

# A Conversation with Alan Dawson on Creative Drumming

By Arvin Scott

**A**S A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, I dreamed of studying with Alan Dawson at the Berklee College of Music. By the time I arrived in Boston, he was no longer teaching at Berklee. Fortunately for me, he had an active private practice at his Lexington, Massachusetts residence. I gladly joined his roster of students and began a friendship that lasted until his death six-teen years later.

Alan was a wonderful mentor whose lessons extended far beyond the art of drumming. I was particularly captivated by the confidence he had in himself and his students. On several occasions, he recommended me for gigs that he could not make. I will never forget the time I substituted on a gig with Mose Allison. Allison, an award-winning musician and composer, prefers a rhythmic structure that he calls “anti-time.” Although I had never played music like this, I met the challenge knowing that Alan believed in my ability. This, and other gigs for which Alan recommended me, opened the door to performances with other musical giants.

In this interview, done several years before his death, Alan shares his view of creative drumming—a topic about which we had numerous conversations. I present it here as a tribute to my teacher and friend with the hope that his words will inspire others to strive for excellence in drumming and life.

**Arvin Scott:** *What are you thinking when you take a drum solo?*

**Alan Dawson:** Something different is going on in my mind for every drum solo. I'm using melody and form as a framework in ninety-nine percent of the cases, with the remaining one percent being the free solo. I especially like tunes with rhythmic melodies that make it easy for you to make statements on melody. For example, “Caravan” is a popular piece for drum solos, but from my standpoint it's not an ideal tune because the melody is legato and spread out. It's not active rhythmically and would be difficult to use as the basis for a solo. So with this tune, I would use the standard arrangement as a framework, which is a Latin style for the “A” sec-

tions and straight ahead for the bridge. This is in contrast to “Oleo,” where the melody is so rhythmic. It would be pretty difficult to sing and think this tune and not play the rhythm of the melody. So these things are to be considered in the approach to the drum solo. But as far as what I play within that framework, I hope that varies to the extent that I can't tell you what I think.

**Scott:** *And that is what improvisation is all about, isn't it? When you improvise*



*you are not necessarily planning what you are going to do, or trying to repeat something that you have done before.*

**Dawson:** You are trying to really do something that's right in the moment. Now I'm sure that it would be unusual to play strictly from a creative standpoint all of the time, because we are to some extent creatures of habit who learn from our experiences. Though I don't know what the actual percentage would be, I would guess that we play things we know seventy-five percent of the time. We even learn how to rearrange them and make them sound different. And maybe twenty-five percent of the time—and that's pretty high—we play from inspiration. Of course, ideally we would all like to be able to play very well and purely creative.

**Scott:** *How can you increase the percentage of creative playing?*

**Dawson:** I have a theory that to be one-hundred percent creative, you must totally disregard learning the instrument. You'll be absolutely creative, but that doesn't mean that what you play will

sound good. By learning the basics I might become less creative, but what I might play would be more interesting to the discerning ear. I would even expect to become less repetitive, because as I learned the instrument I would master a variety of things to play.

**Scott:** *And you learn more ways of using what you know.*

**Dawson:** That's right, more ways of using what I know—that's what improvisation is. It's like taking an amount of material and being able to rearrange it so that it doesn't sound the same. For example, there are only twenty-six letters in the alphabet, but look at all the novels that have been written. Somebody who invents another alphabet might be more creative, but nobody will understand what they are trying to communicate. There is a lot to be done with what's out there already. None of us have really tapped all the possibilities of what already exists.

**Scott:** *You are consistently described as a melodic drummer, and your personal philosophy and practice of singing tunes as you solo reflects this style.*

**Dawson:** In all the music of the world, the elements of rhythm and melody are present. Harmony is not necessarily present in all music. I don't mean to imply that harmony isn't great. It is, but it isn't necessarily present in the music in all cultures like rhythm and melody. Harmony is another addition—a sophisticated addition to making music—but it isn't the basis.

**Scott:** *You've often played vibes on gigs. Do you find yourself needing or requiring something special from the drummers on these gigs?*

**Dawson:** I think that playing another instrument is important for a drummer. I don't mean that the instrument must be vibes, but just to play another instrument and to have a drummer play behind you broadens your perspective of drumming. I have been in an audience listening to a drummer play and thought he was really cooking. Moments later while on the break, I've heard fellow players complain about his playing—in

particular his volume. So when I play with another drummer, I become more conscious of dynamics and how to blend with the group when I'm the drummer.

