

the breakbeat bible

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The Breakbeat Bible

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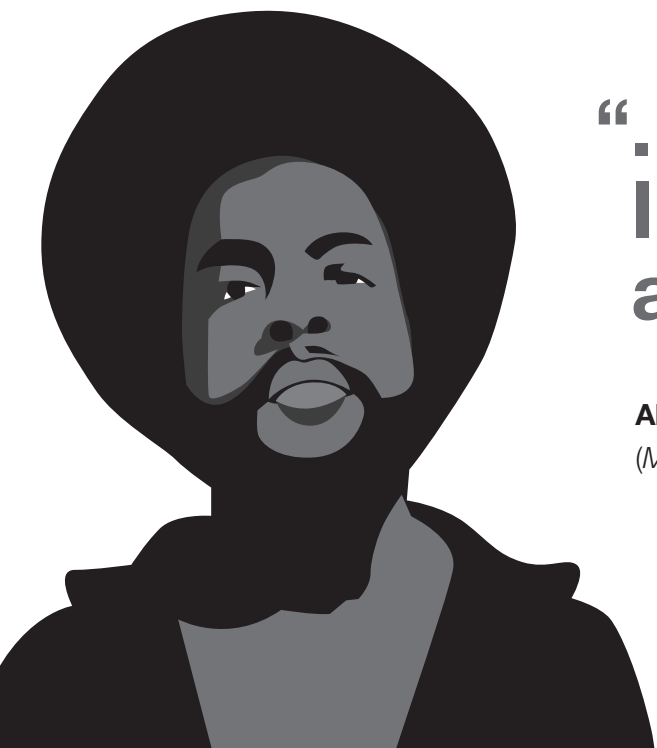


Foreword

There's something inherently kinetic about a drum break.

Maybe it's the drummer's intent to play the absolute tightest, funkier, most revolutionary beat possible. Maybe it's the vibe of the studio session. Whatever it is, the inherent energy of the break carries over to the music that uses the break as a sample. As I began to analyze drum breaks used in hip-hop, I realized that authentically replicating them on the drumset is more difficult than it seems. The exercises, beats, concepts, and transcriptions in this book are things that I've been developing over the past several years. My intention has been to tighten up and take my own playing to the next level. I hope this book will help other players as much as it has been helping me. I also hope it brings as much enjoyment to drummers as other books have brought to me over the years. After all, that's what it's all about.

Mike Adamo



“...breakbeat drumming, I feel, is an impeccable art form.”

Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson
(Modern Drummer, March 2005)

The Mission of *The Breakbeat Bible*

This book focuses on the fundamentals of breakbeat drumming, as applied to hip-hop. However, you can also apply the grooves/concepts from the book to a variety of genres.

A breakbeat is, in essence, a funk beat. However, it's also much more. Due to the nature of looping, and the precision of programmed drum patterns, there's an impeccable tightness to a breakbeat beyond that of your average funk beat. This is not to say that one is better than the other; they're just different. For example, let's consider the song "Here Comes the Meter Man" by The Meters, from their 1969 self-titled release. Zigaboo Modeliste's drumming pushes and pulls throughout the track. The tempo pretty much stays the same, but if you analyzed the drum track in Beat Detective, the kick, snare, and hi-hat parts would fall in slightly different places in each measure. This is beautiful because it gives the song a unique feel and swing. This is funk drumming at its finest. In contrast, consider the Digable Planet's song "Black Ego" from the album *Blowout Comb* (Pendulum Records, 1994). The drum pattern from this song is based on a two-bar drum break sampled from Zig's playing at the end of "Here Comes the Meter Man." **It's a looped two-bar drum break, therefore, in "Black Ego" the timing nuances of the kick, snare, and hi-hat occur at the exact same place in each measure.** A certain precision comes from this looped drum pattern that doesn't from a drummer playing throughout an entire song. Programmed drum patterns are even more precise than looped breakbeat samples. They're created with computers and drum machines, and are inherently precise (unless you program by hand, in real time, with the quantization off, like Jay Dee a.k.a. J. Dilla sometimes did). Due to the prevalence of drum loops and programmed beats in contemporary music, in addition to the use of Pro Tools in post-production to fix the recorded playing of live drummers, people have come to expect a certain level of perfection in drum beats.

