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Part I: The Method



Introduction

In this book I'd like to introduce you to some of my ideas and drumming concepts. I'll try to give you some insight into my approach to playing, and my philosophy, and my practicing methods. I'll lead you along the way by gradually developing simple ideas into valuable practicing tools and routines.

Throughout the course of this book the easy yet comprehensive exercises presented will gradually develop into more complex structures that are modern and quite challenging at times. I call them "control mechanisms." These control mechanisms are about total control of all four limbs—not just about hand or foot technique. That's why there's an emphasis on foot exercises in this book, so you can eventually achieve equal skills with both hands and feet.

Every exercise you'll see here is a combination exercise. I like to combine various components of practicing into one exercise in order to save time. This way you can practice technique, coordination, independence, and endurance at the same time. Why practice hands alone when you can practice with your feet at the same time?

This creates a coordination challenge that forces you to spend long periods of time with each exercise, which, again, requires stamina and adds an endurance component to these exercises. All exercises consist of very simple patterns and combinations thereof. These simple patterns consist of one to eight notes. All other groupings can be built with these simple short patterns. A group of nine, for example, can be created by adding various combinations of the simple patterns of one to eight notes. For example: $9 = 1 + 8$; or 3×3 ; or $7 + 2$, $6 + 3$, or $5 + 4$; or $8 + 1$. Or, $2 + 4 + 3$, and so on.

This simple concept of using short basic terms works for playing long groups of notes and for odd time signature playing as well. $15/8$, for example, is $8 + 7$, or 3×5 ; or 5×3 , and so on.

I emphasize groove playing because that is the most important function of a drummer and the sole purpose of this instrument. I build everything around the essential goal of learning to play rhythms and repetitive phrases. Even when I play odd groupings, I often count in $4/4$ for two reasons. First, it is an additional umbrella signature forcing you to count in four when playing seven or nine or any other odd time signature; it is an added challenge. Second, most of today's popular Western music is in $4/4$ and I find it very important to condition myself to always feel $4/4$ time, even when I'm playing say, $13/16$, for example. It is often easier to count only one odd time signature than to count a straight time on top of an odd-time signature simultaneously.

You might wonder what some of these exercises are good for. The first reason, your groove playing and handling of the drum set as a whole benefits greatly from everything you practice, of course. If you can play complex patterns, playing simple patterns will be even easier.

I trained myself to play difficult things in order to play easy things with more confidence and ease. This is the point of practicing, in general, of course: conditioning yourself to be able to play everything with ease and confidence.

Second, some contemporary music requires a higher degree of command over the instrument than most of the music of say, the 1920's, for example. Many of these exercises have been formulated as response to technological progress and the use of computers in today's music.

I grew up with electronic music, computers, click tracks, and sequences. I developed many of these exercises in an attempt to hone the skills necessary to replicate programmed drum parts live.

Enough said. Let's go!

CHAPTER 1: Singles

We're going to start with a short hand warm up exercise on the drum set and then move on to some linear exercises.

EXERCISE 1: Singles

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

Half/ Double time

Drumming is all about symmetry and ambidexterity. And I like to be able to play everything with both my hands and both my feet. That's why I practice all these patterns—groups of eight, four, three, two, one—with both hands and both feet.

And all these following exercises are constructed to help you build up that ability and skill—to be able to play anything with both hands and both feet at the same time or alternating.

And the reason why I practice all these linear exercises is not just because of their obvious use in a lot of chops and licks, but because I like to play two hi-hats and I like to be able to produce choked hi-hat sounds with each one.

That means I have to play a note and then close the hi-hat. And that's basically a linear pattern. It's just like playing right hand, right foot.

EXERCISE 2: Groups of 8 – Alternating Singles

R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L L L L L L L

R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L L L L L L L

EXERCISE 3: Groups of 4 - Alternating Singles

R R R R L L L L R R R R L L L L L L L L L L

R R R R L L L L R R R R L L L L L L L L L L

EXERCISE 4: Groups of 3 - Alternating Singles

R R R L L L R R R L L L L L L L L L L L L L L

R 6 R R R L L 6 L L L R 6 R R R L L 6 L L L

EXERCISE 5: Combinations. Improvisations using groups of 8, 6, 4, 3, 2, & 1's

R R R R R R R L L L R R L L R L R L R R L L L L
 R R R R L L R L L L R R L R R L R L R

I also like to play these hi-hat patterns, the foot patterns, on the beat as well—not just between my hand patterns. Until now, I played all the foot patterns on the off-beats, but I also like to practice them on the beat...

EXERCISE 6: Groups of 3 - "on the beat"

Note: play right hand on tom

Or, the same thing with groups of four...