**Scott:** *Years ago when I took my first lesson with you, you emphasized control, stamina, accuracy and speed—some of the basic ingredients of good technique. How important is a finely tuned technique to the drummer?*

**Dawson:** Good technique frees you so that you can concentrate on the music. Some people have the idea that too much technique gets in the way of the soul of the music. It is true that sometimes when a person who has been playing awhile starts to study, the playing may not go as well as it did before he or she started to concentrate on technique. That's only temporary. After studying long enough, you can be freed from having to think about how and what to play, and eventually there will be fifty million more things to play. The whole idea of learning the instrument is to get to the point that it's an extension of your fingers and toes. Eventually you can play music that will be more interesting than it was when you started out.

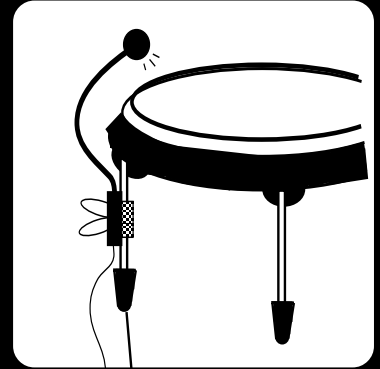
**Scott:** *You always appear to be so relaxed, calm and confident when you*

*are performing. Will you share your secret with us?*

**Dawson:** Good acting. I'm not always calm and collected, but I guess most of the time I am. I don't always love practicing; I don't always like going out in the cold to get to the gig or lugging my drums there. But the playing itself I love ninety-nine percent of the time. When I get up on the bandstand, I believe I'm supposed to have some fun, and I usually do. So enjoyment contributes to relaxation. And I don't feel that I'm competing with any other drummers. I just feel that when it's time for me to play, I've done all I can do to prepare myself. So here I am, fat ankles and all. By that I mean I don't take myself seriously as I once did. I do, however, take the music seriously—very seriously. **PN**

*Arvin Scott, an alumnus of the Berklee College of Music, earned his Ph.D. from the Union Institute. Before joining the faculty at the University of Georgia in Athens, where he teaches drumset and hand drumming, he taught at Berklee and the New England conservatory of Music. His background includes U.S. and European performances with major jazz, rhythm & blues and hand percussion artists such as Mose Allison, Dorothy Donegan, Rufus Thomas, Mor Thiam and Denagan Janvier Honfo.*

## Mini-Clip™ Microphones



great sound! easy to use!

**The mic for all  
your percussion needs**

• free catalog •

**Donnell Enterprises**  
24 Parkhurst  
Chico CA 95928  
800/585-7659

See us  
at the  
NAMM  
show  
Booth 827

Since 1988

Vintage & Custom  
Drums and Percussion

**NOT SO  
MODERN  
DRUMMER**

Vintage Drum Magazine



*The Ultimate Source for  
Vintage & Custom Drums!*

Extensive Listings of Vintage drums at **REASONABLE PRICES** • Articles and Stories about Vintage Drums, Companies and the History of vintage drums • Helpful hints on Buying, Selling and Trading through the mail • Database of Collectors and Vintage Enthusiasts • Free Wanted and For Sale Ads for Subscribers! Reasonable Ad Rates.



To request a complimentary copy of NSMD, write to  
NSMD: FREEBIE PN,  
119 Old Hickory Blvd East, Madison TN 37115  
or call 615-860-7817 or Fax/615-860-7818  
Subscription Rates: \$25/yr. USA (\$40/yr.Outside  
USA) **VISA/MC!**

# JOIN THE PROS!

- 10 Ply Maple Shell
- Cam - Lever™ Strainer
- Low Mass Tube Lug
- 5-Point Snare Tuning
- Grover® Silver/Bronze Custom Orchestral Snares

## GROVER

PRO PERCUSSION

22 PROSPECT STREET, UNIT 7  
WOBURN, MA 01801, USA • (781) 935-6200  
e-mail: grover@tac.net

# CUMBERLAND DRUM CAMP



## Drumset Clinic & Performance

Saturday June 14, 2008

Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Center  
University of the Cumberlands

Presented by:

**John Willmarth**

Director of Percussion - Lafayette High School  
Adjunct Faculty - University of Kentucky

Please visit John's website:

[www.johnwillmarth.com](http://www.johnwillmarth.com)



UC Drumline: [www.ucumberlands.edu/drumline](http://www.ucumberlands.edu/drumline)

# 1. JAZZ STYLES

## 2-BEAT

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: BAG'S GROOVE BY MILES DAVIS, TRACK 1: "BAG'S GROOVE."

1

## BAG'S GROOVE

MILES DAVIS, PRESTIGE 7109

KENNY CLARKE, DRUMS

CHORUS 1

## IN 4 (WALKING BASS LINE)

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: KIND OF BLUE BY MILES DAVIS, TRACK 2: "FREDDY FREELOADER"

MILESTONES BY MILES DAVIS, TRACK 4: "MILESTONES"

2

## WITH BRUSHES

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: AT THE PERSHING BY AHMAD JAMAL, TRACK 5: "NO GREATER LOVE"

3 BRUSHES

# JAZZ SHUFFLE

1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: MOANIN' BY ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS, TRACK 2: "MOANIN'."

