

## Contents

Odd Times Made Easy – An introduction.....	7
Counting within this book.....	8
The bottom number.....	9
Playing in 3.....	11
What’s the difference between $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ ? .....	15
Playing in 5.....	19
Playing in 7.....	29
Playing in 9.....	37
Playing in 11.....	45
Playing in 13.....	53
Playing in 15.....	61
Playing in 17.....	69
Playing in 19.....	77
Playing in 21.....	85
Parting words.....	92

# ODD TIMES MADE EASY

*Making sense and having fun with any time signature from 3/4 to 21/16.*

Welcome to this book of odd time signatures.

Since I started drumming, I was drawn to songs comprised of odd time signatures. They seemed to be a language I couldn't speak and I so desperately wanted to be able to talk and communicate like I saw my heroes doing. I started playing in 4/4, as most of us do in the western world, but soon I started listening to more and more odd time signatures and tried to copy what I heard.

At first, I found it so confusing; working some of these time signatures out seemed a bit like extreme maths.

My hope with this book is to make it simple and fun and that by the end of it, you will feel a lot more comfortable speaking this new language and be able to adapt and enjoy any time signature that greets you on your musical journey.

The fun bit about this book...

I've created each chapter as if we are playing a computer game. Along the way you'll have new obstacles (time signatures) to deal with and you will need to play everything as written to have the chance of 'levelling up'.

You **level up**, when you can get to the next stage in skill for whatever time signature you're looking at. Being able to conquer these harder tasks will give you an extra edge when playing any of these grooves.

## What to expect in the LEVEL UP sections

We will be adding different elements to our grooves in these **level up** sections:

- 1) Accents
- 2) Ghost Notes
- 3) Orchestration

### **Accents:**

Accents are notes that are louder than all the others. Accents will appear above the hi-hat, like this:



Primarily we will be playing these accents on the hi-hat. I have given some suggestions of different accent ideas but please come up with your own and explore, once you feel confident with what's written here.

### **Ghost notes:**

Ghost notes can make such a difference to a groove! They are quiet notes to be played on the snare drum. These are notated by a snare that is inside a bracket, like this:



Ghost notes can add texture, enhance the feel of the groove you're playing and this happens by making sure the volume is low. Just make sure that the stick is low to the drum to pull off these quiet notes.

## Orchestration:

Orchestration is about where we choose to play the groove: which drums or cymbals we pick. This gives us a lot of options! Instead of playing the groove on the hi-hats the whole time, it's a good idea to try the groove on other parts of the kit; whether you play on the ride cymbal, floor tom or even the Crash Cymbal. In this book, I have just explored the idea of using the floor tom instead of the hi-hats but once again, feel free to explore and take the groove to any part of the kit that you want to.

## COUNTING WITHIN THIS BOOK

There will be many time signatures within this book: from the perhaps familiar  $3/4$  to more complex  $21/16$ .

Throughout the book, I will suggest ways to count that will hopefully help you to keep the beat going and for it to feel good (and not feel like I can hear you trying to count!).

For time signatures that have 8 as the bottom number, I will display the regular count above it to show you where all the notes fall.

For time signatures that are in 16, the count will be displayed in a way that I've found easiest to play and count! This is because the feel of the groove will appear faster and so the counting can sometimes get lost here.

I encourage you to try the counts I have suggested but also explore different combinations that feel good to you. Keep the following things in mind:

1. Keep the numbers below 10

I don't know about you but counting above 10 while playing a groove doesn't feel easy at all. I have made a rule for myself to always count numbers that are simple to say. Counting 14,15,16 etc. above 150 bpm? I DON'T THINK SO!

