worked with most of the great west coast jazz players and has backed many top singers on T.V. and in films.

Additionally, he has worked around the country as a clinician, concert artist and adjudicator for high schools, colleges and private organizations. He also continues to write for **MUSICIAN**, the prestigious jazz magazine.

Acknowledgements

To Don Ellis, Hari Har Rao, Frank Zappa and Milcho Leviev. Their particular inspiration and contribution to my present-day knowledge have made this book possible.

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Purpose

The purpose of this book is to lead the player visually and musically into the logic of odd rhythms and their various forms, so that he may apply this new knowledge to contemporary rock, jazz and Latin music.

Through my experience in all styles of music, I have been able to put together a comprehensive study of rhythms and meters, material which is not largely available on the current market. It should prove to be most useful to amateurs and professionals alike, to both rock and jazz stylists, to all those who are hungry for some new, fresh ideas and approaches to drumming and drum literature.

To you, therefore, this book is appropriately dedicated.

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The basic principle to bear in mind when confronted with a meter longer than three beats is that it can be subdivided into regular, or even groupings of 2's *or* 3's, and irregular, or odd groupings which combine 2's *and* 3's. A common example of a regular duple meter is 4/4, which subdivides into two groups of 2 (2+2/4). The meter 6/8 is an example of a regular triple meter, which normally subdivides into two groups of 3 (3+3/8). Meters in this category are easily felt because the pulse, once it is established, recurs in a regular, equal manner.

An irregular or odd meter, conversely, does not subdivide evenly, simply because a combination of 2's *and* 3's must exist for it to be odd. For example, a meter in 7 would subdivide unevenly into the following groups: 2+2+3, 2+3+2, 3+2+2. Meters based on multiples of 2 (e.g. 8, 10, 12, 14, etc.) and multiples of 3 (e.g. 9, 12, 15, 18, etc.) are exceptions to this rule, even though they can be subdivided unevenly as well.

In the performance of odd rhythms, it is best to stress the first beat of each group of 2 and 3, even though accents are not often indicated. It is also very important to avoid the pitfall of many, one where you begin to approximate the duration

value of each group of 2 and 3 so that the distinction between them is not precisely clear. Always be certain that you give each group of 2 and 3 its proper value.

As a general rule, as soon as you can, get away from the page by memorizing the exercise as you play it so that you can concentrate more on how you are conceiving it in your mind, and how it is feeling within your body. Therefore, move your attention from reading to thinking and playing, which will lead to "feeling" it, the prime objective.

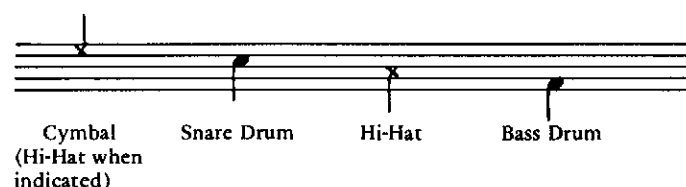
I strongly recommend the use of a metronome with all the exercises, at least at first. Included in each section are suitable tempo markings which give an indication of a performing tempo. A further suggestion is to count the exercises aloud or to yourself as you play. First determine the subdivision of the exercise, then count accordingly.

Ideally, to achieve the maximum benefits from this material, a teacher is strongly recommended, preferably one who is part of the contemporary musical scene, and who can be a guide in the application of this material in musical situations.

PART I: TIME PATTERNS FOR THE DRUM SET

The exercises below are designed to acquaint you with various odd time patterns, and to aid in the development of independence between the hands and feet.

The symbols to be used for PART I will be located on the staff as follows:



The swing or jazz ride-cymbal pattern is indicated in the dotted 8th, 16th-note fashion as follows:

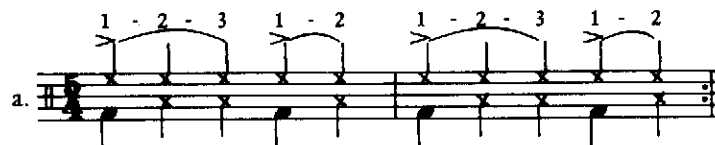


It usually, however, is not played exactly as written. I suggest playing the dotted-8th/16th-note rhythm less strictly. Loosen it up, and strive for a casual swing.

Straight 8th-notes are to be played exactly as written.