2

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: CENTRAL PARK NORTH BY THAD JONES/MEL LEWIS, TRACK 4: "GROOVE MERCHANT"

3

## MOANIN'

BY BOBBY TIMMONS

FROM THE ALBUM "MOANIN'" BY ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

ART BLAKEY, DRUMS

Drum notation for the introduction of 'Moanin'. It consists of two staves. The top staff shows a series of eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff shows a series of eighth notes with accents. The notation includes a first ending bracket and a second ending bracket.

SHUFFLE!

Drum notation for the shuffle section of 'Moanin'. It consists of four staves. The top two staves show a series of eighth notes with accents, and the bottom two staves show a series of eighth notes with accents. The notation includes a 'FILL!' instruction.

# II. BRAZILIAN STYLES

## BOSSA NOVA

1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: SONG FOR MY FATHER BY HORACE SILVER, TRACK 1: "SONG FOR MY FATHER."

2

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: PAGE ONE BY JOE HENDERSON, TRACK 1: "BLUE BOSSA."

3

RH: BRUSH ON SNARE, LH: STICK

## SONG FOR MY FATHER

FROM THE RECORDING SONG FOR MY FATHER

BY HORACE SILVER

INTRODUCTION

Bossa!

5

FILL!

9

13

FILL!

17

# SAMBA

1 **SAMBA BATUCADA**



\*WITH STICKS OR BRUSHES

Detailed description: This block contains the first musical pattern, labeled '1' in a circle. It is titled 'SAMBA BATUCADA'. The notation is on a single staff in 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. It features a series of eighth notes with accents, grouped into four measures. Below the staff, there is a note that says '\*WITH STICKS OR BRUSHES'.

2



Detailed description: This block contains the second musical pattern, labeled '2' in a circle. It is on a single staff in 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. It features a series of eighth notes with accents, grouped into four measures.

3

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: FRIENDS BY CHICK COREA, TRACK 4: "SAMBA SONG."



Detailed description: This block contains the third musical pattern, labeled '3' in a circle. It is on a single staff in 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. It features a series of eighth notes with accents, grouped into four measures. Above the staff, there is a note that says 'RECOMMENDED LISTENING: FRIENDS BY CHICK COREA, TRACK 4: "SAMBA SONG."'.

## CAPTAIN MARVEL HAND PATTERNS

CHICK COREA AND RETURN TO FOREVER, "LIGHT AS A FEATHER"

AIRTO MOREIRA, DRUMS

0:42



Detailed description: This block contains four staves of musical notation for 'Captain Marvel Hand Patterns'. The first staff starts with a time signature of 0:42. The notation is on a single staff in 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. It features a series of eighth notes with accents, grouped into four measures. The subsequent three staves continue the pattern with similar notation.

# III. FUNK

## EXAMPLES USING GHOST NOTES:

1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: THE J.B.'s FUNKY GOOD TIME, DISC 1/TRACK 4: "PASS THE PEAS."

2

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: THE J.B.'s FUNKY GOOD TIME, DISC 1/TRACK 9: "GIVIN' UP FOOD FOR FUNK"

## EXAMPLES OF DISPLACED BACKBEAT:

3

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: "STAR TIME" BY JAMES BROWN, DISC 2/TRACK 10: "COLD SWEAT."

4

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: HEADHUNTERS BY HERBIE HANCOCK, TRACK 1: "CHAMELEON."



# IV. AFRO-CUBAN GROOVES

## CASCARA

1

Musical notation for Cascara, measure 1. The staff is in 2/4 time with a common key signature. It features a series of eighth notes with stems pointing down, and some notes are beamed together. There are 'x' marks below the staff indicating specific rhythmic points.

2

Musical notation for Cascara, measure 2. Similar to measure 1, it consists of eighth notes with stems pointing down, some beamed together, and 'x' marks below the staff.

3

Musical notation for Cascara, measure 3. Similar to measure 1, it consists of eighth notes with stems pointing down, some beamed together, and 'x' marks below the staff.

## SONGO

1

Musical notation for Songo, measure 1. The staff is in 2/4 time with a common key signature. It features a series of eighth notes with stems pointing down, and some notes are beamed together. There are 'x' marks below the staff indicating specific rhythmic points.

2

Musical notation for Songo, measure 2. Similar to measure 1, it consists of eighth notes with stems pointing down, some beamed together, and 'x' marks below the staff.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: ALIVE BY CHICK COREA ACOUSTIC BAND, TRACK 8: "MORNING SPRITE."

