

GROOVE SYSTEMS

FUNCTIONAL FOUR-WAY COORDINATION EXERCISES

SYSTEMS INCLUDE

ALLEN'S AFROBEAT
GO-GO
JAMES BROWN
ELVIN LATIN
REGGAE
JAZZ TIME
AFRO-CUBAN 6/8
GADD MOZAMBIQUE
PURDIE VARIATIONS
IDRIS BOOGALOO

BY TIM CARMAN

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR . . .

I have been developing the concept for this book for several years and am thrilled to finally share it with you all. The idea was originally inspired by my first drum teacher, the late Bob Gullotti, who utilized African rhythms to develop a four-way coordination exercise he called "The Kinka." Gullotti's method called for the student to perform an ostinato (repeated pattern) with their feet while reading call-and-response melodic passages with their hands. I found these coordination exercises to be both challenging and incredibly beneficial for numerous reasons. First, they were musical! Unlike many coordination exercises I had practiced—which often contained impractical limb combinations—these were especially enjoyable because they created melodies. Second, by presenting a large variety of ostinatos and call-and-response passages, "The Kinka" contained an enormous number of possible rhythmic combinations that could be studied and practiced for years. Last, because Gullotti transcribed the rhythms directly from a West African percussionist, "The Kinka" not only developed four-way coordination, but also presented real vocabulary from a specific style of music.

Inspired by Gullotti, I sought to develop my own coordination system with these ideas in mind. The book contains 10 Groove Systems across a variety of styles: Afrobeat, Gogo, James Brown, Reggae, Elvin Latin, Jazz Time, Afro-Cuban 6/8, Gadd Mozambique, Purdie Variations, and Idris Boogaloo. Like the "The Kinka," each system can be utilized as a way to develop four-way coordination in a functional and musical manner. The vocabulary presented has been directly transcribed from the given genre or style. For example, in the Elvin Latin System, I transcribed Elvin's ride patterns for the "A" vocabulary, his cross-stick and tom melodies for the "B" vocabulary, and his bass drum and hi-hat foot combinations for the "C" vocabulary. Finally, due to the large variety of vocabulary presented, this method allows the student to create an almost endless amount of rhythmic combinations.

The beginning of each system contains a brief history of the style of music, a list of some of the key drummers and artists who exemplify that style, and groove examples. Along with the vocabulary presented in each system, there are melodic passages at the end of the book that can be read on various limbs and utilized for additional studies.

I truly hope you enjoy working through this method.

—Tim

INTRODUCTION

The System Explained:

Each Groove System utilizes patterns directly transcribed from the given style of music as a vehicle for both coordination development and an increase in stylistic vocabulary. The Groove System encompasses thousands of coordination exercises across 10 unique musical styles. Each chapter contains a brief history of the style of music, as well as a list of the key drummers, artists, and grooves that exemplify that style. The Groove System follows and contains vocabulary for each isolated “instrument” of the drum set.

Groove System Labels:

This book utilizes letters in each system with the purpose of organizing the rhythms played on each limb. For example, in the James Brown section, “A” refers to the hi-hat patterns that will be used, “B” refers to the snare drum accent patterns, “C” refers to the bass drum patterns, and “D” refers to the ghost note variations. Additionally, each letter is numbered (e.g., A1, A2, A3, A4, etc.). This method will allow you to organize and keep track of all the combinations that you have practiced. For example: “Monday, I practiced A1 and C1 with B1-B6. Today, I should start my practice on B7.”

Combining The Vocabulary:

There are a variety of creative ways to combine the patterns in each chapter. Using the James Brown Section as an example, the student can create an ostinato utilizing A1 as the repeated hi-hat pattern, B1 as the repeated snare drum accent pattern, and C1 as the repeated bass drum pattern. While performing this ostinato, the student can play through all of the snare drum ghost note examples (D1, D2, etc.). Follow the steps listed after each system, but also experiment with your own rhythmic combinations!

Melodic Passage Studies:

Some Groove Systems will refer you to melodic passages located in the last pages of the book. These passages are organized by time signature and should be used to further develop coordination within the given style.

