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CD audio examples performed by Rich Lackowski.
Instructional photos by Larry Lytle.



This book picks up where *On the Beaten Path: Beginning Drumset Course, Level 1* leaves off. It is designed to help you get “on the beaten path,” that is, to help you play the beats and solos that our mighty drumming predecessors play on the songs we love. You will learn everything you need to know to go from the first thought of “I want to play the drums” to playing some of the most legendary beats and solos ever recorded! Many books claim to do this very thing, but what sets this book apart from the rest is that here, you will learn by playing along with the greatest drummers in the world—all types of famous drummers from a variety of musical styles—and you’ll learn how to play the beats that they perform on some of the most famous songs ever recorded. This book explains what these drummers play on their songs by breaking it down in a way that gets you to learn to read music and start developing your own ideas into beats, fills, and solos.

I believe that drummers learn by mimicking their heroes. Sure, beats grow and change and morph into original ideas, but all drummers—from aspiring beginners to seasoned professionals—are naturally inspired by what other drummers are playing. The proof is in all those people you’ve seen air drumming along to some key part in a song. Many of these people have never sat behind a drumset or even held a drumstick, but the drum beat and the framework of the song somehow gets them to raise their arms in the air and act out

their interpretation of a moving drum passage. It’s basic human instinct. When writing this book, I wanted to guide this natural instinct in a way that logically feeds you information as you need it so you can accelerate the process of learning how to play your drumming heroes’ beats.

I know when I first started playing the drums, even though I had just begun taking group lessons on the snare drum in school, that the *real* learning happened when I got home and threw down my boring class snare drum book that our teacher assigned to us. I put on the headphones each day, sat behind my drum kit, and tried to mimic the beats and fills that the drummers were playing on my favorite songs. Through trial and error, I was eventually able to play the songs and at least fake my way through the more difficult parts.

In this book, I will accelerate this process of trial and error, and guide you through the things that every drummer needs to know in order to play the drums. This book can be used with or without a teacher. Although you don’t *need* a teacher to use this book, it would benefit you to go find a drum teacher in your area and take lessons. A teacher will get you to practice if nothing else, but they will also correct any bad techniques you may be developing before they become hard-to-break habits.

Now let’s get started and begin our journey On the Beaten Path!

Icons Used in This Book

The following icons are used throughout this book to help you learn valuable information and to become a better drummer.



TIP: This icon is shown near helpful tidbits of advice.



TOOL: This icon is shown near key concepts or tools that will help you play the drums with more expression and personality.



TERM: This icon is shown near explanations of key music notations and concepts.



Drummer for Muddy Waters for nearly two decades, Willie Smith appears on all of Waters's Grammy award-winning albums, including *Hard Again*, *I'm Ready*, *They Call Me Muddy Waters*, *Muddy "Mississippi" Waters Live*, *The London Muddy Waters Sessions*, and *The Muddy Waters Woodstock Album*. Smith is one of the pillars of blues drumming, and a true legend of the instrument.

"I Want to Be Loved #2"

FROM MUDDY WATERS' *HARD AGAIN* (1977)

Drummer Willie Smith integrates a short triplet drum fill right into the drum beat of this song, which was written by the mighty bluesman Willie Dixon, and performed here by "the father of Chicago blues," Muddy Waters.

Original transcription (Intro):

♩ = 112

Track 9

Let's start by getting comfortable playing the basic blues beat before adding the triplet snare fills.

Now, let's add that triplet fill that comes at the end of the two-bar phrase, beginning on the "let" of beat 3 in bar 2.



Steve Jordan has played with the proverbial who's-who in the music business, including Stevie Wonder, the *Saturday Night Live* band, the *Late Night with David Letterman* band, the Blues Brothers, the Rolling Stones, Keith Richards and the X-pensive Winos, John Mayer, James Taylor, Alicia Keys, Bruce Springsteen, and Eric Clapton, just to name a few. He's known for his impeccable feel and irreplaceable groove.

"Sweet Home Chicago" (ex. 1)

FROM THE BLUES BROTHERS' *THE BLUES BROTHERS SOUNDTRACK* (1980)

This song is built on a standard 12-bar blues form, which means the band plays sections that are in groups of 12 bars (measures). At the end of the 12th bar, there is something called a *turnaround*. The turnaround is a special fill that concludes the first 12-bar section and sets up the next 12-bar section. This is a very common musical element you will encounter as you listen to the blues. In this example, Steve Jordan plays the following turnaround fill, as notated here. Go ahead and try to play this fill on your own.

Original transcription (0:29):

♩ = 125

Track 23

Now, here's how the entire 12-bar section looks when it's notated on paper. Notice that the same fill we just learned is now placed in measure 12 of this 12-bar blues section. Go ahead and play, then repeat, the entire section. It may be helpful to either play along with the song on your headphones or sing to yourself while you play along on the drums.

Track 24

"Theme from New York, New York"

FROM FRANK SINATRA'S *TRILOGY: PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE* (1980)

Irv Cottler takes the basic swing beat learned in the previous lesson and modifies it to more closely fit the "vibe" of what the other instruments are playing on this iconic tune. Cottler plays the hi-hat (slightly open) instead of the ride cymbal, the kick on beats 1 and 3, the snare on beats 2 and 4, and the crash cymbal on beat 2. Go ahead and give it a try!

Original transcription (0:01):

Track 36

♩ = 111 ♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}}^3$



Joe Jones was born in Philadelphia but it was in New York City where he made a name for himself as one of jazz's most influential drummers.