The Breakbeat Bible begins with the Elements section. Here, breakbeat drumming is divided into thirteen elements. Each element is introduced and discussed in its own chapter. The introduction and discussion are followed by exercises, beats, and eight-bar phrases pertaining to the specific element. These give drummers the opportunity to practice reproducing breakbeats on a drumset. The Elements section is followed by Beats With Everything, Beats With Drops, Fills, and Breakbeat Transcriptions. The next section of the book is the Click Track Loops. This section contains various click track patterns meant to be programmed with a drum machine. They're designed to strengthen the internal clock while enhancing your precision, timing, and groove. Practicing with these loops will bring a new degree of tightness to your drumming. They will give you the control necessary to reproduce breakbeats with loop-like precision. The Click Track Loop section also discusses various options for non-traditional metronome usage, should you not have a drum machine. These will also tighten up your drumming, although not quite to the degree of the full-on Click Track Loops. The final section of the book contains a brief overview of Dubstep.

Breakbeat drumming is an art form. There's a deeper level of tightness and accuracy that we're striving for here, and this book will help you to attain it.

These are important times, and music is playing a critical role in initiating change and promoting positivity. In a time when DJs and computers are taking over the music scene, it's important for drummers to step up in tightness and groove. This book will help drummers match beats and play with loops and DJs in a live context. After all, there is no greater blessing in music than the presence and soul of a drummer. Word up.

Concepts

There are three main concepts that should be used in conjunction with practicing the exercises and beats in this book.

The first is playing along with recorded songs. This will help you develop the feel of the type of music you want to learn. It'll also develop a stronger sense of time, your internal clock, and your groove. Use the following four-step process when practicing/playing along with songs:

1. Listen to the song a few times. Check out what the drummer is doing, and how this fits in with the other instruments. It'll help a lot if you actually transcribe (write out) the drum part.
2. Play along with the song 10 times in a row.
3. Record yourself playing along to the song (listen to the song through headphones, so just your playing is recorded).
4. Listen back to the recording and analyze your playing. If your beat doesn't sound and feel like the recording, figure out what's wrong and repeat the process. Keep on doing this until your playing begins to match the recording. Don't worry, you won't lose your individual feel by doing this. You will gain the control necessary to duplicate pre-existing feels and beats.

Also, practice the exercises and beats in this book along with music that you want to get the feel of. In other words, use recorded music as your click track. Obviously, the exercises and beats from this book will be different than the drum parts of the song. That's okay. This process is more about capturing and applying a certain feel to the exercises and beats. For example, use albums such as James Brown's *In the Jungle Groove* if you want to get that classic breakbeat feel, or use Gang Starr's *Moment of Truth* or A Tribe Called Quest's *Midnight Marauders* if you want to get that classic 1990s East Coast hip-hop feel. The more styles you do this with, the better off you'll be.

The second concept is playing along with a metronome/click track. This helps you develop the ability to play with metronomically tight time (if the situation requires it). It also gives you the ability to bend the time, play "in between the cracks" of straight and swung, or play slightly behind or slightly in front of the beat (without dragging or rushing the pulse). These are important skills to have for contemporary drumming.

At first, practice the exercises and beats of this book with a standard quarter note click track. When you're comfortable with this, you can begin practicing with the Click Track Loops (located on pg. 162). You don't necessarily have to finish the other sections of the book before getting into the Click Track Loops.

Play the exercises and beats in this book at various tempos. In order to build solid, feel-good grooves, start slow and gradually increase the tempo. A general tempo range for the exercises and beats is between 85 and 105 bpm (the average hip-hop tempo). However, you should be comfortable playing them slower and faster as well. A lot of the beats in this book will also work well in the Drum'n'Bass

and Jungle tempo ranges (about 160-180 bpm and 190-210 bpm respectively). If you want to take them to that level, make sure you start slow and gradually increase the tempo. Otherwise, your playing will be strained, rushed, and uneven. If you're interested in Drum'n'Bass and Jungle, check out *Jungle/Drum'n'Bass for the Acoustic Drumset* (Alfred Publishing) by Johnny Rabb.