Practice Tips

The notation for each limb in this book is presented separately so you cannot visualize how each instrument lines up on one staff. The vocabulary is laid out in this way for a variety of reasons. First, it will force you to memorize each ostinato before reading through the rhythmic combinations. Second, it will help you develop a stronger understanding of rhythm as it relates to your ostinato, which will lead to more improvisational freedom in that style. Last, it will force you to reach a deep level of focus as you practice, which will eventually carry over to live performances. Additionally, practicing in this manner can be both physically and mentally challenging, so I recommend focusing on one or two ostinatos each practice session. Also, make sure you utilize the blank notation section in the back of the book to write out some of the more complicated examples. Finally, it is essential that you listen to and practice along with the song examples provided at the beginning of each section. It should also be noted that while these 10 systems can be practiced in any order, I recommend focusing on one system at a time.

Straight vs. Swung vs. In-the-Cracks

All of the examples in this book are either straight, swung, or in-the-cracks between straight and swung. Straight grooves are based on a strict sixteenth-note subdivision. Swung grooves, like a jazz ride pattern or a shuffle, are based on a triplet subdivision. You can swing both eighth-notes and sixteenth-notes. Grooves that are in-the-cracks, which New Orleans drummers like Idris Muhammad and Zigaboo Modeliste exemplify, land somewhere in between the triplet and sixteenth-note subdivision. Refer to the image below to visualize how these notes relate to one another:

1 e + a 2

straight sixteenths

6 swung sixteenths

straight eighths

in-the-cracks eighths

3 swung eighths

1 trip let 2

Feel, Sound, and Time

In my opinion, feel, sound, and time are the three most important aspects of not just drumming, but also music as a whole. The **feel** of a style of music is generated by its subdivision. Is the music based on a triplet subdivision and therefore swung? Is it based on sixteenth-notes and therefore straight? Or does it land somewhere "in-the-cracks" between straight and swung? Along with subdivision, feel is defined by intensity. Is the groove on top and driving, or does it have a laid-back swagger? Each system in this book is different, and it is essential that you listen to and imitate the groove examples given at the beginning of each section to achieve the proper feel. **Sound** is an incredibly important and often overlooked aspect of drumming. Dynamics, drum tuning, and touch all combine to create your sound on the kit. Each style or genre of music calls for slight differences in sound. For example, hard-bop jazz drumming calls for a wide range of dynamics, light and crisp playing on the snare and bass drum, and greater emphasis on the hi-hat and ride cymbal, while rock drumming calls for almost the opposite: solid and aggressive snare and bass drum playing and an overall louder dynamic. Jazz drummers usually tune their drums to higher pitches and play with a lighter touch than rock drummers, who often utilize heavy snare drum rim shots as their backbeat. Knowing how and when to execute these differences is essential. Last, **time** is defined by the space between each note. Having "good" or "steady" time means you have consistent control over these spaces. Counting out loud and playing with a metronome are two good ways to develop steady time, which is why all of the systems in this book contain suggested metronome markings for you to practice with. Consideration of all three elements is essential. By executing your notes with the proper tone and dynamic (**sound**), within the necessary subdivision (**feel**), and in a controlled and consistent manner (**time**), you will create music that GROOVES!

DRUM KEY

A musical staff diagram illustrating the drum key. The staff is divided into two systems. The top system includes: Ride (marked with an asterisk), Hi-Hat (marked with an 'x'), Hi-Hat Open (marked with an 'o'), Tom 1, Tom 2, Snare, Cross Stick, Bass Drum, and Hi-Hat Splash. The bottom system includes: Cowbell/Woodblock, Snare Ghost Note, Floor Tom, and Hi-Hat Foot (marked with an 'o').

R = Right Hand

L = Left Hand

> = Accent

|| ♪ Or ♪ = buzz note or multiple bounce note

♪ = ♪³ swing

Final Thoughts

Today, professional gigging drummers are expected to be proficient at a variety of styles of music. After graduating from the Berklee College of Music, I often found that I would get called for a gig that required proficiency in a style that I knew I needed to touch up on—such as reggae—and usually I'd have a day or two to prepare. I think the Groove Systems in this book are a fantastic way to practice for situations like this.

These systems are meant to introduce you to the vocabulary of 10 styles of drumming. For further information, I highly recommend checking out resources that are dedicated exclusively to each style.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Based in Boston, MA, Tim Carman is an international touring musician, session drummer, published author, and educator. He currently performs and tours with GA-20, an electric blues trio signed with Karma Chief/Colemine Records, and leads his own funk/jazz project called Tim Carman & The Street 45s.

