



The Sound of Brushes

by
ED THIGPEN

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INTRODUCTION

The use of brushes is not new. I have been told that as early as the 1920s the brushes were becoming an integral part of the drummers' equipment.

It would be impossible for any of us to develop without the influence of others. I would like to acknowledge some of the people who have had the greatest influence on my approach to playing brushes: my father Ben Thigpen, Jo Jones, Denzil Best, Art Blakey, Buddy Rich, Max Roach, Shelly Manne, and Elvin Jones. One cannot help but be influenced by these great artists.

Since the emergence of rock music, which for the most part requires heavy drumming, the brushes were set aside or, for most of the young players who began playing during this period, have never been used at all.

In 1965 I wrote a book entitled *Ed Thigpen Talking Drums* in which was included a few pages of diagrammed brush strokes. It was then suggested that I do a book totally devoted to brush technique.

This book is the result. All of the strokes included herein I use, depending upon the musical situation. It is my sincere hope that *The Sound of Brushes* will help you in developing effective brush technique.

ED THIGPEN

Renowned the world over for his exemplary musicianship, brush artistry, and acclaimed teaching methods, Ed Thigpen is considered by musicians and critics alike to be one of the finest drummers/percussionists in jazz.

Born December 28, 1930, in Chicago, Ed was raised, however, in Los Angeles where, while studying music with Samuel Brown, he acquired drumset experience with his school's swing band. In fact, his unwavering dedication and skills earned him the Thomas Jefferson High School music award.

In 1951 he moved to New York City and joined the Cootie Williams Band, playing at the Savoy Ballroom and later touring the U.S. with a number of well-known R&B performers.

Serving in the army between 1952 and 1954, Ed gained his initial experience as a drum instructor with the Sixth Army Band Training Unit before doing a tour of duty in Korea with the Eighth Army Band.

It was between the years 1954 and 1958 while working with such artists as Dinah Washington, Gil Mellé, Bud Powell, Jutta Hipp, and the Billy Taylor Trio that Ed laid the foundation for what has become one of the most enduring and respected careers in jazz. It was during the period with the Billy Taylor Trio and working on the TV series "The Subject Is Jazz" when he decided to pursue his concepts in jazz education.

Ed first gained worldwide acclaim through his work with Oscar Peterson and Ray Brown in what many still believe to be the greatest piano-bass-drums trio in the history of jazz. His contribution to this trio earned him the 1959 *Down Beat* critics' New Star Award. Ed's association with the trio lasted six and a half years (January 1959–June 1965).

In June 1966 he accepted an invitation to tour with the great jazz vocalist, Ella Fitzgerald, with whom he worked until January 1967. Ed then moved to Los Angeles where he became active in studio recording sessions as well as working with notable singers Pat Boone, Johnny Mathis, and Peggy Lee and the orchestras of Oliver Nelson and Gerald Wilson.