The third concept is feeling an underlying half-note or whole-note pulse as you practice/play various grooves (instead of feeling a quarter-, eighth-, or sixteenth-note pulse). This is important for generating a relaxed, open feel. Intense practice with a metronome, and/or the Click Track Loops, despite tightening up your playing, may cause your overall groove to become forced and rigid. Feeling the underlying half-note or whole-note pulse will give your playing a more open, relaxed feel, while maintaining the tightness developed with the metronome/Click Track Loops.

Using these concepts will greatly enhance your internal clock. They'll tighten up your playing and help you authentically replicate breakbeats on the drumset. They will also give you the skills to match programmed beats and perform with DJs, sequenced backing tracks, and loops.

Practice

It will take hours of practice/playing to take your drumming to the next level. It's up to you to decide how intensely you want to practice. Increased skill level is not something money can buy. Lessons with the best teachers and the best new gear in the world will not make you a better player without practice. You can't buy skills, and you can't use a computer to program yourself to be better (yet). That's the value of intense, focused practice. It's something you earn for yourself, and no one can take that away from you.

Listening

Once you attain a certain level of technical proficiency, things you hear in music will begin to automatically emerge in your playing. Therefore, it's important to listen to the style of music that you want to play. Although this book discusses artists that use breakbeats, it is by no means the final word on the topic. Hopefully this book will be a launch pad for your journey into the greater "Breakbeat Universe." It's also important to draw inspiration from a variety of musical styles. That way you'll always keep your playing fresh.

Drum Sounds

The drum sound for the breakbeat style is often very tight and controlled. In the studio this can be accomplished in a variety of ways. One technique of old-school soul music is to cover the entire drum set with a blanket. In addition to this, the drummer plays as lightly as possible. This creates a dirty, gritty, compressed sound. A controlled, dry drum sound makes it easier for engineers to add effects after the drums have been recorded. You can also achieve this type of drum sound by putting t-shirts over the drums, duct taping the drum head, or putting your wallet on the drum head. There's also a product called Moon Gel that works well.



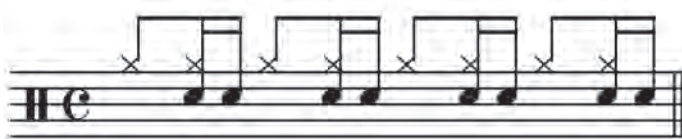
The Third Element

The snare playing two 16th notes in a row with one hand.

This can occur on either the “and-ah’s,” the “e-and’s,” the “1-e,” “2-e,” “3-e,” or “4-e,” or the “ah-1,” “ah-2,” “ah-3,” or “ah-4.” The Third Element adds texture, color, and depth to a beat. Also, like the First and Second Elements, it can be used to determine the swing of a beat. With this element, there are different combinations of accents and ghost notes. Sometimes both notes will be ghosted. Sometimes both will be mezzo forte. Occasionally, the first note will be accented and the second ghosted. This is known as a control stroke, and will be discussed later in the chapter. Sometimes the first note will be ghosted, and the second will be accented. This is known as a pull out, and will also be discussed later in the chapter. **The Third Element is a cornerstone of breakbeat drumming.**

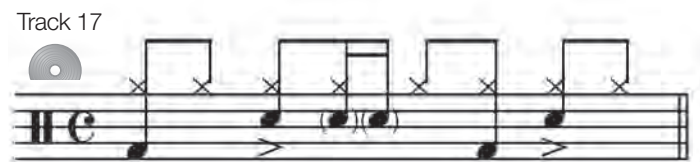
For now, let’s start simple.