SECTION I: QUARTER-NOTE METERS

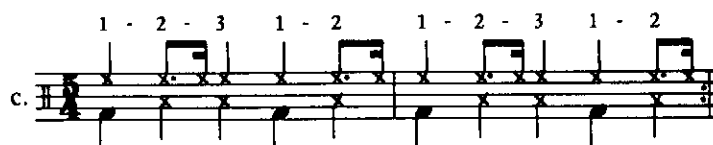
A: Exercises in 5/4*

*Swing 8ths**Exercise 1*

Repeat example a. until you begin to "feel" the subdivision of 3+2. Count 1 - 2 - 3, 1 - 2 as you play and stress the first beat of each group. Then play the following cymbal-ride pattern:



Now add the bass-drum and hi-hat part and note that it reinforces the 3+2 subdivision of the cymbal line. Repeat until independent foot and hand movements feel natural:



Now play the next exercise:



Note that the top line (cymbal) is a 3+2 subdivision, while the bottom part (bass-drum, hi-hat) is a 2+3 subdivision. By adding a snare drum to beat 4, however, the bass-drum on beat 3 becomes an anacrusis, or upbeat, making the subdivision 3+2.

Following is an example of polymeter, or two or more meters occurring simultaneously. The cymbal line delineates a 5-beat pattern, while the underlying part outlines a 10-beat pattern that ignores the bar-line. It can be in either 10/4, or 5/2:



*Although each quarter-note may be considered as being equal in importance, and therefore stressed the same to create an even pulse, I prefer that you learn to identify and group the pulses according to the rhythmic implications of the measure, or measures. Discover where the metric (or main) accents are.

In exercise 4 the cymbal line remains the same, while the lower part implies a 5/8 meter, subdivided 2+3, 2+3:

4.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

1-2 1-2-3 1-2 1-2-3 1-2 1-2-3 1-2 1-2-3

Play the following exercise:

5.

1 - 2 - 3 1 - 2 1 - 2 - 3 1 - 2

1 - 2 1 - 2 1 - 2 1 - 2

The first two bass-drum beats form a duple rhythm against the triple rhythm of the cymbal, creating a polyrhythm of 3 against 2.

For a looser, more "jazzy" approach, tie the 16th-note cymbal to beat 3:

6.

1 - 2 - 3 1 - 2 1 - 2 - 3 1 - 2

...or to beat 1:

7.

1 - 2 - 3 1 - 2 1 - 2 - 3 1 - 2

Play the following exercises until you feel comfortable with the cymbal pattern:

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

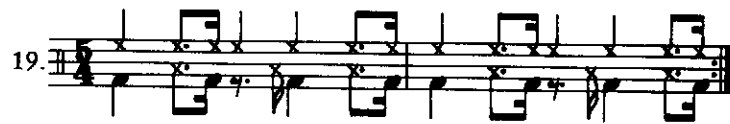
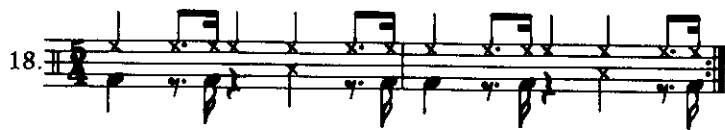
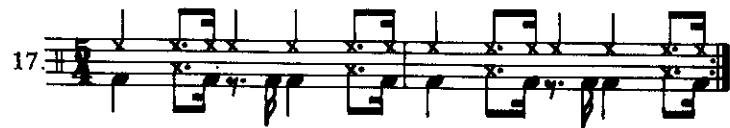
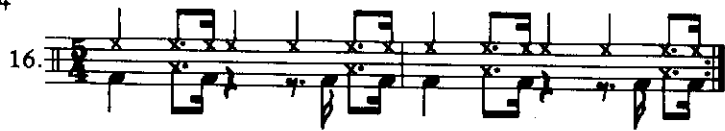
13.

14.

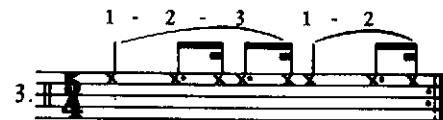
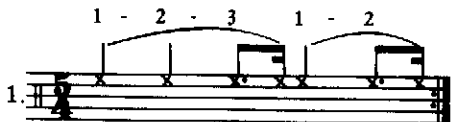
15.

NOTE: Repeat each until a casual swing develops.

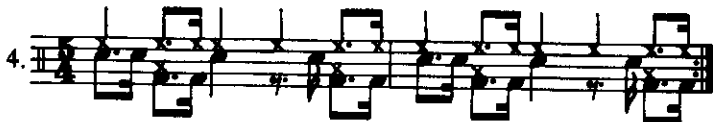
4



Play the following alternate cymbal patterns with each of the previous exercises. Some will adapt better than others, so choose the variation that sounds and feels more relaxed and musical. If you succeed with the 10-beat cymbal pattern, you can consider it quite an achievement.



Following are exercises with cymbal variations and added snare drum:



Straight 8ths

Stress the first 8th-note of each group with the right hand to bring out the pulse. The rhythmic configuration of the snare and bass-drum lines will determine the subdivision of the exercise. Accent only those snare-drum beats which act as the "back-beat" of each exercise. Always strive for a relaxed groove.

NOTE: The opening (o) and closing (+) of the hi-hat is optional. However, if you employ this technique you will notice that the exercises become more interesting and challenging.



Repeat until a relaxed groove develops.