3

Musical notation for Songo, measure 3. Similar to measure 1, it consists of eighth notes with stems pointing down, some beamed together, and 'x' marks below the staff. There are also accents (>) above some notes.

## **EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS:**

**JAZZ: MUSICAL TIME BY ED SOPH**

**JAZZ STANDARDS FOR DRUMSET BY BRIAN FULLEN**

**ART OF BOP DRUMMING BY JOHN RILEY**

**BEYOND BOP DRUMMING BY JOHN RILEY**

**JAZZ CONCEPTION AND INTERMEDIATE JAZZ CONCEPTION (DRUM PLAY ALONG) BY JIM SNIDERO**

**JAZZ DRUMMER'S READING WORKBOOK BY TOM MORGAN**

**FUNK: 100 FAMOUS FUNK BEATS BY JIM PAYNE**

**THE FUNKY BEAT BY DAVID GARIBALDI**

**FUTURE SOUNDS BY DAVID GARIBALDI**

**FUNK DRUMMING: INNOVATIVE GROOVES AND ADVANCED CONCEPTS BY MIKE CLARK**

**LINEAR TIME PLAYING BY GARY CHAFFEE**

**LATIN: AFRO-CARIBBEAN RHYTHMS FOR DRUMSET BY DRUMMERS COLLECTIVE FACULTY**

**BRAZILIAN RHYTHMS FOR THE DRUMSET BY HENRIQUE DE ALMEIDA**

**BRAZILIAN COORDINATION FOR DRUMSET BY MARIA MARTINEZ**

**AFRO-CUBAN COORDINATION FOR DRUMSET BY MARIA MARTINEZ**

**GROOVIN' IN CLAVE BY IGNACIO BERROA**

**CONVERSATIONS IN CLAVE BY HORACIO HERNANDEZ**

**DVDs: THE HISTORY OF THE U.S. BEAT BY STEVE SMITH**

**MUSICAL DRUMMING IN DIFFERENT STYLES BY GREGG BISSETTE**

**SECRET WEAPONS FOR THE MODERN DRUMMER BY JOJO MAYER**

**TAKE IT TO THE STREET, VOL. 1 & 2 BY STANTON MOORE**

**AFRO-CUBAN DRUMSET-GROOVES YOU CAN USE BY CURT MOORE**

**CONVERSATIONS IN CLAVE BY HORACIO HERNANDEZ**

# Beginning Drumset Beats

John Willmarth

① Quarter-Note Rock

Musical notation for Quarter-Note Rock. The staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. The notes are on a single line, and there are four measures shown.

② Eighth-Note Rock

Musical notation for Eighth-Note Rock. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

③ Sixteenth-Note Rock (One Hand)

Musical notation for Sixteenth-Note Rock (One Hand). The staff shows sixteenth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

④ Sixteenth-Note Rock (Two Hand)

Musical notation for Sixteenth-Note Rock (Two Hand). The staff shows sixteenth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

⑤ 12/8 Feel (Blues, R&B, Gospel)

Musical notation for 12/8 Feel (Blues, R&amp;B, Gospel). The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. The time signature is 12/8. There are four measures shown.

Blues Shuffle

Musical notation for Blues Shuffle. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are triplets indicated by a '3' above the notes. There are four measures shown.

Jazz

Musical notation for Jazz. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are triplets indicated by a '3' above the notes. There are four measures shown.

Bossa Nova

Musical notation for Bossa Nova. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

Samba

Musical notation for Samba. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

Generic Latin Beat

Musical notation for Generic Latin Beat. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

Songo

Musical notation for Songo. The staff shows eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. There are four measures shown.

# STYLISTIC EXAMPLES FOR DRUMSET

KENTUCKY CHAPTER OF PAS ALL-STATE COMMITTEE

COMPILED BY JOHN WILLMARTH

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: MILESTONES BY MILES DAVIS, TRACK 2: "SID'S AHEAD."

1 SWING

NOTE: REFER TO THE JAZZ COMPING WORKSHEET FOR MORE INFORMATION ON JAZZ TIME

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: BAG'S GROOVE BY MILES DAVIS, TRACK 6: "DOXY."

2 2-BEAT

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: MOANIN' BY ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS, TRACK 2: "MOANIN'."

3 JAZZ SHUFFLE

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: LIKE MINDS BY GARY BURTON, TRACK 1: "QUESTION AND ANSWER."

4 JAZZ WALTZ

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: THRU MY EYES BY MICHEL CAMILO, TRACK 9: "AFRO BLUE."

5 12/8 AFRO-CUBAN

6 JAZZ MAMBO 1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: THE REAL MCCOY BY MCCOY TYNER, TRACK 1: "PASSION DANCE."

