

# Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Usage Notes	2
Audio Examples	3
Thrash History	3
Thrash Listening List	5
Warmups and Technique	6
Rock	10
Rock Transcriptions	12
Thrash Tone	13
Punk	14
Punk Transcriptions	16
Touring Tips	17
Thrash/Skank/Double Time	18
Double Time Thrash Trans.	20
Health	21
Double Bass	22
Double Bass Transcriptions	24
Cymbal Chokes	26
Cymbal Choke Trans.	27
Kit Setup	29
Blast Beats	30
Blast Beat Transcriptions	31
Fills	32
Fill Transcriptions	34
Feel Changes	36
Tempo	39

# Introduction

Thrash metal drumming is not a terribly complicated art form, from an academic perspective. The typical beats and fills are simple, most tunes can be performed with no rudimentary knowledge beyond single strokes, and a large number of thrash songs are based on easy, standard rock and pop song structures. There is almost no improvisation, little need for advanced 4-way coordination, and functionally speaking, reading and music theory are unnecessary most of the time. However, as simple as thrash drumming appears to be on the surface, it is *not* easy. The difficulty in performing thrash metal on drums originates not from an abundance of rhythmic complexity or the need for an overly diverse set of musical skills. Thrash is challenging because drummers are expected to play at uncomfortably high tempos for long periods of time, while hitting extremely hard and maintaining machine-like steadiness. It also requires the ability to navigate feel changes, meter changes, and tempo changes without losing energy or intensity. Playing thrash in a stylistically consistent and authentic manner is as exhausting and physically demanding as going to the gym or competing in a sport, and yet must be musical and compelling. Many fine drummers, with more than enough skill and musical training, have failed to play thrash in a believable, realistic, and authentic manner. They fail primarily because of an unwillingness or inability to exert the necessary physical labor to produce enough sound and achieve the high speeds required. Thrash drumming does require specific skills, most of which will be outlined in this book, but chiefly it demands participants commit to the necessary dynamism, enthusiasm, and physicality to produce the desired effect.

One of the most challenging parts of thrash is the tempo. Songs may have sections dipping down below 100 bpm (thrash bands do sometimes write ballads), while other songs may have parts exceeding 250 bpm where the drummer is expected to play 16th notes. Gene Hoglan of Dark Angel has some of the fastest drum parts of his era, including the song “Merciless Death,” which clocks in around 263 bpm at the fastest point. Playing faster than 250 bpm is straining to most drummers of any genre, no matter the dynamic level or simplicity of the groove.

Another aspect of thrash that causes problems is the expected volume or dynamic level. There are dynamic changes, and the playing does not have to be one-dimensional, but on average a great thrash drummer hits exceedingly hard. Loud playing can be considered obnoxious or outside the realm of good taste in some genres, but is essential in thrash metal. Solid and forceful drum hits serve a number of purposes. The first is aesthetic. Metal in general is aggressive and energetic and thrash is no exception. Loud playing conveys the intended emotion and atmosphere that the lyrics, melodies, and overall image point toward. Next, loud drumming helps the rest of the band play in time. Monitor mixes are never perfect, and some DIY shows don’t even have monitors. Other band members need to hear drums loudly and clearly on stage or in the rehearsal space to perform their parts correctly and in time, often over the roar of full-stack amps and high gain tones. Other metal musicians often like to feel the drums in their body, not just hear them with their ears. A forceful performance is much better for your bandmates than a moderate or laid-back sound. Conflicting with the practices of many musical genres, thrash guitar and bass players actively seek a loud, hard-hitting drummer for their bands and, all other things being equal, will hire the drummer who has the bigger sound. Igor Cavalera, originally of Sepultura, is one of the hardest-hitting drummers among a genre full of hard-hitting drummers. Just watching him play can be tiring, but he always sounds great and supports his band’s overall vibe. Further, hitting the drums at a healthy volume sounds better and produces the expected thrash tone more easily than hitting them softly. Damaging the drumheads or abusing the instrument is still a bad thing, and I recommend you always rebound the sticks and pedals off the drums and use proper drumming technique. That said, playing drums loudly gets the column of air inside the shells vibrating, which in turn employs more of the resonant head than does playing softly. A forceful stroke allows the shell, the air column, and both heads to vibrate in unison, whereas a soft stroke may activate only the batter head and produces a totally different tone. Finally, when using microphones in a live or studio setting, hitting the drums harder can actually make them easier to mix. The sound engineer

