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Introduction

Success, real success, in any endeavor demands more from an individual than most people are willing to offer—not more than they are capable of offering.

— James Roche

Welcome to *The Commandments of the Half-Time Shuffle*. This book represents a vision I have held deep in my heart for over two decades, so it brings me great joy to see this one-of-a-kind method book come to life! My specific goal with this book is to give you the practical methodology to delve into the mastery of the half-time shuffle. If you choose to master this wonderfully unique feel, you will find that its governing rhythmic principles will enable you to play a wide variety of other grooves that are equally infectious and useful.

All rhythms and grooves are cousins or distant relatives of other rhythms and grooves. So the more you really develop one, the easier it is to develop others. In the same way that a standard college class credit would transfer to another school, many of the rhythmic principles here will transfer equally as well.

This book is broken down into six major sections. Each of them prepares you for the next more challenging set of independence exercises and grooves. If you make the commitment to work through each section, you will inevitably come out with greater control and mastery over the language itself.

No matter what your current skill level happens to be, I believe that working through this book will benefit any drummer who takes on the challenge. Both the novice and pro alike will find it rewarding and certainly worth the effort it will take to proficiently master all the patterns.

Taking first things first often reduces the most complex human problem to a manageable proportion.

— Dwight D. Eisenhower

As with any groove, there is almost an endless array of combinations one could develop. Those presented here are merely the conceptual ideas I have found helpful as well as very applicable to a variety of usable grooves that emphasize the swung triplet feel. Whether you are playing blues, hip-hop, or jazz, this material will only enhance your ability to execute those feels at a much higher level. Once you have mastered these grooves, your goal should be to exercise your own creativity and take this groove to new and uncharted territory.

At this time, I'd like to give a shout-out to my partner Dustin Ransom who facilitated all of the transcriptions and notation throughout this book and did an amazing job, if I say so myself! Both he and I have gone to great lengths to bring to you the most in-depth and thorough method book ever written on the subject of the half-time shuffle. An incredible amount of hard work, love, and passion has gone into this project. It is our hope that you enjoy delving into this incredible groove and the music that best represents it, as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you.

Music moves us, and we know not why; we feel the tears, but cannot trace their source. Is it the language of some other state, born of its memory? For what can wake the soul's strong instinct of another world, like music?

— Letitia Elizabeth Landon

Basic Swung-Eighth-Note Shuffles

Here are some nice basic shuffles where both the bass drum and your lead riding hand are swinging in tandem. Even though they may seem simple, the key is to make them feel great—which is easier said than done! Always practice these grooves at a variety of tempos for greater control. The slower and really fast tempos are especially difficult, so never forsake working on those.

13 numbered musical exercises for a drum set, each in 4/4 time with a shuffle feel. Each exercise consists of two staves: a top staff for the lead hand (ride cymbal) and a bottom staff for the bass drum. The lead hand part features a continuous eighth-note triplet pattern (x7x7x7x7). The bass drum part features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth notes, quarter notes, and eighth-note triplets, often with accents. The exercises are numbered 1 through 13.

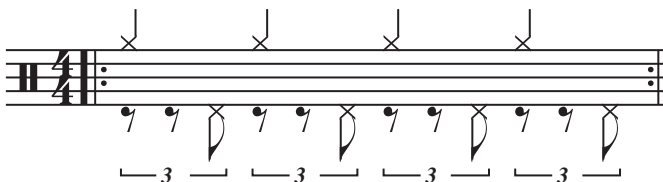
Third Partial of Triplet with Quarter-Note Ride

This is perhaps one of my favorite sections of this book and one of my all-time favorite ways to play a shuffle. Playing the hi-hat foot on the third partial of the triplet is especially challenging from an independence standpoint. In order to effectively use this rhythmic concept, you'll need to have a variety of triplet language mastered between the bass drum and snare drum against that consistent third note of the triplet being played with the hi-hat foot.

I first heard this way of playing a shuffle back in the 1960s on a song called "Terrible Thing" by the legendary Memphis, Tennessee soul group Booker T. & the MG's. Once I heard drummer Al Jackson Jr. do this, I became intrigued with that way of playing a shuffle and began to work on a variety of independence exercises to help me garner more freedom to play it without losing that really unique hi-hat foot pattern.

Your goal should be to eventually solo confidently in a shuffle setting, with your hi-hat foot playing that third note of the triplet without stopping the hi-hat foot pattern. This adds so much to the feel and keeps that swinging triplet pulse going throughout the groove, making it rhythmically stronger by introducing counterpoint to your solos.

Main Pattern



Main Pattern with Snare Triplet Divisions



Buzzes

A *buzz* is a multiple-bounce stroke that lasts for as long as the written note value. Buzzes are a great way to further embellish your comping work and are synonymous with any kind of shuffle. They're used frequently in all forms of R&B music. The examples presented here are classic and the backbone of any buzzing you would do in a shuffle setting.

Exercise No. 1

Exercise No. 2

z = Indicates a buzz

Exercise No. 3

Exercise No. 4

Groove Example No. 1

Groove Example No. 2