7 JAZZ MAMBO 2

8 SONGO 1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: ALIVE BY CHICK COREA ACOUSTIC BAND, TRACK 8: "MORNING SPRITE."

9 SONGO 2

BOSSA NOVA 1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: PAGE ONE BY JOE HENDERSON, TRACK 1: "BLUE BOSSA."

10

BOSSA NOVA 2

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: SONG FOR MY FATHER BY HORACE SILVER, TRACK 1: "SONG FOR MY FATHER."

11

JAZZ SAMBA 1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: MICHEL CAMILO BY MICHEL CAMILO, TRACK 1: "SUITE SANDRINE PART 1."

12

JAZZ SAMBA 2

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: FRIENDS BY CHICK COREA, TRACK 4: "SAMBA SONG."

13

FUNK 1

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: THRUST BY HERBIE HANCOCK, TRACK 1: "PALM GREASE."

14

FUNK 2

RECOMMENDED LISTENING: HEADHUNTERS BY HERBIE HANCOCK, TRACK 1: "CHAMELEON."

15

# Preparing for A Drumset Audition

BY ED SOPH

A performance-based drumset program stresses learning the art of rhythmic improvisation in a variety of group configurations from combo to big band, in a variety of styles—not simply “jazz.” Participation in any of these ensembles as well as entrance into the program is based upon how well one plays, which is determined by an audition.

Let’s look at the profile of an unprepared drummer. His or her technique has been developed primarily by copying other drummers’ “licks” and soloistic devices. Little thought has been given to copying how another drummer keeps good time, delineates form, or plays within the rhythm section. The unprepared drummer has listened to drummers without being aware of the musical context of their playing.

This applicant knows little of the physical and musical evolution of the drumset. Often, this drummer’s knowledge of the tradition of past masters of the instrument is by name alone and not by the music of those players. And by “past masters” I am not referring simply to jazz drummers, but to the masters of funk, pop, and rock as well.

Most unsettling is the lack of melodic awareness. Tune knowledge, something as simple as being able to sing a melody, is rare. Often one receives the response, “I know the beat but not the tune.” Again, this is attributable to listening only to the drums.

Unprepared drummers can read rhythmic notation but cannot interpret musically what they are reading. The dynamic range is usually very narrow. Soft dynamics often don’t exist in the hands of the unprepared player. Steady time sounds erratic because of over-played accents and subsequent lack of dynamic balance on the instrument.

All of these deficiencies can be taken care of before one seeks admission to a program. Most desirable, of course, is a teacher who can teach music on the instrument; not simply technique-pattern books and beat compendia. A teacher is needed who supplements instruction with a discography so that the student knows how the instrument sounds when played musically, not just drummistically.

It is to the aspiring student’s advantage to get snare drum in-

struction—rudimental and orchestral. Learn the basic stroke systems, the ways a drum can be struck. Learn dynamic control and accent techniques. Learn how to interpret musically. Learning on one surface gives one the musical foundation to transfer to the multiple surfaces of the drumset. Get the basics out of the way so that one can concentrate on music-making.

There are many things one can do without a teacher, too. Using historical videos, study how Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Baby Dodds played the instrument: how they played time and worked with the rhythm section; how they accompanied soloists; how they soloed. Read books like *Drummin’ Men* by Burt Korall. Purchase and use musical drum books. John Riley’s *The Art of Bop Drumming* and *Beyond Bop Drumming* are excellent. Check out John Ramsey’s book on Art Blakey. David Garibaldi’s *Funky Beat*, Allan Slutsky’s and Chuck Silverman’s *The Great James Brown Rhythm Sections*, Herlin Riley’s and John Vidacovich’s *New Orleans Jazz* and *Second Line Drumming* are enlightening books. Two more books worth studying are Jim Payne’s *Give The Drummers Some* and Zoro’s *The Commandments of R & B Drumming*. All of these books are about playing the drums in a musical context. That’s what one will be doing in school. That’s what one will be doing in his or her career after school. Get started now!

All of the books I’ve mentioned contain discographies, and that is where the truly serious studying is done. One must hear the music to understand how the instrument is played musically. If listening is not enjoyable, do not pursue music.

In closing, I’ll relate a true story to illustrate how NOT to approach learning. I once asked a student if he had read an article in *Modern Drummer* about Tiny Kahn, who had a tremendous influence on many drummers. Tiny had died at the age of 30 in 1953. The student said he had seen the article but did not read it. “Why not?” I asked. “Because I didn’t know who he was,” was the incredible reply.

That’s how NOT to prepare for an audition!

