

WICKED BEATS

REGGAE, ROCKSTEADY &
JAMAICAN SKA DRUMMING

by *GIL SHARONE*

Edited by Rick Gratton

Managing Editor: Joe Bergamini

Layout, design, music transcriptions and engraving by Rick Gratton

Additional transcriptions by Michael Dawson

Executive Producer: Rob Wallis

Cover art: Evan Skrederstu

Cover design and digital book creation: Mike Hoff

Digital video preparation: Alfonse Giordano



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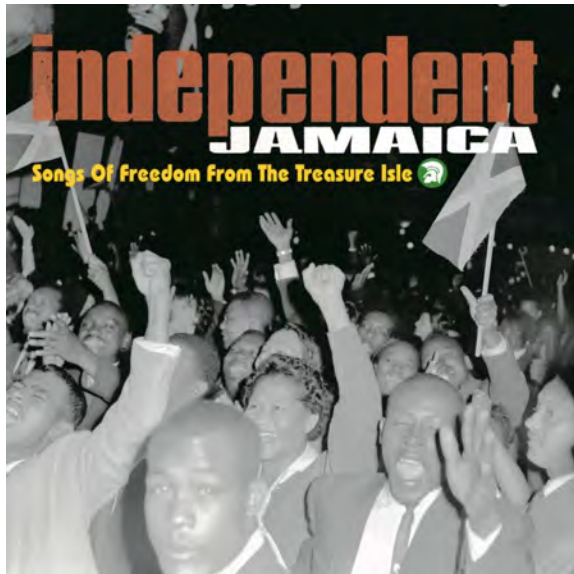
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This book is dedicated to my grandmother, "Mom." 1921-2016.

SKA

At the time of its independence, achieved in August of 1962, Jamaica was consciously searching for a new type of music to call her own. The result was ska.



The original ska rhythm was an infectious double-time shuffle beat that married the earlier mento with R&B, placing the accent on the second and fourth beats, wrapped around the blues framework.



The Skatalites



THE SKATALITES -- c. 1964

UNKNOWN TRUMPET LLOYD KIBBS DRUMS ROLAND ALPHONSO TENOR SAX UNKNOWN VOCALS JACKIE MITTOO PIANO
JOHNNIE MOORE TRUMPET LESTER STERLING ALTO SAX LLOYD BREVETT BASS TOMMY MCCOOK TENOR SAX UNKNOWN GUITAR



Ska

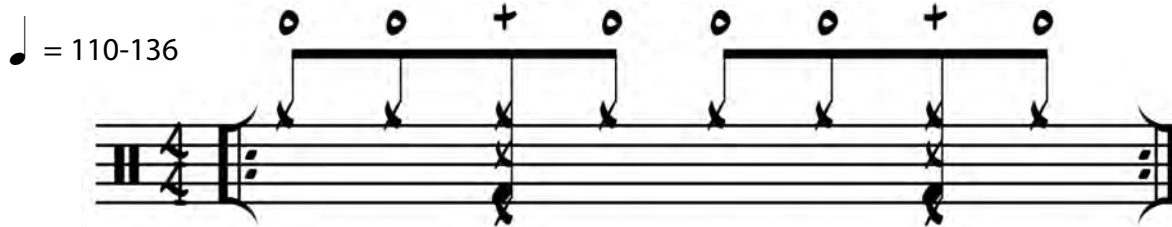
In the early 1960s the beat of the Jamaican shuffle was turned around and a new beat was born. This was a new sound and pulse for the people to dance to, and the feel is key.



The first time I heard the traditional ska beat I was hooked. It was unlike any feel I've heard before and I loved it. I was instantly moved by the feel of the upbeat pulse and heavy bass line against the strong backbeat and swish of the open and closed hi-hat pulse.

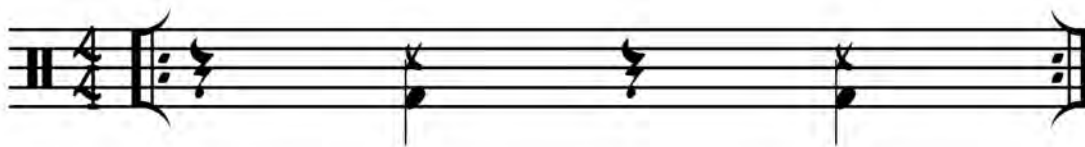
Lloyd Knibb told me a story of how he was in the studio with legendary Jamaican Producer Clement "Sir Coxsone" Dodd of Studio One and Coxsone was looking for a new feel that was unique to Jamaica. Lloyd was messing around with various ideas and the SKA beat was born.

