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LESSON 2 ➔ **SIX-STROKE FILL EXERCISE**

When interviewed for this book, I was asked about one of my “trademark fills.” This particular six-stroke pattern is something I picked up from Steve Gadd and use a lot in my playing. You can use it to develop your own trademark fills.

Start out playing the pattern between your snare and bass drum. Be sure to play the ghost notes (LL) softly—about one inch off the head.



1

R L L R L

As you become comfortable with the basic pattern, begin orchestrating it around the kit.

A

R L L R L

B

R L L R L

C

R L L R L

D

R L L R L

Try these bass drum variations on the second beat of the bar:



2

R L L R L

A

R L L R L

B

R L L R L

The second beat of Example “A” is written using 16th-notes to help you clearly see the rhythm. It should actually be played with a 16th-note triplet feel as in Example “B.”

You can expand the length of the fill by adding two extra bass drum notes.



3

R L L R L R L L R L

LESSON 3

DEVELOPING FILLS

EXAMPLES 3.1 AND 3.2

Many years ago I saw Terry Bozzio play with Frank Zappa. He played this amazing fill around the kit, a flurry of little notes syncopated in a way I'd never heard before. It was too fast for me to break down, but in trying to emulate the effect of it, I came up with sets of four-note groupings which did the same job. (I'm still not sure if that's what Terry was playing, but it doesn't really matter—the inspiration is what counts, not the emulation!) The basic building blocks of this concept are outlined in Examples 3.1 and 3.2. I have used variations of this on snare drum and around the kit in many Rush songs.

3.1

Four-Note Grouping

3.2

Four-Note Grouping Around The Kit

N.P. EXAMPLE 3.3



Example 3.3 is a fill from the rideout of "Show And Tell," which uses three of the four-note figures leading from snare to two high toms, then returning to the snare and into a triplet run down through two lower toms. This idea also allows many variations, which led me further, into an interesting way to use three-note groupings.

"Show and Tell"

N.P. EXAMPLE 3.4

Example 3.4 shows this concept—a three-note grouping turns the sticking around, so that the downbeat is shifted from your right hand to your left.

Right-Left Switch