---

Ed Soph is an Associate Professor at the University of North Texas. Soph is the co-leader with trumpeter Marvin Stamm of a

## THE DRUMSET AUDITION

I listen for good, solid timekeeping, combined with stylistic awareness. I need to see that the drummer has really studied and analyzed the jazz, rock or Latin style and can play it with authenticity. When it comes to sight-reading, I look for a drummer who can take control of the chart, reading down the figures, provide the proper set-ups and fills and, of course, nail the style. I want to hear playing as if the band were sitting right there in the room. Often times, I hear drummers read charts with “practice chops.” I want to hear “performance chops” with performance intensity.

It is always a good idea to do some research on the type of audition you are about to take. For example, a cruise-ship audition would ask for different things than would an audition at UNT, a top-40 band, or a Disney gig. Know who or what you are auditioning for and understand how past successful drummers in that setting prepared for the audition/gig.

Steve Houghton: Performing artist, author, clinician

## DRUMSET AUDITION PREPARATION

Prospective percussion majors at Wichita State University are asked to demonstrate reasonable proficiency in all areas of percussion. The drumset portion of the audition generally adheres to the following format.

First, the students are asked to play along with a recording that is minus a drum track, or a CD that has a drum track that can be tuned out. For this segment, no headphones are used to see if the student can adjust to the volume of the room speakers. Recordings used might include: *Oscar Peterson and the Bassists* (Pablo Live, OJCCD-383-2) or *Essential Styles*, Books 1 & 2, by Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington (Alfred Publications, Inc.; CDs included).

The second part of the audition is done with headphones. The student must demonstrate a knowledge of and proficiency in swing, rhythm & blues, rock, various Latin rhythms and the like, while playing with recordings. Material is chosen from the following: *The Drumset Soloist* by Steve Houghton (Warner Bros.; CD included); *Alfred Master Tracks—Blues*, by Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington (Alfred Publications, Inc.; CD included); *Afro-Cuban Grooves for Bass and Drums (Funkifying the Clave)* by Lincoln Goines and Robby Ameen (Manhattan Music Publications; CD included).

For the final portion of the audition, students are asked to read a big band chart. Materials might include: *The Ultimate Drumset Reading Anthology* by Steve Houghton (Alfred Publications, Inc; CD included); *Louis Bellson Honors 12 Super Drummers* (Warner Bros.; CD included); *Studio and Big Band Drumming* by Steve Houghton (Barnhouse Publications; CD included).

From this type of audition, which also includes mallets, timpani, snare drum, etc., I am better able to assess a student's level of proficiency and potential as a drumset performer. Many prospective students have had little experience with drumset. The materials mentioned above will provide a focus for study.

Dr. J.C. Combs: Professor of Percussion, Wichita State University.

quartet that includes Bill Mays, piano, and Rufus Reid, bass. The group recently recorded with the addition of saxophonist David Liebman. His books, *Essential Techniques for Drumset* and *The Big Band Primer*, are highly acclaimed. He is also the co-author of one of the first instructional videos, *The Drumset: A Musical Approach*. PN

PN

## PASIC '99 EXHIBITOR PACKETS NOW AVAILABLE

This year PAS is offering several low-cost opportunities for companies to participate in the largest percussion-oriented trade show in the world.

5 x 8 Booths (limited quantity)  
10 x 10 Booths  
Booth Sharing  
Literature Bins

To receive your PASIC '99 Exhibitor Packet or for additional information contact PAS at (580) 353-1455, fax (580) 353-1456, e-mail: rebecca@pas.org

**MEY ROSAURO**  
*New Publications*

*Mey Rosauro In Concert*



Listen to the composer play the original string orchestra version of the most popular marimba concerto of this decade. Includes other important Rosauro repertoire including Three Marimba Preludes and Concerto for Vibraphone and Orchestra.

MalletWorks Music is the exclusive worldwide distributor of all Mey Rosauro compositions, recordings, and books. American retail agents for Roscauro Orchestral and Wind Ensemble works.

*Seven Brazilian Childrens Songs*

Beginner level pieces for marimba utilizing four mallets, based on popular folkloric Brazilian rhythms and melodies.



*Rhapsody*

This earlier work for solo percussion is now available in arrangement for Jazz Ensemble Big Band!





**MALLETWORKS MUSIC**

P.O. BOX 2107 STAMFORD CT 06906 USA  
WWW.MALLETWORKS.COM T 203.327.2054 F 203.426.0865

# The Declaration of Dependence

BY ED SOPH

**M**y generation was probably one of the last to learn how to play jazz when that music was still a part of everyday life. One could see Miles Davis on *The Steve Allen Show* and many of the great bands and jazz singers on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Even jingles for automobiles and ballpoint pens were swingin'! We played what we heard and it was fun.

There were books already on the market that attempted to explain the intricacies of jazz "independence." We played what we read and the fun was gone as we tied ourselves in knots pitting one appendage against the other. While we were struggling with our Chapin and Reed applications, jazz faded from the airwaves and clubs. Enter rock 'n' roll and the ascendancy of "dependent" drumming.