can more readily work with a strong signal and a full tone. In a live situation, a hard-hitting drummer can often be turned down in the house mix, leaving more room for vocals in the main PA speakers. Sometimes, only the kick drum need be reinforced in a small room if the drummer can make enough sound on the rest of the kit. Microphones can easily be dialed back to pick up less sound, but will cause problems if turned up to a higher sensitivity to pick up more sound.

The last, but possibly most important, difficult aspect of thrash drumming is time and tempo. This is important for drummers of all musical persuasions, but thrash most types of metal are played without much “feel” or “groove” as compared to

rock, funk, jazz, r&b, or other styles. Thrash drummers need not be completely robotic, but playing ahead of or behind the beat is frowned upon. Tempo must be maintained with metronomic precision at all times. Injecting too much personality, or playing around with the placement of the beat, can be distracting or even disastrous to a thrash composition. Many thrash songs rapidly shift between straight time, half time, and double time feels. It is also fairly normal to switch from a straight 8th feel to a triplet or 6/8 feel and back again. Practicing to a metronome is a must to account for these possibilities accurately.

In order to achieve the required sound output, dial in the precision timing, and meet the high tempo demands of thrash, you must practice. A LOT. Breaking a sweat, elevating your heart rate, and getting out of breath are normal occurrences and are healthy. Practice sessions for any serious thrash drummer should involve physical stress. On the other hand, poor technique or pushing too hard can cause repetitive stress injuries. That is not fun, nor conducive to a long drumming career. Be sure to pay attention to your body and stop yourself before causing injury. As long as you are being careful, thrash drumming should be fun, healthy, and completely rad!

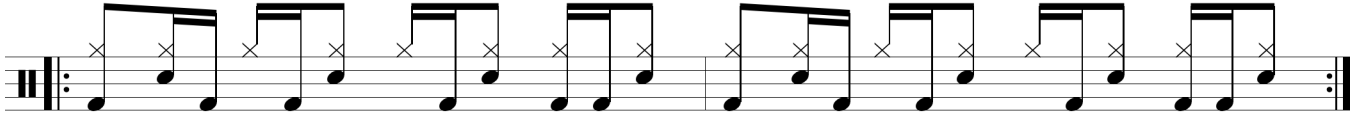
**Note:** it is an expensive problem if you are hitting your cymbals too hard. Broken cymbals can cost hundreds of dollars to replace, whereas drumheads are relatively cheap, in the tens of dollars. A good drummer will always dial back the cymbal crashing strokes as compared to the drum strokes so as to balance the overall sound output (cymbals are louder to begin with) and to preserve the cymbals’ life spans. Of course, many cymbals intended for heavy music won’t open up and give a good sound until a minimum volume level is met. Cymbal crashing technique and self-mixing between drums and cymbals is a critical skill for any drummer but can be very important as a cost-saving tool the otherwise gung-ho metal drummer.