So, let's make it easier and divide our time signature into two sets of numbers we can count with ease, which is tip number two:

2. Group our time signature up if it is difficult to grasp. If we have the time signature  $13/8$ , for example, it may well be easier to divide it up into a 6 and a 7. Whatever order you choose to play is up to you, but try and keep it...
3. ...musical! If we try and tune into the music we are playing to, you will most likely hear a phrase. If you can sing this phrase in your head then chances are your groove will be sounding great. Also, the less we are concentrating on numbers (remember this shouldn't be a demonstration of complex maths!), the more likely we will be thinking musically and trying to support the song.

## THE BOTTOM NUMBER

So, what is it? Is it 11/8 or 11/16? I am often asked this when I am setting some odd meter challenges for my students. The answer is always the same: it depends on the context...NOT the most popular answer, I assure you.

Let's step back a moment and take a closer look at the question:

Is the bar in 11/8 or 11/16? So really the question is about the **pulse**.

Can you clap along? Can you feel more of an 8th note vibe? Does it feel a bit clunky and complex?

As you might already be aware, in the time signature at the beginning of a section of music, the top number depicts **how many** notes you should be counting, and the bottom number is the **value** of those notes. Now, when you're an odd time nut like me and you decide to make beats up just for fun, perhaps there is no music, making it quite difficult to decide what the bottom number should be.

You could naturally play quite fast, so a 7/8 groove to you might sound more like 7/16 to someone else! When you're on your own this may not matter too much but you will need to keep it in mind and make sure you decide on a tempo and the time signature before you collaborate with others.

I have laid this book out so that you can go to any number you want to play in, and it will all be there for you.

So, if you want to look at the difference between 7/4 and 7/8, turn to the chapter on 7. If you want to look at 5/4 and 5/8, look at the chapter on 5.

Remember that we all may feel things a bit differently but, in the end, an odd time signature will have a numerical value that will be universal no matter what the bottom number is.

My wish is that this book will help take some mystery away from odd time signatures and that you can turn to any page and play whatever time signature you like.

Feel free to look at the time signatures that interest you most or go from the beginning and read all the way through to the end.

This is for you and **you** decide how you approach these time signatures.

One thing I ask is that you take it slowly. Count out loud and above all... **ENJOY!**

# Playing in 3

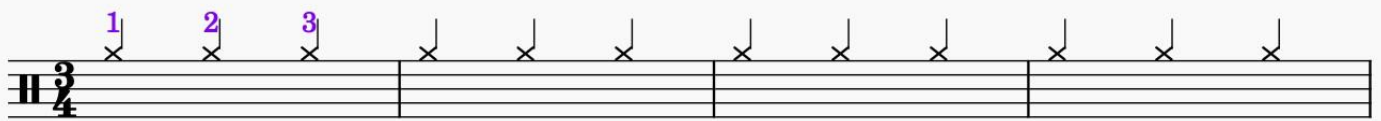
3/4 is probably the first time signature you might come across that is considered an odd time signature. Fortunately for us, there are lots of examples of music that is in 3/4.

A 'waltz' is a type of ballroom dance, which has been around for hundreds of years. A waltz can be recognised by listening to how the first beat is heavily accented. The tempo is usually moderately slow so counting along should be encouraged if this is a new time signature for you.

Let's learn to play some 3/4, shall we?

As you will see in this book, for each chapter we will start with the hi-hat, get used to how the time feels, get used to counting aloud, and get comfortable.

i)



Once you are nailing just playing the hi-hats, then we will add the bass drum and snare drum.

ii)



iii)



Here are some groove variations for you to try:

iv)



v)



vi)



vii)



Now let's make the quarter notes on the hi-hats, eighth notes instead.

For eighth notes, we count "1 and 2 and 3 and". The 'and' is represented by the plus symbol (+).

i)



ii)



iii)



iv)



v)



### 3/4 LEVEL UP

Perhaps your first LEVEL UP! Woohoo! Remember, take it slowly; give yourself the time to practice these until they feel really comfortable.

Let's go!

The first thing I want you to do is to get comfortable with the groove below. We are going to look at varying it, but make sure you can play it first, even if you need to sit with it for a while or come back to it.

