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# Introduction

This book is an extension of the *Sticking Patterns* book I wrote some years ago. In this volume we're going to be exploring how these stickings could be used in a variety of odd meters. The use of different meters has become much more common in contemporary music, so it's important for students to understand how they work and what you can do with them. A number of sticking phrases will be shown for each meter. By working with these examples you will become familiar with many of the ways they can be organized. You can then use them to create your own time feel and solo ideas. For those of you who are already familiar with my sticking system, this should be very easy to do. If, on the other hand, you are new to my system, it won't take long to see how everything works.

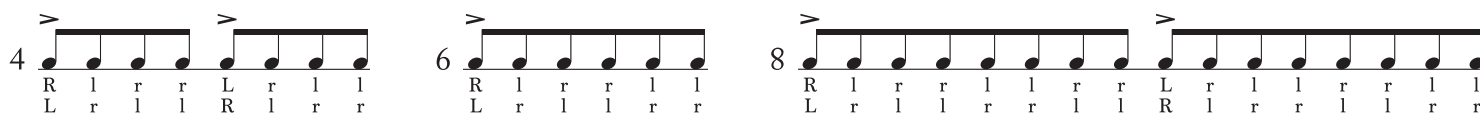
## MY STICKING SYSTEM

The sticking system I created consists of just 11 stickings, and is based upon how the singles and doubles are organized.

### A STICKINGS (one single followed by doubles)



### B STICKINGS (two singles followed by doubles)



### C STICKINGS (three singles followed by doubles)



**D STICKINGS** (four singles followed by doubles)**E STICKINGS** (five singles followed by doubles)**WHAT IS A STICKING?**

A sticking is a sequence of right- and left-hand strokes that create a pattern. Most stickings are combinations of single and double strokes. When they are mixed together, they create a certain sound because of the motions our hands use to execute the singles and doubles (which are naturally different).

There used to be a concept that stated we should try and play everything flat, smooth and even. In other words, make our singles and doubles sound the same. This is silly because the sound of a sticking pattern is what gives it its unique character. We should embrace this, not fight it. Making all of our notes sound the same would be like a horn player playing everything staccato. (Just ask one of your horn or guitar playing friends how dumb that would be!)

There are a few instances when we do want to play things very evenly, as when playing double-stroke rolls. Most of the time, however, we want to allow a particular sticking to follow its natural shape because that's the musical thing to do.

**ABOUT THE ACCENTS**

You will notice that there are accent markings above the stickings. They are there for two reasons:

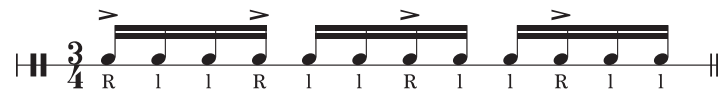
- Putting accents at these points will more clearly realize the shape of the sticking when you're playing both hands on a single sound, and
- they will help you identify the stickings when they are mixed together.

The accents are meant to be played slightly stronger than the other notes in the pattern. Just follow the natural motion the sticking suggests.

## WHAT CAN A STICKING DO?

The **most important** thing you have to understand about stickings is that they are not rhythms. You can play any sticking in any rhythm and, when you do this, a lot of cool things can happen.

When you play a sticking in a matching rhythm (like a paradiddle in sixteenths), everything sounds straight up and down. But, when the sticking and rhythm don't match, you create a phrase because it takes a certain amount of time for the two to cycle. Here's an example using a three-note sticking in a four-note rhythm:



Now, what would happen if you used this same three-note sticking in a five-note rhythm?



Amazingly it works exactly the same. So, the number of notes in the sticking you're playing will equal the number of beats it will take to cycle the sticking **in any non-matching rhythm!**

### **"THIS IS THE FIRST LAW OF STICKINGS"**

Now, what would happen in a situation where the sticking and the number of notes in the measure didn't match? Let's look at the same three-note sticking in 4/4 time:



It's still cycling every three beats, but now it also takes three measures for the entire phrase to cycle. And, believe it or not, this process works no matter what meter you're in!

### **"THIS IS THE SECOND LAW OF STICKINGS"**

Even if you combine stickings (like a 4 and a 3), the sequence would take seven beats and/or seven measures. Just think for a minute about the possibilities this is going to offer you!

## **HOW CAN WE USE STICKINGS?**

**Time Feels**—Stickings allow us to organize the notes in a time feel in endless ways. We can set them up to match certain things that are happening in the tune. We can also get the accents wherever we want, as they can really do a lot.

**Soloing**—Every sticking sequence you play will allow you to move around the set in a variety of ways. They also offer the potential of creating ideas of any length. The possibilities are endless.

When using stickings in either of these situations, the accents may change (or disappear completely) because now you're breaking up the sticking between different sounds.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF METER?**

Meters are the structures we use to organize our musical ideas. Some meters have been around for a long time, and so their typical structure is well known. Other, more exotic meters don't necessarily have a defined structure, and so we'll have a lot of options in terms of how we set them up.

## **ABOUT THE NOTATION**

Owing to what we just talked about, there are many ways to approach different meters, and these can really affect notation. My wife is a classical pianist, and so I've looked at a lot of her music. The composers notate things according to how they want them to be played. They have two BIG advantages over us. The first is pitch, so when they set up a three-note sequence it's very easy to see. Secondly, they have articulation markings (symbols that represent how you're supposed to play the notes—staccato, legato, etc.), that are written into the notation. In a very real sense, stickings are our version of articulation since each sticking has a unique sound.

It's important to understand that our perception of a pattern is heavily influenced by what it looks like. For example:



Many people would say this looks like a beat of singles leading right, followed by a beat of singles leading left, followed by a paradiddle. However, it's actually a combination of the 5C and 7E stickings. Let's add the accents to make it clearer.



Now you can begin to see the stickings, but it still needs something more. So, I decided to add brackets to make it absolutely clear what the pattern is.



This is the way I will be notating the examples when we're dealing with the more common meters. In situations where the meter doesn't have such a defined structure, the notation will be based upon the stickings being used.

Here's an example using the sticking sequence 5C/4B/4B in 13/16:



You will have different options in terms of how you perceive the pulse in such examples. This will be explained in more detail as the specific examples are explored.

## **PRACTICE PROCEDURES**

Here's how you should practice the materials in this book. You have two primary goals. The first is to become really familiar with the meters, and all the different ways they can be organized. Secondly, you're looking for ideas that you can use for time feels, as well as solos.

### **GETTING TO KNOW THE PHRASES**

Most of the examples in this book are set up as one-measure phrases. Each phrase is shown two ways: forwards (starting with the singles) and backwards (starting with the doubles). You should start by playing each example endlessly, as you're just trying to get into it, hearing it, seeing it, and feeling it. Do this with each phrase on the list.

As you're playing certain phrases, you may notice things that indicate some possible uses. Keep these ideas in mind because that's what you're going to be doing with the phrases once you complete the exercises.

### **APPLICATIONS**

The whole purpose of this book is to take the phrases you're learning and use them to develop time feels and solo ideas. What I'm going to do is describe a general process you can use to develop such ideas. It will be up to you to come up with the specific versions on your own. You're going to have literally thousands of possibilities to work with, so you can have a lot of fun doing this and at the same time develop your own concepts about how you're going to approach odd-meter playing.

#### **APPLICATION #1: TIME FEELS**

It's very easy to use sticking phrases to set up time feels. Here's what you do.

**Step 1**—Pick the phrase you want to work with. (I'm going to use 3A/5A/4B in 3/4 time to demonstrate.)