Now here's the rub. Jazz drumming is just as dependent as rock (and as independent and linear as funk). We lucky ones who had the music around us continued to learn how to play by listening to the music. And we first learned to play the style dependently. The books were strictly secondary, as their authors probably intended them to be. And the more we listened, the more we realized that very, very few drummers played in the style of those books. That is even more apparent with today's masters.

The cultural situation has changed and the majority of drumset students I see today are primarily from a book background, not a listening one. Consequently, they have very poor jazz coordination skills because of the unrealistic and unmusical manner with which those skills are often taught by solely book-based teachers.

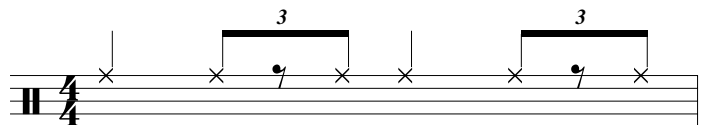
So many times I have heard a young person say, "Jazz drumming is hard because you have to play different patterns in each appendage, or play one pattern against another. Rock is easier because everything falls together." The kid is right! Were it not for such things as "coordinated independence" and a repetitive ride cymbal pattern, a lot more youngsters would enjoy the experience of learning how to play jazz styles. Even today, the most difficult aspects of jazz coordination are taught first—those of "independence." That's like learning the coordination necessary to play rock by starting with transcriptions of David Garibaldi grooves.

Long ago, a fellow in New York called one of the masters and arranged to have a lesson. There were two sets in the studio and the student assumed that the master would share some of his incredibly hip licks. Instead, the lesson was spent with the master running the young man through a series of seemingly simple dependent exercises that, much to the student's embarrassment, he could not play. The master's words were to the effect that, until you can play your limbs together (dependently) in different dynamic and tempo configurations, there is no worth in trying to play them apart (independently).

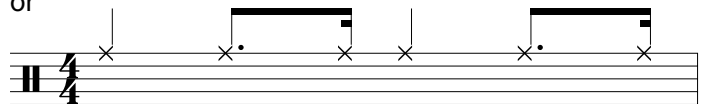
That makes very good sense. Look at our own motor-skill development. Ask a young child to play "bap-bap-bap-bap" on a table with his hands. Does the kid use a sticking pattern? No, he does it with unison hands. The genesis of drumming coordi-

nation, the clapping of hands, is a dependent/unison action.

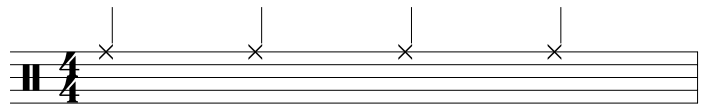
Here are some ideas for teaching jazz coordination skills from a dependent approach. First, banish the idea that a ride pattern is just this:



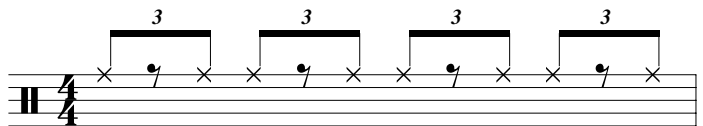
or



Second, a ride pattern is a sound, not a pattern. Third, there are two fundamental ways of thinking about the patterns played on the ride cymbal. Those patterns emerge either from adding subdivisions of the quarter notes to the basic quarter-note rhythm of the time signature:



or, by leaving out subdivisions of a shuffle pattern:



The following examples start with the two ride "roots" explained above. Interpret the eighth notes in jazz style. Example 1 is in 12-measure blues form and example 2 is a 16-measure AABA format. The exercises begin with unison figures and gradually progress to more syncopated comping phrases. This progression is shown in examples 3 through 7.

I'll close with a quotation from the great writer Katherine Anne Porter. Substitute "drumming" for "writing": "Writing cannot be taught, but only learned, and learned by the individual in his own way, at his own pace and in his own time, for the process of mastering the medium is part of cellular growth in a most complex organism."

Declare your dependence!



**NEW**  
Alpha Series  
Hardware



# CHRONOS

Professional performance  
with practical features.