Ex. 7 - Standard Ska Beat #1

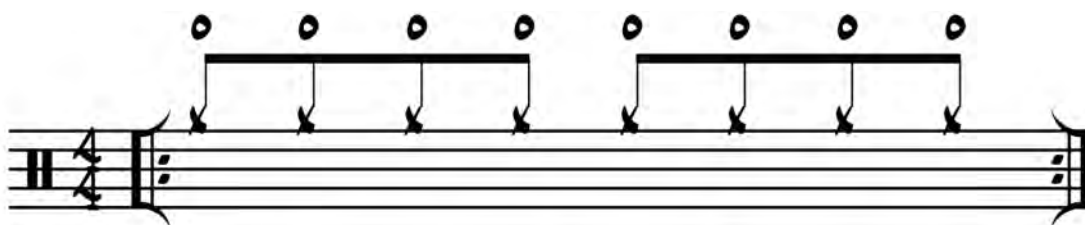


Let's break down this groove for you so you can understand what's happening with the mechanics of it.

What will make this sound correct is the feel. Let's break this down as a two-and-four backbeat, like we talked about with the Jamaican boogie variation. Below we have 2 and 4 on a cross-stick with the bass drum.

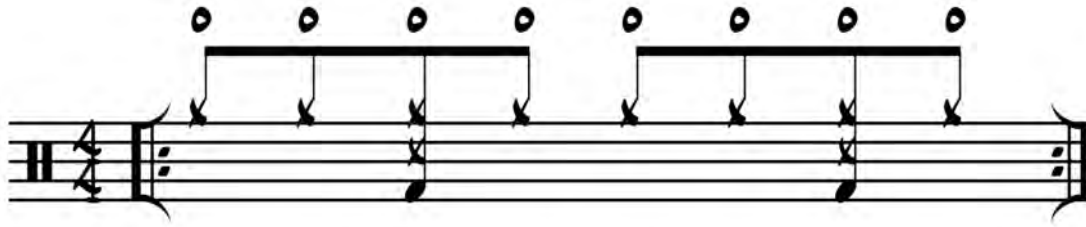


Now we're going to play the hi-hat open and just play straight eighth notes:

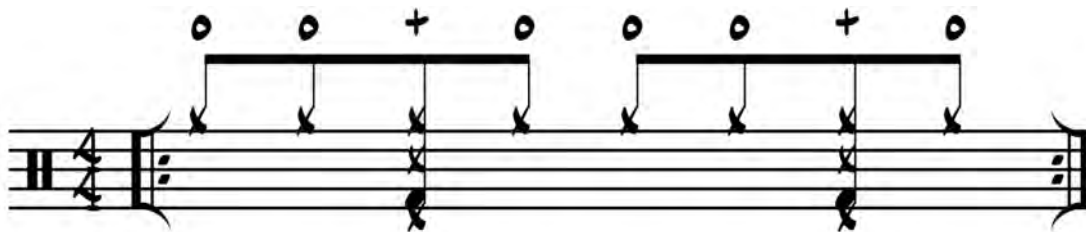


Ska

Put it all together:



Now, here comes the ska element. We're going to step on the hi-hat pedal on beats 2 and 4:



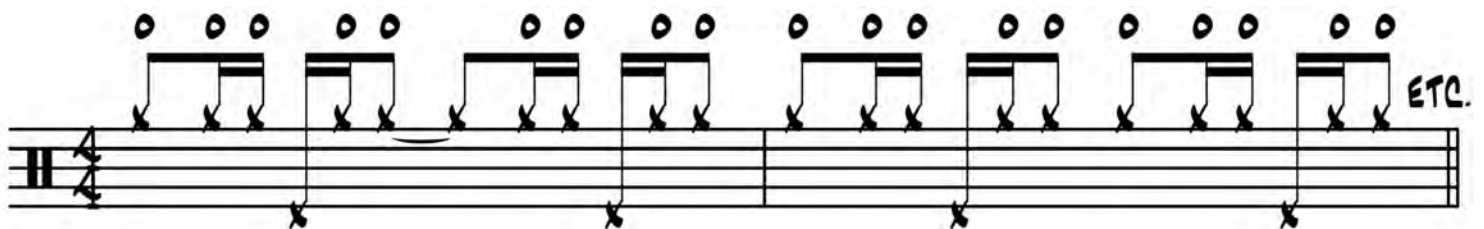
What I'm going to add next are the subtleties of that straight/swung kind of feel that we talked about earlier, because what I want to do is "swish" the hi-hat on the "ah" of 2 and 4. This creates a nice motion:

Ex. 8 - Standard Ska Beat #2



One signature trait of traditional ska is riding the bell of the hi-hat:

Ex. 9 - Riding the Bell



Ska

Playing that in the ska groove sounds like this:

Ex. 10 - Riding the Bell over Ska Groove

You can also play the ska feel with a tight hi-hat eighth-note pulse:

Ex. 11 - Closed Hi-Hat Variation #1

Ex. 12 - Closed Hi-Hat Variation #2

I call this the Jump with Joey beat because this was their drummer Willie McNeil's signature beat.

