

# STRENGTHENING YOUR RHYTHMS

Have you ever noticed that when you watch experienced players laying down the simplest grooves, they always seem to sound so strong and driving, and yet when you jump on your kit, playing the same rhythm, things are a mess? Even when you play the rhythms note-for-note, why aren't they sounding as 'alive' as what you are hearing when the pro's play it?

The simple fact is, that drumming is more than a collection of different notes. Tommy Igoe stated that if you put ten drummers in a room and got them all to play the same beat, you'd hear ten distinctly different rhythms. The way we approach and play our rhythms is as unique as the setups we play them on.

In this lesson, we aren't looking at giving you new rhythms, but rather new and improved ways of playing your existing rhythms. With these practical and simple modifications you will be able to add more groove and power to the rhythms in your repertoire.

Lets look firstly at the basic rock rhythm;

Drum Set

...On the surface it doesn't seem like anything too difficult to hold together. But is it actually *together*? When your bass drum falls with the hi-hat, is it 100% together with the hi-hat or is it slightly out of sync? We use the term 'simultaneity' when we talk about the 'togetherness' of our playing, not unlike quantization in MIDI recording. Experienced players will learn to deliberately play in front or behind a beat to create a feeling of speed or drag. For you though, it's a matter of first ensuring you can play directly on top of the beats, 100% together.

Play the following exercise for three minutes without stopping. If you can keep your hits 100% simultaneous over that time - congratulations. The majority of drummers can't!

3

5

7 R R R R

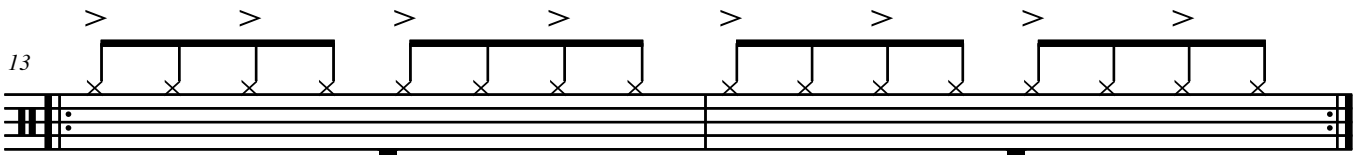
9 L L L L

11

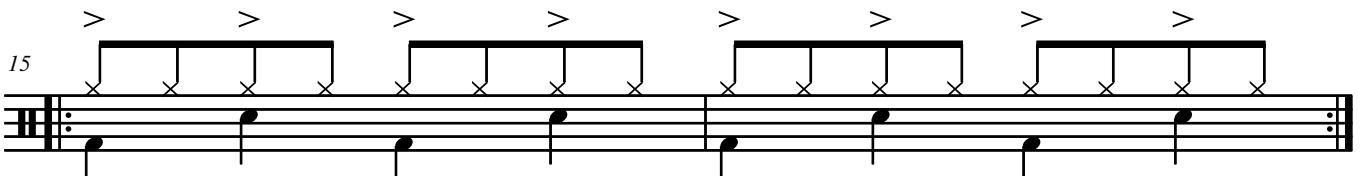
Once you are confident enough playing the previous patterns, revisit the rock beat and concentrate on playing everything a lot tighter than before, making sure you can feel hands and feet falling *exactly* together where necessary. Improving your simultaneity alone will do so much for your groove!

### ACCENTING

Aside from simultaneity, accenting can give our rhythms the push where its most needed. Dynamics in general give our playing so much more flavour and enhance the pocket so that the rhythms feel more solid. The quarter note accent is perhaps the most common recurring accent in popular music. Often, this accent is used on the hi-hat foot to drive a rhythm, but for the next example, take the rock beat and add accents on the hi-hat as quarter-notes - which is where the snares and bass drums fall.



Now apply it to the rest of the rock beat...



To see the full effect that the quarter-note accent has on the feel of our rhythms, try applying it to these following rhythms in which the bass and snare parts are more independent. You should start to see that the groove feels a lot stronger, even when snares and kicks move off the quarter-note. By keeping the quarter-note accent stable you can create a sense of 'drive' to your rhythms, even with complicated snare and bass drum permutations.