Here’s what the snare notated on the “and-ah’s” looks like:

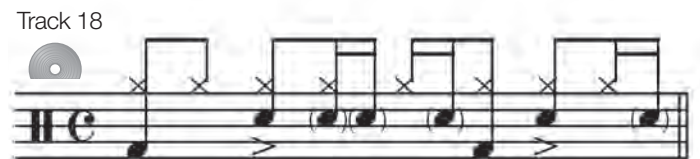


Within the context of a full groove, this usually occurs on the “and-ah” of beat 2 and/or the “and-ah” of beat 4.

In this beat, the snare is playing ghost notes on the “and-ah” of 2:



Two 16th notes in a row on the “and-ah” are often mixed with single snare subdivisions (the First Element). Check it out:



Play through the previous examples. Notice the extra texture, color, and depth created by those ghosted snare notes (especially the instances of “two in a row”).



“Take Me to the Mardi Gras”

Bob James

Two (CTI Records, 1975)

This break features the inimitable **Steve Gadd** on drums. Notice instances of the Third Element in the first and third measures. This four-bar break occurs at the intro.

≈104 bpm
0:00

This break was sampled for the **Run-DMC** song “**Peter Piper,**” from the album ***Raising Hell*** (Profile, 1986). Rick Rubin and Russell Simmons (the producers of the track) added processed kick, snare, and high-hat patterns. Although it kind of covers up Gadd’s original drum pattern, it really fattens up the beat.

Here’s what the snare notated on the “e-and’s” looks like:

Within the context of a full drum beat, this usually occurs on the “e-and” of beat 1 and/or the “e-and” of beat 3. Remember, nothing is set in stone. It can occur anywhere in the measure.

In this beat, the snare is playing ghost notes on the “e-and” of 3:

Track 19



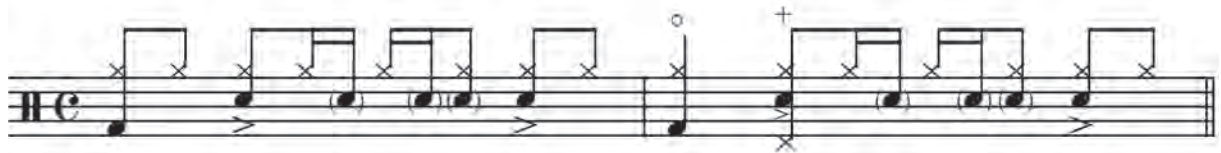
“Think (About It)”

Lyn Collins

Think (About It) (People Records, 1972)

This break is from Lyn Collins’ cover of James Brown’s “Think (About It).” Lyn’s version is backed by the JB’s, and features **John “Jabo” Starks** on drums. It was released in 1972 on People Records (a label founded and co-owned by James Brown). Check out other artists from this label as well. This break occurs at 1:21, and again at 2:02 in the song. It contains a good example of the Third Element in a classic drum break. (Note: The open circle over the hi-hat note on beat 1 of the second measure means that it’s an open hi-hat note. This topic will be discussed in the Fifth Element chapter.)

≈113 bpm
1:21



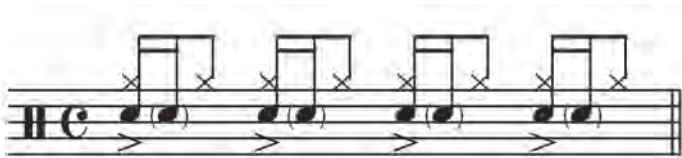
This break has been sampled countless times. For example, it was sampled and slowed down for the **Heavy D and the Boyz** song “**You Ain’t Heard Nuttin Yet,**” from the album **Big Tyme** (MCA Records, 1989). DJ Eddie F (the producer of the track) slightly chopped up the original break in order to create the new beat. He also enhanced it with a percussion part.

Now we’ll get into control strokes and pull outs...

Control Strokes

Control Strokes occur when there are two 16th notes in a row played with one hand. The first note is accented, and the second note is ghosted. This is achieved by playing a full stroke for the accented note, then allowing the tips of your middle, ring, and pinky fingers to control the rebound from that stroke in order to achieve the ghost note. It’s one smooth motion, as opposed to two separate motions.