"Philly" Joe got his nickname to avoid confusion with "Papa" Jo Jones, drummer for the Count Basie Orchestra. "Philly" Joe will always be remembered as the drummer extraordinaire for Miles Davis from 1955-1958 and a member of Miles Davis's "First Great Quintet."

"Straight, No Chaser"

FROM MILES DAVIS'S *MILESTONES* (1958)

Miles Davis's "go-to" drummer, "Philly" Joe Jones, plays another adaptation of the standard swing beat in this rendition of the jazz standard composed by Thelonious Monk. The drum beat in this excerpt, played under Red Garland's gorgeous piano solo, features a typical swing pattern on the ride cymbal, a rim click on beat 4, and the hi-hat that's played with the left foot on beats 2 and 4. This tune is played at a brisk tempo that may be too challenging at first, so don't try to play it at this tempo right away. Be sure to practice slowly, and gradually increase the tempo over time as you feel comfortable. Eventually, with some practice, you'll be able to play the beat at this tempo.

Original transcription (6:10):

Track 37

♩ = 174 ♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}}^3$



Among the first to play both bebop and hard bop jazz styles, Art Blakey was one of the most influential drummers in jazz. He led The Jazz Messengers, one of the longest-running jazz groups in history, which throughout their 30 years showcased a long line of legends including Horace Silver, Clifford Brown, Wayne Shorter, and Freddie Hubbard, to name a few.

"Moanin'"

FROM ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSENGERS' *MOANIN'* (1958)

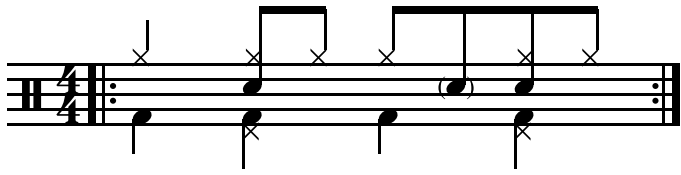
Art Blakey led the highly influential Jazz Messengers for over 30 years. This tune features some beautiful playing by Blakey. Notice how he punctuates the music by sometimes adding soft ghosted snare hits right before the backbeat. This is the touch of a master drummer and a skill that's definitely worth learning.

Original transcription (0:30):

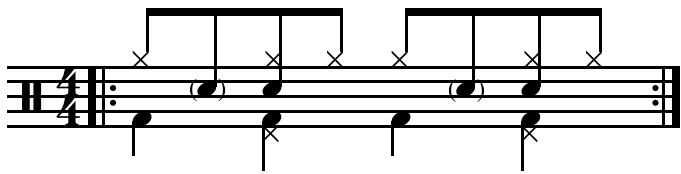
Track 43

Let's start by playing a basic swing groove with the right hand on the ride, the snare on beats 2 and 4, the kick drum softly on beats 1, 2, 3, and 4 with the right foot, and the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4 with the left foot.

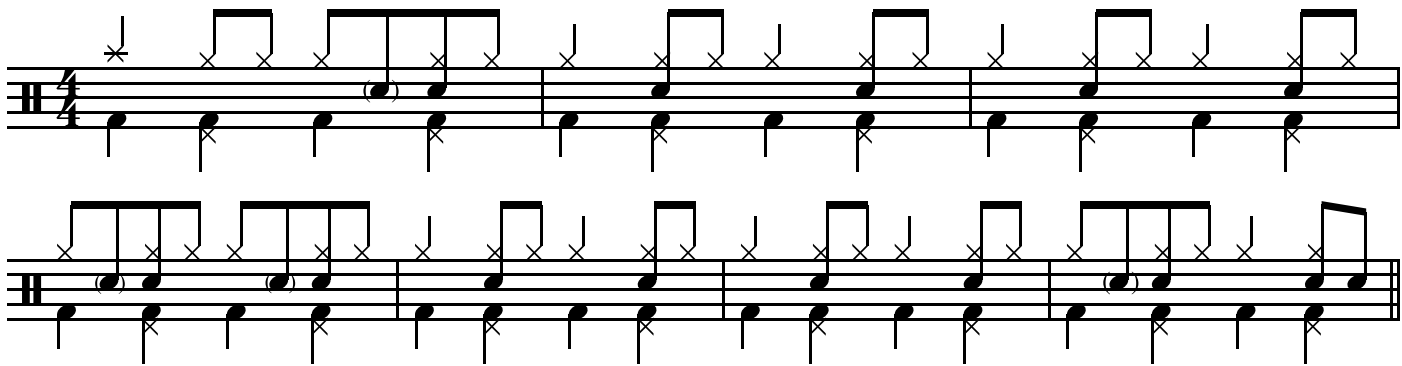
Next, let's play the same beat, but this time, also play a very soft ghost note on the "&" of beat 3. It will take some practice to play a soft ghosted note on the snare immediately followed by a louder hit on the drum, but stick with it. Practice slowly at first, and gradually increase the tempo as you feel comfortable.



Now, let's play the same beat as in the previous lesson, but add another ghosted snare hit on the "&" of beat 1.



Finally, play the full seven-bar excerpt, which has the ghosted snare hits tastefully placed throughout.



"So What"

FROM MILES DAVIS'S *KIND OF BLUE* (1959)

Many jazz drummers embellish the basic swing beat by adding hits that "color" and "texture" the groove. Drummer Jimmy Cobb plays the standard swing beat with a brush in his right hand on the ride cymbal and the hi-hat with his left foot on beats 2 and 4, and he embellishes the groove by playing the kick drum on beat 3 and on the "&" of beat 4—right in tandem with Miles's trumpet. Go ahead and play the beat just like Jimmy Cobb plays on the recording!

Original transcription (0:52):

