

Mastering Time

PART 1: RHYTHMIC SCALES

by David Stanoch

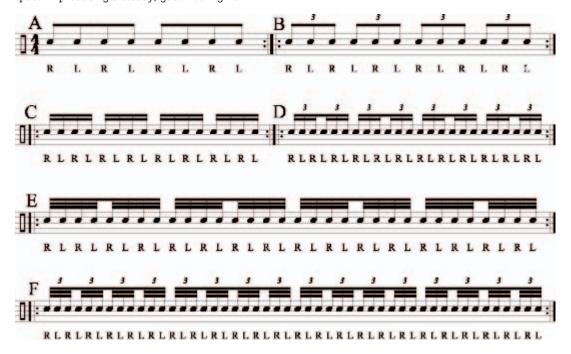




rum rudiments are often referred to as drummers' scales. But it makes more sense to think of rudiments as part of our overall vocabulary, while various rhythmic *subdivisions* act as our scales. With a little imagination, you can use these basic scales to combine timekeeping practice with work on coordination, phrasing, and rudimental and polyrhythmic studies. This series of articles will explore those concepts in a variety of ways.

THE STANDARD TIMETABLE

The standard timetable focuses on the most commonly used duple and triple subdivisions of a quarter-note pulse. Set your metronome to a slow tempo (40–60 bpm) and play the examples below using single strokes as indicated. The goal is to be able to anticipate, hear, and play each of the subdivisions with steady time and conviction. Singing the rhythms is also helpful in terms of feeling the full duration of each note, from the attack to the release. Being aware of when each note should release emphasizes the importance of space in producing a steady, good-feeling flow.



ROUNDTABLE FORM

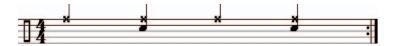
After playing through Examples A–F of the standard timetable, practice transitioning through the subdivisions in reverse order (F, E, D, C, B, A). It's common to rush the tempo when increasing the subdivisions of a quarter-note pulse, and it's equally common to drag the tempo when decreasing the subdivisions. Using the roundtable form (A, B, C, D, E, F, E, D, C, B, A) will help you eliminate those tendencies.

ADDING THE FEET

Once you've mastered the basic timetable, try adding a simple foot ostinato.

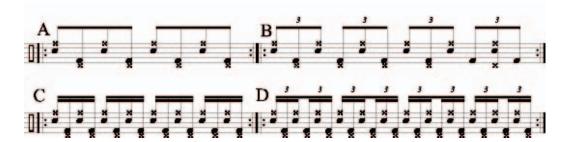


You can also play the timetable with the feet. Here's a simple hand ostinato to use with that variation.



HAND/FOOT COORDINATION BUILDERS

To develop four-way coordination, assign different limbs (or groups of limbs) to the standard timetable. Here's one way, which involves playing the right-hand notes with both hands and the left-hand notes with both feet.



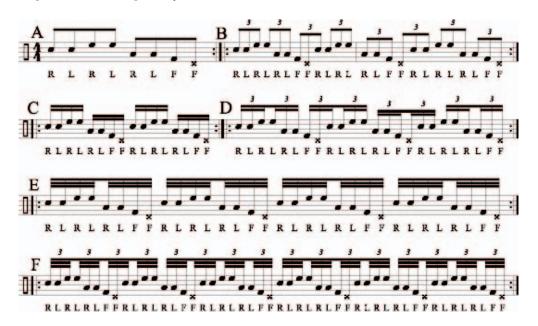
POLYRHYTHMIC SOLO PHRASING

Now let's create some soloing applications on the drumset based on the timetable. The following examples explore phrases that descend around the kit. They also introduce polyrhythmic phrasing as the initial four- or eight-note groupings are superimposed over each subdivision.

The first example is a four-note motif that creates polyrhythms when it's applied to the triplet subdivisions in Examples B, D, and F, respectively.



The next example is an eight-note motif that creates polyrhythms when it's applied to the triplet subdivisions in Examples B, D, and F, respectively.

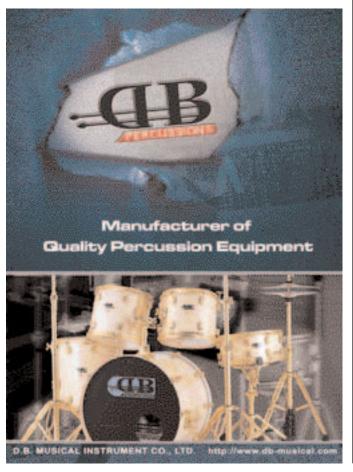


As you work through these ideas, use a metronome to be sure you're totally locked in. Then play the examples without the metronome in order to internalize the feeling of the subdivisions. Do this at a variety of tempos. Record yourself and study the playback objectively, focusing on your time and feel.

Next time we'll discuss the concept of dynamic control.

David Stanoch has worked with a variety of artists including Bonnie Raitt, Jack McDuff, Butch Vig, Richard Davis, and the Minnesota Orchestra. He's also a faculty member at the McNally Smith College Of Music. Material for this article is adapted from David's award-winning book, Mastering The Tables Of Time, Vol. 7, published by Rhythmelodic Music. Used with permission. For more information, visit rhythmelodic.com.







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