

Lesson 6

Fills

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This month we are going to look at some drum fills - firstly how to construct a fill and then different starting positions. To do this we are going to use the rhythmic notation and the stickings we have learnt over the last few months. Up to this point I have suggested that you always practice leading with both left and right hands. However we are now going to be moving from the snare to the first, second and third toms, so to prevent any awkward crossing over, start each fill with your lead hand.

Ex 1

In this first example we have whole bar fill. On beat 1 we have set of 1/8th notes on the snare drum and on beat 2 a set of 1/16th notes on the first tom. On beat 3 we miss out the "e" on the second tom and on beat 4 we miss out the "a" on the third tom. As you can see, all we have done to create this fill is to take four groups of different rhythms and place them around the kit.

1 & 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 & 4 e & a

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 e & a

1 & 2 & 3 e & a 4 e & a

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 e & a

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 e & a

1 & 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

R L R L L R R L R L
L R a L R R L L R a

1 & 2 & 3 e & a 4 e & a

R L R L R
L R L R L a

Ex 2

Here we have another example of a whole bar fill, but rather than moving straight around the kit we are now playing snare on beat 1, first tom on beat 2, back to the snare on beat 3 and the third tom on beat 4. It's a good idea to experiment with different ways to make up fills, not just the rhythms you play but also the way you move around the kit.

Ex 3

Now we move on to a half bar fill. This means that we play a pattern over the first 2 beats of the bar and then start the fill on beat 3. You will also see that we are now moving around the kit within groups of rhythms.

Ex 4

Another example of a half bar fill.

Ex 5

In this exercise we are now leaving the start of the fill until beat 4. This makes for a very short fill but these are good for breaking up a pattern without disrupting your groove or getting in the way of the singer.

Ex 6

One more example of starting on beat 4.

Ex 7

So far all the fills that we have tried have started "on" the beat, e.g. beats 1, 3 and 4. Now it's time to try starting from an "off" beat e.g. the "&" - in this case we start from the "&" of the 2. The snare beat on the 2 is part of the pattern not the fill.

Ex 8

And for our last exercise we are starting the fill from the "&" of beat 3. As always there are many variations that we could play.

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