Ex. 13 - Closed Hi-Hat Variation #3

Ska

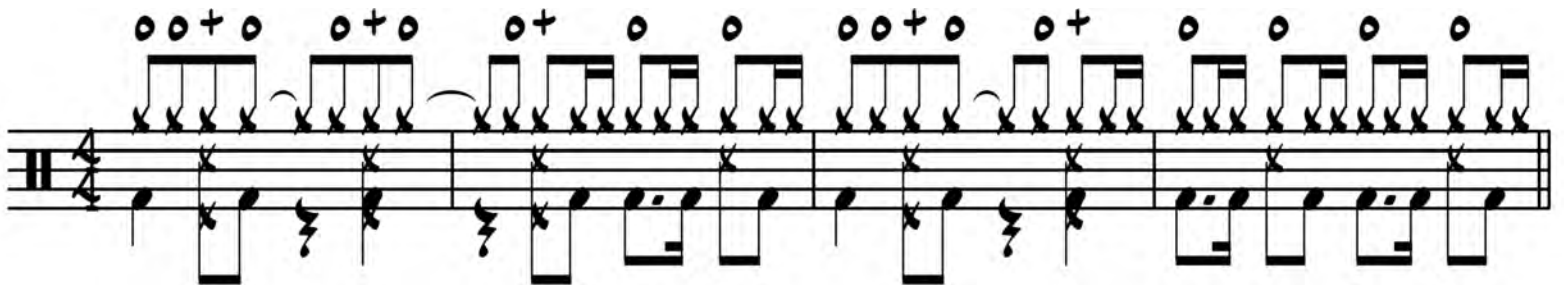
Closed Hi-Hat Variation #4



Ex. 14 - Latin Variation on Ska Beat

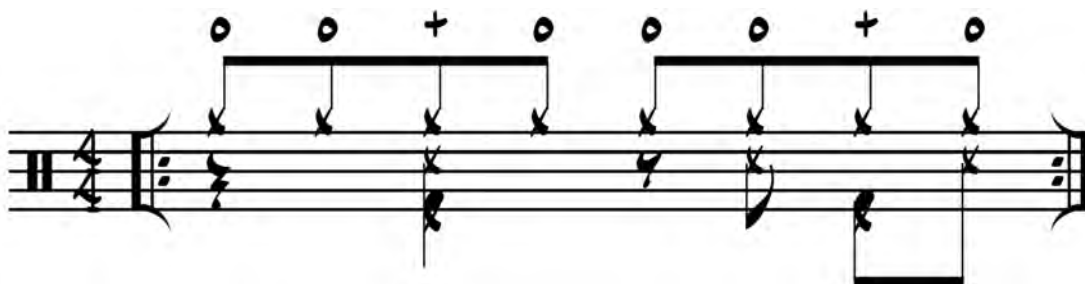
This is more of a Latin variation that you can incorporate into the swing of the ska feel.

I call this pattern the Jazz Jamaica variation because their drummer Kenrick Rowe was the first player I heard play this variation in a ska setting.



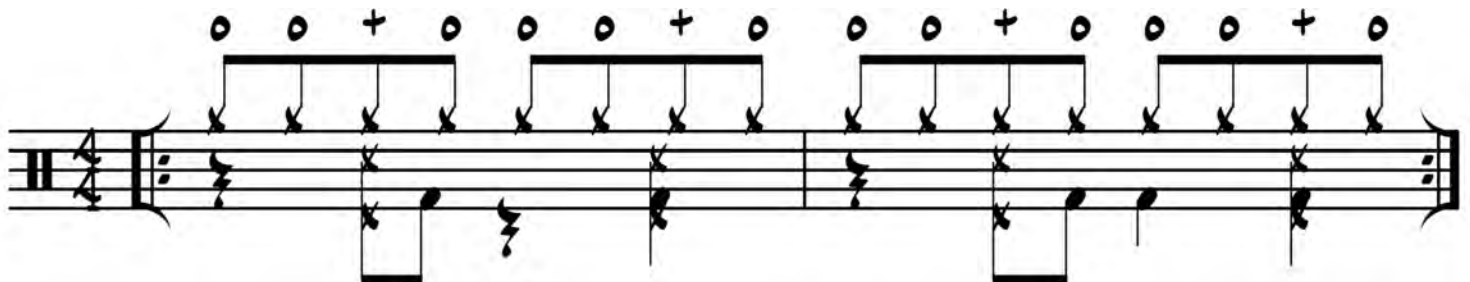
Ex. 15 - Variation on Standard Ska Beat

You can hear Lloyd Knibb playing this variation on Bob Marley & The Wailers song "How Many Times (Do You Remember)" from 1965.