*See the full line of Chronos products at*

THE PERCUSSION SOURCE

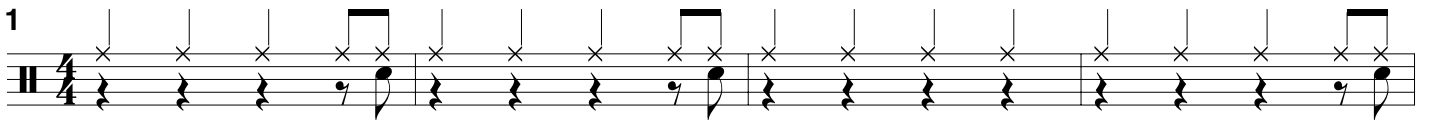
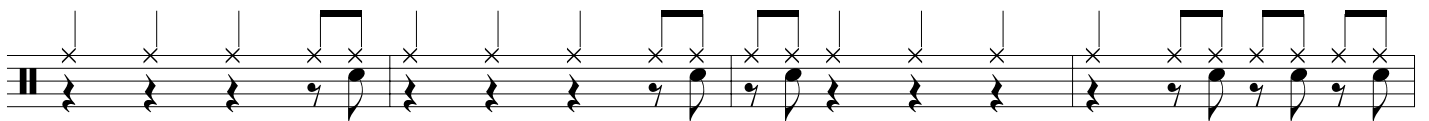
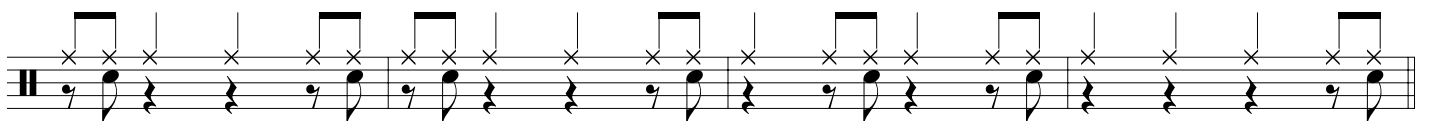
(866)849-4387

[www.percussionsource.com](http://www.percussionsource.com)

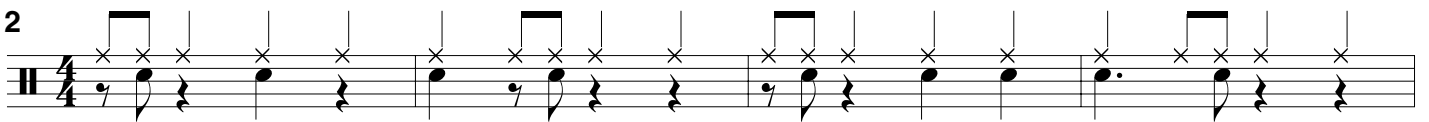
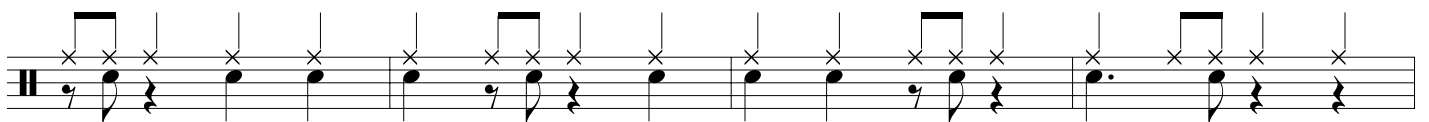
**NEW**  
Cherry Timpani  
Series

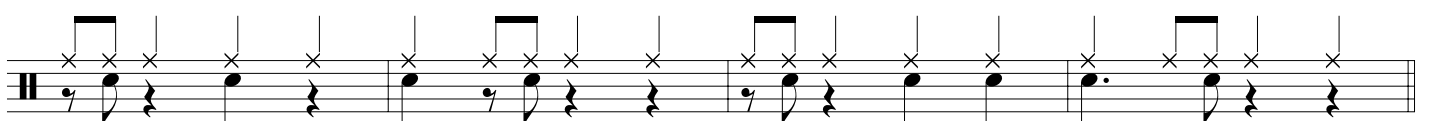


1

2



3

4

5

6

7

**Ed Soph** is an Associate Professor of Music at the University of North Texas. In addition to teaching, Soph performs and records with the Stamm/Soph Project: trumpeter Marvin Stamm, pianist Bill Mays, and bassist Rufus Reid. He is currently completing a series of books on dependent coordination for jazz styles.

PN

**American Drum**

*"We make mallets... that Revolutionize the industry!"*

Write for a free catalog.

American Drum

at Special [www.americandrum.com](http://www.americandrum.com)

2800 Seven Hills Blvd., Richmond, VA 23231 Ph. (800) 476-1776

## PASIC 2002 EXHIBITOR PACKETS AVAILABLE

PAS is offering several low-cost opportunities for companies to participate in the largest percussion-oriented trade show in the world.

5 x 10 Booths • 10 x 10 Booths  
Booth Sharing • Literature Bins  
Program Advertisement

To receive your PASIC 2002 Exhibitor Packet or for additional information contact PAS at (580) 353-1455 or e-mail: [rebecca@pas.org](mailto:rebecca@pas.org)