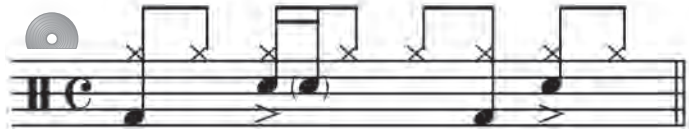
Control strokes usually occur on a downbeat (1, 2, 3, or 4) and the following “e”:



Control strokes most commonly appear with the accented note falling on beat 2 or 4. However, this is not always the case. For instance, there could be an accented note on the “and,” followed by a ghost on the “ah.”

Here’s an example of a beat that contains a control stroke. Notice how the snare plays the accented note on beat 2, then immediately plays a ghost note on the “e” of 2:

Track 20



Control strokes are often mixed with other ghost notes, like this:

Track 21



Play through the previous examples. Notice how the control strokes add another layer of depth to the beats.



“Chinese Chicken”

Duke Williams and the Extremes

Monkey in a Silk Suit is Still a Monkey (Capricorn Records, 1973)

This break features **Earl Young** on drums. Young was a force to be reckoned with on the 1970s Philadelphia funk/soul/R&B studio scene. This is a four-bar break. The first bar contains a control stroke on 2, the second bar contains a control stroke on 4, and the fourth bar contains a control stroke on 2. Look out for other subdivisions on the snare (both ghosted and accented). The break occurs @ 1:40.

≈116 bpm
@ 1:40

(Note: The hi-hat note with an open circle over it on the “and” of 4 in the second bar is an open hi-hat note. This is discussed in the Fifth Element Chapter. This is an advanced break, so don’t worry if you can’t quite play it right away. For now just listen to how those **control strokes** sound in the context of a classic drum break.)

Pull Outs

Pull outs also occur when there are two 16th notes in a row played with one hand. However, this time the first note is ghosted, and the second is accented. This is achieved by playing the ghost note as you’re lifting your wrist to play the accented note. You play the ghost note as your wrist is pulling up (your wrist is pulling up, but your hand and the stick are moving downward, towards the drum head), then right away you snap your wrist to play the accented note. Again, this is done in one smooth motion, as opposed to two separate motions. This is an advanced concept. Check out the book *It’s Your Move* (Alfred Publishing), by Dom Famularo and Joe Bergamini, for a more in-depth discussion of control strokes and pull outs.

Pull outs usually occur on the “ah” followed by the next downbeat.

They most commonly occur with a ghost note on the “ah” of 1 followed by an accented snare note on beat 2, or a ghost note on the “ah” of 3 followed by an accented snare note on beat 4. But, again, they can occur anywhere.

Here’s an example of a beat that contains a pull out. Notice the ghost note on the “ah” of 3 followed by the accented note on beat 4:

Track 22

A musical staff showing a drum pattern. The staff is labeled 'Track 22' and 'HC'. The pattern consists of four measures. The first measure has a snare note on beat 1. The second measure has a snare note on beat 2. The third measure has a ghost note on beat 3 and an accented snare note on beat 4. The fourth measure has a snare note on beat 4.



BREAKS



“Squib Cakes”

Tower of Power,
Back to Oakland (Warner Bros., 1974)

This break features the legendary **David Garibaldi** on drums. The first and second bars feature pull outs, and the third bar also contains a pull out (notice the ghost note on the “e” of 3 followed by the accent on the “and” of 3). This break occurs at the beginning of the song.

≈112 bpm
0:00

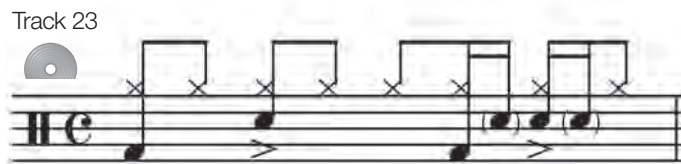
Two staves of musical notation for the 'Squib Cakes' drum break. The first staff shows the first three measures, with a triplet of eighth notes on the snare in the first measure and a ghost note on the snare in the third measure. The second staff shows the next three measures, with a triplet of eighth notes on the snare in the first measure and a ghost note on the snare in the third measure. The notation includes various drum symbols like snare, kick, and hi-hat, with accents and pull-out markings.