Ex. 16 - Ska Beat with Bass Drum Variation

This is very common and groovy bass drum variation, especially when it locks with the bass line.



Ska Ad Lib Variations

Now I'm going to play some ska time variations with different fills, from basic setups to more elaborate rolls around the kit. Again, these are highly influenced by Lloyd Knibb.

These variations are food for thought to show other examples of where to place accents and fills.

♩ = 130

Ska Variation Ad Lib

The musical notation for 'Ska Variation Ad Lib' consists of 16 measures of drum patterns, numbered 1 through 16. Each measure is represented by a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The patterns are written using stick figures (R for right, L for left) and rhythmic notations (x for hits, beams for groups, and accents). The patterns are as follows:

- Measure 1: R R R L, followed by a sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 2: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 3: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 4: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 5: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 6: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 7: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 8: R L R L R R L R L R R L.
- Measure 9: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 10: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 11: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 12: R R L L R L L R R.
- Measure 13: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 14: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 15: A sequence of hits with accents.
- Measure 16: L R L L R R L 3 R L.

Ska Ad Lib Variations

♩ = 133

Ska Variation Ad Lib #2

The musical score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 133. The score consists of 17 measures, each with a corresponding drum set notation below it. The drum set notation uses 'x' for snare, 'o' for hi-hat, and 'r' for bass drum. The patterns are as follows:

- Measure 1: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 2: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 3: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 4: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 5: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 6: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 7: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 8: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 9: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 10: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 11: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 12: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 13: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 14: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 15: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 16: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R
- Measure 17: Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r), Snare (x), Bass (r). Pattern: R L L R L R

The score concludes with a cymbal choke in measure 17.

Ska Ad Lib Variations

♩ = 135

Ska Variation Ad Lib #3

The musical notation consists of four staves, each representing a different variation of the ad lib. The notation includes rhythmic patterns for the right hand (R) and left hand (L), often indicated by 'x' marks on the notes. Various musical symbols are used, including accents (>), triplets (3), and dynamic markings. The patterns are numbered 1 through 10 across the staves.



Clement "Sir Coxson" Dodd of Studio One

HIP-HOP/REGGAE BEATS

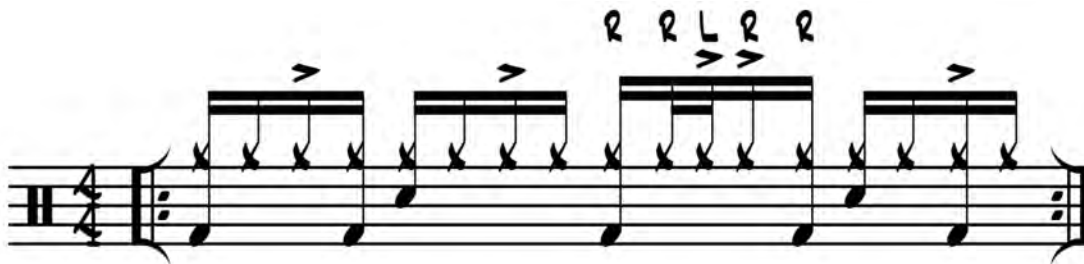
Now I want to talk about some of the beats that can cross over from the reggae feel into the hip-hop realm.

Hip-hop is highly influenced from the Jamaican culture, not only reggae, but the sound system culture in general, including toasting and DJs, which gave birth to the MC in hip-hop.

Hip-Hop/Reggae Variation #1



Hip-Hop/Reggae Variation #2



Hip-Hop/Reggae Variation #3



Hip-Hop/Reggae Variation #4



REGGAE-INFLUENCED DRUM 'N' BASS GROOVE TRACK



This track was something that Phil had programmed and had layers of screaming guitars and heavy bass on it. We played a stripped down version of it on the DVD so people can see that even though the drum beat is a double time feel, the bass line is still rooted in reggae.

I can easily drop into a reggae feel during this track and it would fit. I always recommend for players to expand their vocabulary and musical range. Learn as many styles as you can as long as they feel good.

♩ = 164

Basic Groove

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

Solo Groove

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

"ON THE CORNER" TRACK

"On The Corner" is another ska tune, but played with a more modern feel. On the DVD you will notice I'm not using my vintage drumset but the more modern reggae set up. You'll find all the familiar phrases we went over in the ska chapter. I'm still doing classic set-ups, riding the bell of the hi-hat, and locking in with the bass line.