EXERCISE 7: Groups of 4 - "on the beat"

Dog Performance Notes

This tune was originally recorded in 2000 for Conrad Schrenk's album. This tune boasts a host of different time signatures, tempo-changes, heavy, high energy playing throughout, challenging unison double kick-drum parts and tricky kicks and hits with the band. It's a full-on assault on the drums on many levels. Fast single-stroke fills around the kit, cross-sticking patterns, double- and single-stroke rolls on double kick-drums, and so on; relentless, driving beats ... it's a lot of fun to play!

The song starts with a 7/4-9/4 cycle of heavily syncopated accents worked into a groove. I am playing this groove on my second (12") snare so that this intro section has a different overall sound than the following main groove, which is the double-time beat with backbeats on the main (14") snare drum. Make sure to really hit that pushed "1" at the end of every second bar with a decent amount of aggression.

In the first verse (the cycle of 7/4 and 9/4) I am back on the 12" snare for some contrast in snare-timbre. The main double-time groove breaks up the verse nicely after four bars. After the second verse pattern it goes straight to a 5/8 section. This section is the bridge. I am playing the 5/8 section as a 10/8 phrase to lengthen the cycle and to make it feel more "half-time." This creates a nice contrast to the following "4 on the floor" section. There I am playing quarter-notes on the kick and 32nd-note double-strokes on two hi-hats. The last bar of this "build-up" is a 5/4 bar ... just to make the next "1" a little more unexpected!

The chorus section follows. This is all about keeping time and driving the band. I play straight through until the last two bars, which contain a double-kick cross-sticking barrage that leads into a two-bar breakdown of just guitar.

Then the 7/4-9/4 verse and the 10/8 bridge follow, leading into another chorus. Here it's all 4/4 for the second time, driving the band and pushing the time a little by playing slightly ahead of the beat. With another big drum fill I lead into the second breakdown. After a 2-bar build up of tension the band kicks in on the 1 for the guitar solo. This section is quite unusual. I am playing very straight time with my hands, trying to guide the band through the busy guitar solo, but at the same time I am playing most of the guitar solo in unison on the kick drum. This is a very unusual thing to do. Conrad asked me in the studio to keep time but phrase along with the solo with my feet. He gave me the chart and said: "that's what I play rhythmically in the solo, please play it in unison but keep time with your hands for the band. Start establishing a groove for four bars and then really get into unison mode with the feet. Occasionally please orchestrate certain sections on the toms, like 8th-note triplets and quarter-note triplets, ... okay?"

I just had to laugh and said: "Unison? Isn't that a rare species of horse with a long pointy horn or something?"...

Anyways, so the guitar solo is the real killer in this song. It's hard to play those guitar phrases in unison in a "blasé" sort of way in order to keep that relaxed feel with the hands going.

The guitar solo ends with a 16th-note unison pattern which I play on the kick drum. That leads into the coda, which is a four-bar 16th-note run orchestrated on snare and all toms, incorporating a couple of cross-stickings. After the full-note kicks, I fill the last bar with a manic, double-kick cross-sticking 16th-note fill to "finish on a high note."

NOTATION KEY

hi-hat w/ foot bass drums toms snare ride open hi-hat crash China or jingle hats x-hat

Dog

♩ = 204

composed by: Conrad Schrenk
music engraved by: Michael Dawson

Intro

Intro musical notation: A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4. The first measure has an asterisk above the note and a breath mark above it. The second measure has a breath mark above the note. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

A

Section A musical notation (measures 5-8): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 5 and 6 are in 7/4 time, and measures 7 and 8 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

Section A musical notation (measures 9-12): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 9 and 10 are in 7/4 time, and measures 11 and 12 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 9, 10, 11, and 12. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

B

Section B musical notation (measures 13-16): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 13 and 14 are in 7/4 time, and measures 15 and 16 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 13, 14, 15, and 16. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

Section B musical notation (measures 17-20): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 17 and 18 are in 7/4 time, and measures 19 and 20 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 17, 18, 19, and 20. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

A

Section A musical notation (measures 21-24): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 21 and 22 are in 7/4 time, and measures 23 and 24 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 21, 22, 23, and 24. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

Section A musical notation (measures 25-28): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 25 and 26 are in 7/4 time, and measures 27 and 28 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 25, 26, 27, and 28. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

B

Section B musical notation (measures 29-32): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 29 and 30 are in 7/4 time, and measures 31 and 32 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 29, 30, 31, and 32. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

Section B musical notation (measures 33-36): A single staff with a treble clef and a 7/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. Measures 33 and 34 are in 7/4 time, and measures 35 and 36 are in 9/4 time. The notation features eighth notes with stems up and down, some with circles above them, and some with asterisks above them. Breath marks are placed above the notes in measures 33, 34, 35, and 36. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 7/4 time signature.

A
29

C
31

34

B
38

42

46

B
50

A
54

C
56