This break contains control strokes in addition to pull outs. It also contains elements we haven’t covered yet, such as open hi-hat notes and two 16th notes in a row on the kick drum. This is an advanced break. Don’t worry if you can’t play it yet. For now just follow along and listen to how the **pull outs** sound in the context of a classic drum break.

You can also play a pull out into a control stroke.

This is achieved by performing the pull out, and then using the accented note of the pull out as the first note of the control stroke. Again, it's all done in one smooth motion, but you're playing three notes. The first note is ghosted, the middle note is accented, and the third note is ghosted. Clyde Stubblefield was one of the first drummers to use this in funk drumming. He's a modern-day master of this technique.

Here's what that looks like within the context of a beat:



This is an advanced technique which will require a lot of practice to get sounding smooth. Take it slow at first; you may want to begin as slow as 40 bpm. Gradually increase the speed. With enough patience and focus, you'll be able to get this sounding like Clyde. Feel free to move on to the rest of the book before you have this concept mastered. It's something you'll have to constantly work on over a long period of time—not something you learn in a week.

BREAKS



“Ain't It Hard”

Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings

Dap Dippin' With... (Daptone Records, 2002)

This break features the great **Homer Steinweiss** on drums. Make sure you check out some other artists on **Daptone Records** as well. The second bar features a pull out into a control stroke. This four-bar break starts @ 1:32.

≈113 bpm
@ 1:32





“Mother Popcorn (Pts. 1 & 2)”

James Brown

[released as a single (King, 1969)]

Although not an actual drum break, perhaps the most famous example of the pull out into the control stroke features **Clyde Stubblefield** on drums. This song was originally released as a two-part single in 1969 on the **King** record label. If you don't already have this one, make sure you get it off the **Star Time** compilation, which contains the full-length, 6:16 version.

♩ ≈117 bpm
▶ 0:00



This is a difficult beat to play. Take it slow at first, then gradually increase the tempo.



THE ARCHITECTS ::

David Garibaldi

David Garibaldi was born on November 4th, 1946 in Oakland, California. He plays drums for the legendary funk band Tower of Power. He began playing drums in the Pleasanton Elementary School band at the age of ten. He got his first pro gig, with the Sid Reis Big Band, when he was a senior in high school. Upon receiving a draft notice for the Vietnam War, he opted to join the Air Force to avoid being sent overseas. This led him to the 724th USAF Band, which was stationed at McChord Air Force Base in Tacoma, Washington. After leaving the Air Force, Garibaldi began playing on the Oakland music scene. Up until this time, he felt the most respectable thing a musician could do with their art was to become a jazz player. However, rock and funk music were gaining popularity and becoming viable occupations for the professional musician. David witnessed a James Brown concert and decided he wanted to be a funk drummer. Developing his own voice became a primary goal. At this point the singer and bass player of the Tower of Power watched David play in a club, and invited him to check out their band. He was impressed, and joined the Tower of Power in 1970 (replacing the singer's brother).

The social upheaval occurring in the San Francisco area during the early 1970s was reflected in Tower of Power's music. All band members participated in the song writing process, and they all wanted to originate as opposed to imitate. After recording their first album, *East Bay Grease* (San Francisco Records, 1970), Garibaldi realized he had a limited vocabulary on the drumset. He didn't want to repeat himself musically, so he began developing different grooves for each song. Eventually, he'd create a different drum groove for each section of a song. This led him to develop a uniquely progressive drum style. Garibaldi created some of the most classic drum breaks of all time, including those found in "Squib Cakes" and "Ebony Jam."