## Usage Notes

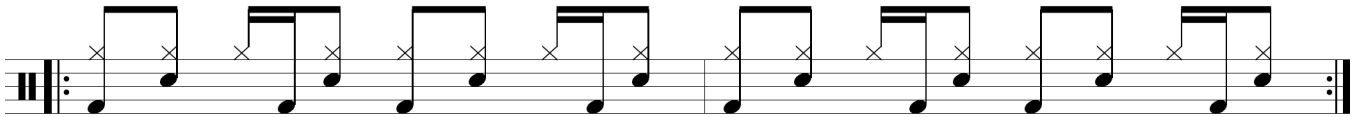
This book requires that you are able to read music and play drums at a beginner to intermediate level. It is not a beginning drum method and there are many other excellent books available to fill that niche for true beginners. Thrash drumming has a strong tradition of using gigantic drum kits and playing monstrous fills. This is cool and fun, but ultimately impossible for a lot of drummers due to space and budget constraints. Aside from the transcription of a few fills, this book will be written for a standard 5-piece drum kit with one exception -- **it assumes that you have access to a double bass pedal or two bass drums and some basic ability to use both pedals.** Thrash drumming has a large proportion of songs throughout its history that require double bass to perform. While there is some thrash metal that can be executed on one pedal, it is necessary to have a second bass pedal much of the time. This book will not devote much space to introducing double bass technique, pedal setup, double kick warm-ups, or other two-footed concerns, but will feature exercises, beats, and fills that indicate a second bass drum pedal. *The Complete Double Bass Drumming Explained* (Hudson Music 2016) dives much deeper into many aspects of double bass playing and would be a great place to go for extra bass drum help. As long as you have access to a normal drum kit, albeit with two kick pedals, and can read rhythms and play basic rock beats, you should be able to utilize and enjoy the following content to its fullest extent. The exercises will be divided into sections for different concepts that appear in thrash drumming: Warmups, Rock, Punk, Skank, Double Bass, Cymbal Chokes, Blasts, Fills, and Feel Changes. Most of the sections of exercises will be followed by transcribed snippets of real thrash songs that apply to the concept.

# Punk-Influenced Transcriptions

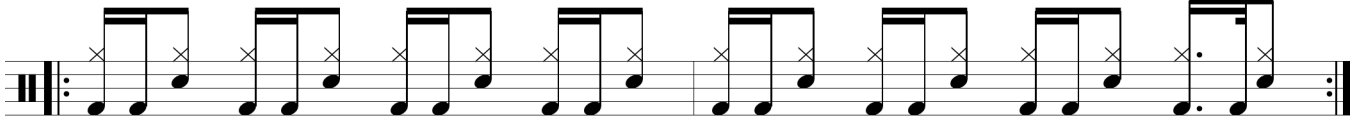
♩ = 160 Megadeth "Take No Prisoners"



♩ = 232 Municipal Waste "Pre-Game"



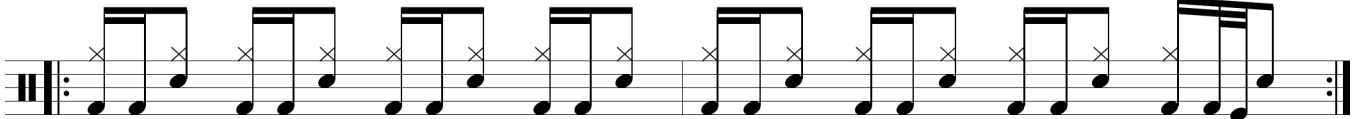
♩ = 100 Anthrax "One World"



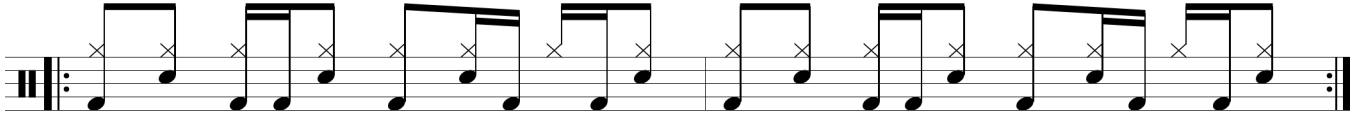
♩ = 98 Nuclear Assault "Trail of Tears"



