

Brazilian and Afro-Cuban Coordination

The purpose of this section is to help the student develop the necessary coordination for performing Brazilian and Afro-Cuban rhythms on the drum set*. There are many types of latin grooves that can be performed on the drum set utilizing this kind of independence, so becoming comfortable with these exercises is a must. The best way to practice this material is to first pick a cymbal rhythm and work on it until it feels relaxed and sounds even (it helps to use a metronome). Next, add a bass drum and hihat rhythm to your cymbal rhythm and practice this until you are comfortable. Finally add the snare/tom hand which will usually be playing a varied rhythm from the rhythmic patterns section. Ultimately the goal is to be able to play any cymbal, bass drum, hihat and snare rhythm in any combination. Try using number groups to keep track of your progress. For example: play the #10 cym. rhythm + #11 bass drum rhythm + #13 hihat rhythm while the left hand plays one of the rhythmic patterns.

Here is what this pattern would look like with each part written out:

Ride Cym.

Bass Drum

The Left Hand plays a notated or improvised rhythmic pattern

Hihat w/foot

Following this exercise are three sections: Brazilian Ostinatos, Afro-Cuban Ostinatos and Solo Ostinatos. All three consist of rhythms created directly from this first section. These are all patterns that I have used both live and in the studio.

It is a good idea to keep track of the combinations you have worked on. You can easily do this by writing down the number combinations (in this case 10-11-13) in a notebook. An accented cymbal note can also be played on the cymbal bell or any other sound source to create a two surface ride pattern. Likewise, any cymbal pattern can be played on the hihat with the accents representing an open hihat sound. I have also labeled, where appropriate, the style in which a particular rhythm is most often used but this should not keep you from creating your own variations.

*If you are unfamiliar with latin music terminology, history and instruments please see Appendix C. It lists some excellent books on the subject. For an explanation of the Clave and Cascara see Appendix B.