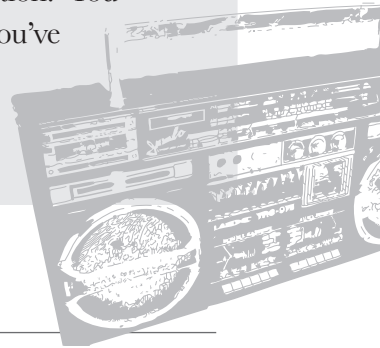
In addition to Tower of Power, Garibaldi has performed/recorded with Boz Scaggs, The BBC Orchestra, The Buddy Rich Orchestra, and Talking Drums. He's also an important educator, and author of classic texts such as *Future Sounds* (Alfred Publishing) and *The Code of Funk* (Hudson Music). (www.towerofpower.com) (www.drummerworld.com)



Two 16th Notes in a Row on the Snare: **Exercises**

These exercises will help you play the different versions of the Third Element. The exercises are grouped into five different categories. They all contain steady eighth notes on the hi-hat and steady quarter notes on the kick. This will allow you to focus on the more intricate snare patterns. Again, feel free to experiment with applying swing to these exercises.

These categories are not necessarily meant to be practiced in a sequential order. For example, if you feel you need extra practice with pull outs, spend more time on the pull out section. You can revisit these exercises as you proceed through the rest of the book, or even after you've finished it. **You can also benefit from practicing these exercises without the hi-hat patterns.** Remember to start slow and gradually increase the tempo.



Two 16th notes in a row: **both are mezzo forte**

1

2

3

4

Track 24

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

18

16

19

17

20

Two 16th notes in a row: **both are ghosted**

1

8

2

9

3

10

4

11

Track 25

5

12

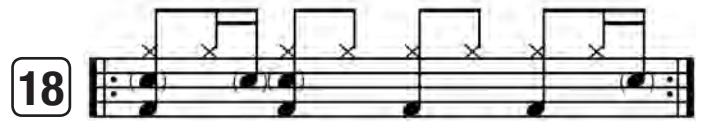
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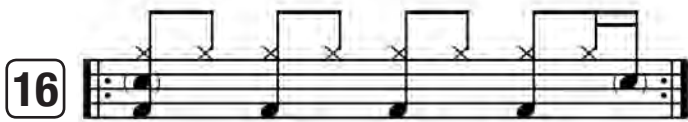
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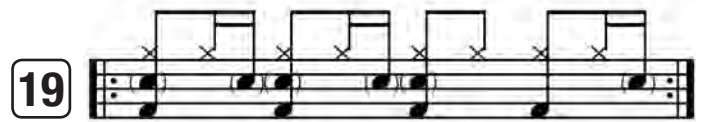
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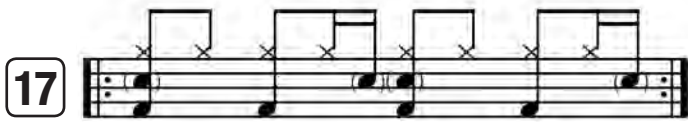
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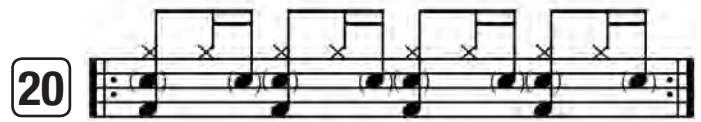
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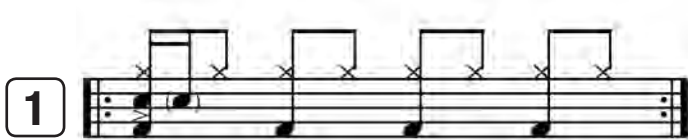
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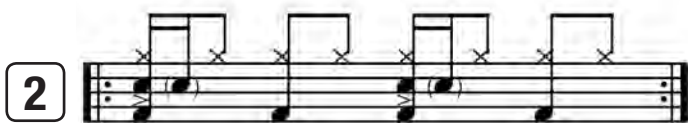
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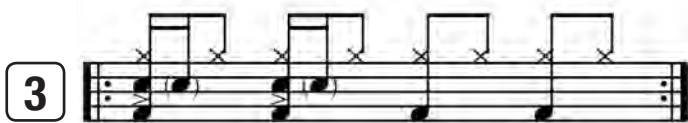
Two 16th notes in a row: **control strokes**