In 1968 Ed re-joined Ella Fitzgerald in a trio led by Tommy Flanagan. He remained with Ella and Tommy until September 1972, when he settled in his current home and base of operation, Copenhagen, Denmark. From there he has maintained a busy schedule of international performances with both European and American artists. Additionally, his role as an educator has continued to expand with teaching positions, the publication of several highly acclaimed method books and educational videos, as well as written articles and advisory contributions for *Modern Drummer* magazine, *The Jazz Educators Journal*, and the Percussive Arts Society. All of which further serve to underwrite the undeniable value of Ed Thigpen's continuing contributions to the art of jazz drumming—past, present, and future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2	Combination Left-Hand Full Circle	
Biography	3	With Right-Hand Hook Stroke .....	.32
The Brush	6	Right-Hand Zorro Stroke .....	.33
Brush Technique	7	Right-Hand Zorro Stroke	
Grips for Playing Brushes	7	With Left-Hand Half Circle .....	.34
Brush Sounds and Rhythmic Feels	8	Right-Hand Zorro Stroke	
Rhythmic Feels/Ground Pulse		With Left-Hand Full Circle .....	.35
and Mini-Pulse	9	Combination Right-	
Recommended Study		and Left-Hand Full Circles .....	.36
and Practice Procedure	10	Basic Ride Rhythm in 3/4 Time .....	.37
Sweep, Lift, and Tick/Tap Signs	11	Accented "Let" Count	
Ride Rhythm in Jazz	12	of First Beat in 3/4 Time .....	.38
Brush Strokes for Playing Time	13	Sixteenth-Note Triplet Punctuation .....	.39
Basic Left-Hand Stroke	13	Sixteenth-Note Triplet in 3/4 Rhythm .....	.40
Basic Right-Hand Stroke	14	Stroke for Double-Time Feeling .....	.41
Combined Basic Right-		Altered Triplet Shuffle .....	.42
and Left-Hand Time Strokes	15	Tight Shuffle Sweep .....	.43
Phrasing in Time (Tempo)	16	Tight Sweep and Taps .....	.44
Right-Hand Punctuation		Strumming (Guitar Stroke) .....	.45
(on "let" count of third G.P. beat)	17	Tap-Sweep-Tap (Time Stroke) .....	.46
Combined Right-Hand Punctuation		Dit-Dash, Dit-Dash, Dot-Dash .....	.47
With Basic Left-Hand Brush Stroke	18	Adapting Brushes to	
Left-Hand Punctuation		Latin American Music .....	.48
(on "let" count of third G.P. beat)	19	Brush Sweep Exercises	
Combined Left-Hand Punctuation		for Samba or Bossa Nova .....	.48
With Basic Right-Hand Ride Pattern	20	Guiro, Cabasa (Simulations):	
Accented Right Hand		Exs. 2 and 6 .....	.49
(on "let" count of first G.P. beat)	21	Notated Brush Sweep Patterns .....	.49
Accented Left Hand		Single and Double Strokes and	
(on "let" count of first G.P. beat)	22	Flat Sound (Execution Suggestions) .....	.50
Accented Right Hand		New Ed Thigpen Signature	
(on "let" count of second G.P. beat)	23	"Multi-P" Brush .....	.50
Accented Left Hand		Single-Stroke Exercises .....	.51
(on "let" count of second G.P. beat)	24	Double-Stroke Exercises .....	.52
Accented Right Hand		Flex and Multiple-Bounce Strokes	
(on "let" count of fourth G.P. beat)	25	(Wire Brushes) .....	.53
Accented Left Hand		The Ed Thigpen "Alt" Model Brush .....	.54
(on "let" count of fourth G.P. beat)	26	(Ed Thigpen Signature Wire Brush)	
Basic Left-Hand Sweep		Action Photos Showing Wire Flex and	
With Right-Hand "Tap" or "Tick"	27	Use for Brush and Cross Stick "Clave"	
Left-Hand Half Circle	28	Funk/R&B and Fusion	
Left-Hand Full Circle	29	Patterns for Brushes .....	.55
Right-Hand Hook Stroke	30	4/4 Grooves .....	.57
Combination Left-Hand Half Circle		8/8 Grooves .....	.58
With Right-Hand Hook Stroke	31	Artists' Comments .....	.58
		Reviews .....	.59

Rhythmic Feels/Ground Pulse and Mini-Pulse

Whereas all of the various notes, rest signs, or combinations of mini-pulse beats can be used to create various rhythms, the overall rhythmic interpretation of a musical style or segment of any music being performed can be determined by activating a basic ground pulse beat and its dominant mini-pulse simultaneously.

count
mini-pulse

Ground Pulse

1 an 2 an 3 an 4 an 1 an 2 an 3 an 4 an

**B.D. rhythm can vary*

count
mini-pulse

Ground Pulse

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

Basic "Swing" Ride Rhythm

count
mini-pulse

Ground Pulse

1 e an ah 2 e an ah 3 e an ah 4 e an ah 1 e an ah 2 e an ah

*Sixteenth note m-p
stylistic grooves vary*

Tap the G.P. with your foot in a steady tempo. Count out the mini-pulse beats while tapping the ground pulse beat with your foot. Use a metronome or click track to check the steadiness of the G.P. foot tap.

These mini-pulse beats are always active whether sounded or not. They are expressed in the breathing and or vibrato of the instrumentalist or vocalist.

Left-Hand Half Circle

This stroke can be used as an alternative to the full circle.