Tim has a Bachelor of Arts degree in music and history from Hamilton College and is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music. He has been fortunate to study drums with the likes of Gary Chaffee, Bob Gullotti, Dave DiCenso, Bruce Becker, Kim Plainfield, Jackie Santos, Tony "Thunder" Smith, Daniel Glass, Steve Hass, Steve Langone, Neal Smith, Jimmy Johns, and many more.

Along with performing, Tim is a dedicated educator with more than 15 years of teaching experience. In 2017, he released his first drum set method book, *Shape Beats for Kids*. Published by Alfred Music, the book utilizes shapes to teach young students basic beats that they can use to play along with popular songs. In 2020, Tim released *Shape Beats: Drum Notation Simplified*, a book tailored to beginning drummers of all ages.

Tim is proudly endorsed by Bosphorus cymbals and Walberg & Auge drums. For more information, visit timcarmandrums.com.

GROOVE SYSTEM 1: ALLEN'S AFROBEAT

Key Drummers:

Tony Allen, Ginger Baker, Phillip Ballman, Geoff Mann, Dylan Fusillo, Chris Vatalaro, Miles Arntzen, Tosin Aribisala, Kevin Raczka

Key Artists:

Fela Kuti, Femi Kuti, Antibalas, Tony Allen & Africa 70, BANTU, Dr. Victor Olaiya's International All Stars, Bola Johnson, Peter King, Segun Bucknor, Ebo Taylor, Seun Kuti, Fela's Egypt 80

Brief History:

Afrobeat originated in the 1960s and 1970s, and is an amalgamation of multiple styles, including funk and jazz from the Americas and traditional Yoruba music and Highlife from Africa. Pioneered by Nigerian musician Fela Kuti and drummer Tony Allen, Afrobeat's songs were often political in nature and critical of the Nigerian military dictatorship. Kuti's band was large, containing a full horn section, rhythm section, percussionists, and backup singers who performed skillfully crafted songs that often lasted up to 30 minutes. Along with the drum kit, repeated patterns from the woodblock and shekere play a significant role in both driving the band and creating the Afrobeat feel. Afrobeat songs contain call-and-response vocals and complex polyrhythms that are repetitive and hypnotic.



Without Tony Allen, there would be no Afrobeat.¹

—Fela Kuti

Drumming Characteristics:

Afrobeat drumming, which is highly influenced by jazz drumming, includes extensive use of all four limbs, often changing and evolving “ride” patterns on the hi-hat or cymbal, a light and crisp touch, and improvised chatter on the snare drum. Afrobeat music follows a 3-2 or 2-3 clave. Most of the following examples utilize the 3-2 clave. In interviews, Tony Allen often emphasized the importance of playing light: “Some drummers don't know what it means to play soft, it's not in their book . . . I know how to make it subtle. You listen to it like a flowing river.” Allen executed these highly syncopated and subtle grooves with a “laid-back” and revolutionary swagger, inspiring drummers across the globe, like Ginger Baker. Allen would utilize his hi-hat foot at all times, even while “riding” on the hi-hat, often emphasizing the “ands” just as a jazz drummer would emphasize beats “two” and “four.” Allen would often vary his groove slightly throughout a song, improvising hi-hat openings and snare and bass drum notes in response to the band. His creativity was endless.

GROOVE EXAMPLES

Afrobeat 1

The first Afrobeat groove system is characterized by a bass drum emphasis on beats "one" and "three," and syncopated patterns on the snare drum in response to the bass drum. As Tony Allen explained, the hi-hat foot should be utilized at all times even when "riding" on the hats. These notes are felt more than they are heard. I recommend getting comfortable with the parts played by your other three limbs before adding in your hi-hat foot. Refer to the following examples:

Tony Allen on the song "I No Get Eye For Back" by Fela Kuti (*Alagbon Close*, 1975)



Tony Allen on the song "Upside Down" by Fela Kuti (*Upside Down*, 1976)



Afrobeat 2

The second Afrobeat groove system is characterized by a snare drum emphasis on the "one" and "three," syncopated rhythms in the bass drum in response, and similar to Afrobeat 1, an active hi-hat foot. Refer to the grooves below, the first of which is the foundational Afrobeat 2 groove from which we will build on.



Tony Allen on the song "Alagbon Close" by Fela Kuti (*Alagbon Close*, 1975)

Basic groove "1:45"



Change in hi-hat foot emphasis