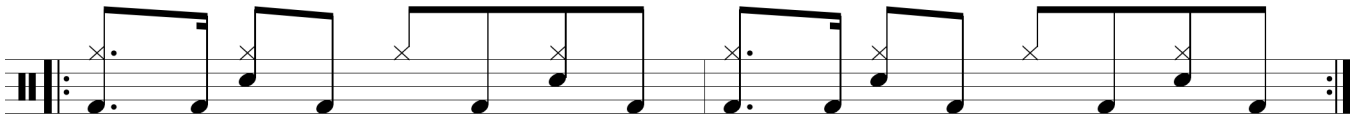
♩ = 205 Sepultura "Mass Hypnosis"



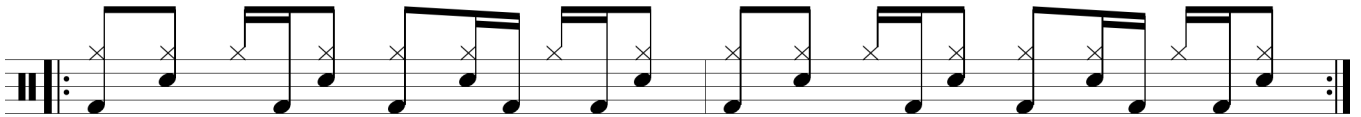
♩ = 161 Megadeth "Poison Was The Cure"



♩ = 190 Testament "Practice What You Preach"



♩ = 163 Toxic Holocaust "Endless Armageddon"



♩ = 110 Gama Bomb "Global Warning"

Musical notation for Gama Bomb "Global Warning". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 110 BPM. The notation features a series of eighth-note triplets across the first five measures, followed by a measure with a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth note marked with an asterisk. The final two measures consist of eighth-note triplets. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 218 Nuclear Assault "Search and Seizure"

Musical notation for Nuclear Assault "Search and Seizure". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 218 BPM. It features eighth-note triplets in the first three measures, followed by a measure with a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth note marked with an asterisk. The next three measures are eighth-note triplets, and the final measure is a triplet of eighth notes with a sixteenth note marked with an asterisk. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 122 Sepultura "Mass Hypnosis"

Musical notation for Sepultura "Mass Hypnosis". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 122 BPM. It features eighth-note triplets in the first four measures, followed by eighth-note pairs in the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 160 Megadeth "Take No Prisoners"

Musical notation for Megadeth "Take No Prisoners". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 160 BPM. It features eighth-note triplets in the first four measures, followed by eighth-note pairs in the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 205 Dark Angel "Merciless Death"

Musical notation for Dark Angel "Merciless Death". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 205 BPM. It features eighth-note triplets in the first four measures, followed by eighth-note pairs in the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 160 Megadeth "Polaris"

Musical notation for Megadeth "Polaris". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 160 BPM. It features eighth-note triplets in the first four measures, followed by eighth-note pairs in the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 98 Warbringer "Wake Up... Destroy"

Musical notation for Warbringer "Wake Up... Destroy". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 98 BPM. It features eighth-note pairs in the first four measures, followed by eighth-note triplets in the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

♩ = 115 Havok "Afterburner"

Musical notation for Havok "Afterburner". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 115 BPM. It features eighth-note pairs in the first four measures, followed by eighth-note triplets in the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## About The Author

Ryan Alexander Bloom has been playing the drums since 1996 and honed his thrash drumming approach on tour with Colorado thrashers Havok from 2007 to 2009. His thrash playing appears on Havok's Candlelight Records debut *Burn* and he can also be heard on both of Bloodstrike's Redefining Darkness Records releases *In Death We Rot* and *Execution of Violence*. Ryan holds a bachelor's degree in percussion from the University of Colorado at Boulder and his previous instructional books include: *The Complete Double Bass Drumming Explained*, *Live Drum & Bass*, and *Encyclopedia Rudimentia*, all published by Hudson Music. When not playing metal, Ryan teaches private lessons and works with local public schools as a concert percussion clinician and marching drum line instructor.