

Lesson 25

Odd Time Signatures: Part 1

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Hello and welcome once again. Over the next 4 issues we are going to take a look at odd time signatures starting with 3/4. However before we start to do any playing lets just go over a little bit of theory.

A time signature should be read like a fraction. The top number tells you the amount of beats per bar, and the bottom number tells you the value of the beats in the bar i.e. 1/4, 1/8th or 1/16th. Therefore, a time signature of 3/4 is telling us that we have to play within a framework of 3 quarter notes per bar. Exercises 1 to 4 are based around a straight 1/8th note feel, whilst exercises 5 to 8 are counted in triplets to give you a swing or jazzy feel.

Ex 1

Exercise 1 is a basic 3/4 pattern, with the 3 quarter notes played on the hi-hats, the bass drum on beat 1 and the snare on beats 2 and 3. This gives you the opportunity to practice counting in 3's.

Ex 1a

We are now playing 1/8th notes on the hi-hats, with the bass drum staying on beat 1 and the snare on beats 2 and 3.

Ex 2

In this exercise we have moved to the ride cymbal and introduced the hi-hat foot on beats 2 and 3; you should also try this with ex 1 and 1a. You will see that the snare is now only on beat 3 which takes us away from a traditional waltz pattern and gives us more of a modern approach to a 3/4 groove.

Ex 2a

Here we have the same pattern as ex 2, but with the ride cymbal playing the 1/8th notes.

Ex 3

This is an example of a 3/4 pattern played over 2 bars. The snare plays on beats 2 and 3 in the first bar and in the second plays only on beat 3.

Ex 4

Here we have the same pattern as ex 3, but with the ride cymbal playing the 1/8th notes and an added bass drum on the end of bar 1.

Ex 5

Exercise 5 is similar to the first bar of ex 3. However we now need to practice counting triplets as we play the quarter notes across the bar. This is absolutely essential, as it ensures that when you add other beats e.g. ghost notes or jazz ride cymbal pattern your beats will be well placed.

Ex 5a

We are now adding an extra ride cymbal on the "Let" of beat 2 to create a 3/4 jazz ride pattern.

Ex 6

Once we have our jazz ride in place we can start to move the snare drum part around to create variation within our pattern. Here we have the snare drum on the "Let" of beat 1; this could be played as either a "ghost" note or a main beat depending on the feel you are trying to create. Note that the snare no longer plays on beat 2 but has moved to beat 3 in exs 6, 7 and 8.

Ex 7

We now move the alternative snare to the "Trip" of beat 2. You could try playing exs 6 and 7 as a 2 bar pattern.

Ex 8

Here we have 2 extra snare beats played on both the "Trip" and "Let" of beat 1. These beats should be played as ghost notes to create the desired effect.