1 

8 

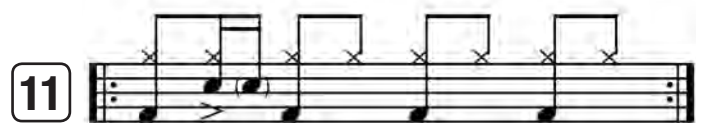
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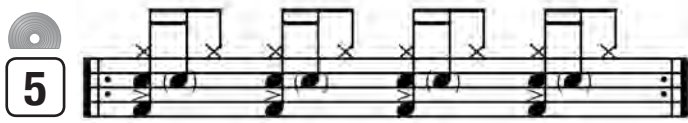
3 

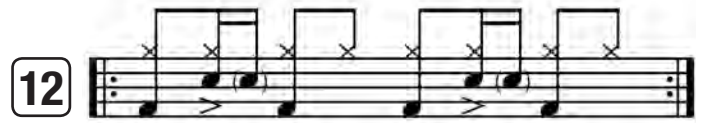
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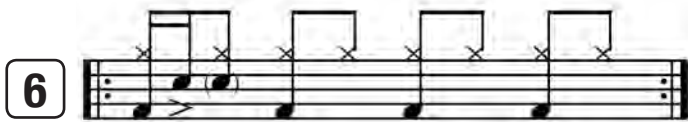
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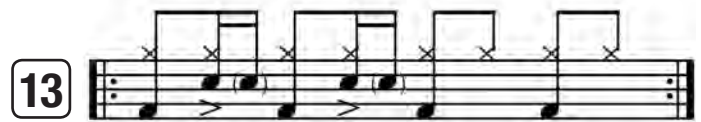
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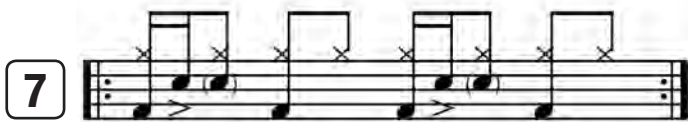
Track 26

5 

12 

6 

13 

7 

14 

15

18

16

19

17

20

Two 16th notes in a row: **pull outs**

1

8

2

9

3

10

4

11

Track 27

5

12

6

13

7

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

Two 16th notes in a row: **mixed patterns**

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Track 28

9

Track 29

10

11

* **12**

* **13**

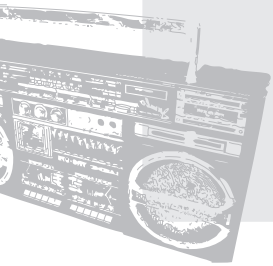
* These exercises contain examples of pull outs into control strokes (you'll need to spend extra time on these).



Two 16th Notes in a Row on the Snare: **Beats**

These beats have simple kick and hi-hat patterns so you can focus on the snare patterns. In addition to the two 16th notes in a row on the snare, the beats also contain some single 16th-note subdivisions on the snare (the First Element). Again, do your best to keep the hi-hat smooth (don't accent it when the snare is accenting). Feel free to apply swing to these beats. However, keep in mind that breakbeats are usually straight or "in-between-the-cracks" of straight and swung.

Start slow (60bpm) and gradually increase the tempo. Again, you may want to practice these beats without the hi-hat pattern. This will help strengthen your kick and snare timing.



1

2

3

4

5

Track 30

6

7

8

Track 31

9

10

* **11**

12

* **13**

Once you're comfortable with the Third Element beats, play the following beat before each of them:

This will make each beat into a two-bar phrase. Repeat each new two-bar phrase 20 times, then move on to the next one.

* These beats contain examples of pull outs into control strokes. Spend some extra time with these to get a good flow going.

Two 16th Notes in a Row on the Snare: **8-Bar Phrase**

Track 32

The image shows four staves of musical notation for a snare drum exercise. Each staff represents an 8-bar phrase. The notation includes eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests, with 'x' marks above notes indicating snare hits. The first staff is labeled 'Track 32' and includes a CD icon.

After you're comfortable with the eight-bar phrase, apply it to the following grid:



For the initial eight bars of groove, use any beat from this chapter, or make up your own.