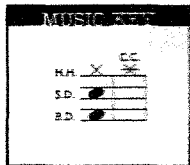


Four Into Three

by Neal Busby



This article focuses on two basic concepts that I use to move a four-note grouping through 8th-note or 16th-note triplets. The first is linear and involves splitting the triplets between hands and bass drum. The second utilizes the four-note groupings to pick unusual accent points across the bar.

Let's start with the linear concept of splitting the triplets between the hands and feet, using a bar of 8th-note triplets and a single-stroke sticking pattern:



Without messing up the sticking, let's "replace" one of the hand notes with the bass drum. Start with the first right-hand note. Now simply move over three more notes, do it again, and repeat the process until the bar is completed. The result is this:



Since we are dealing with triplets, there are two more starting points that will give us all the variations:

Starting With The Second Note



Starting With The Third Note



To practice these patterns, I encourage that you play them along with a metronome set to very slow quarter notes. While you're doing this, try to beat your left foot in four on the hi-hat. This will give you a strong reference point for keeping the triplet feel, which is being tested by the four-note pattern.

Once you can keep the triplet feel going, try moving your hands to other sound sources: closed hi-hats, toms, cowbells, etc. I think you will find the effect quite interesting.

The application so far has been for one bar of triplets used as a fill. However, we can use the same idea to create linear grooves as well. For example:



The concept of bass drum replacement can also be applied to triplets using other sticking patterns. For example, try RLL, RLL, RLL, RLL:



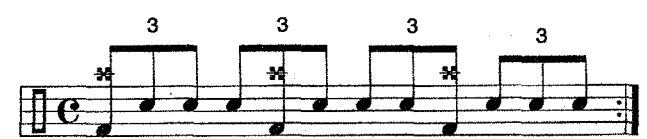
or RRL, RRL, RRL, RRL:



The second idea for applying this concept, playing unusual accent points in the measure, follows essentially the same course as what we've just done. The difference is that instead of replacing notes with the bass drum, we are going to use the four-note grouping to play accents. So once again, let's take a bar of 8th-note triplets. Accent the first note, and then count over three notes, repeating until the bar is completed.



Use the accent as a guide for hitting toms, China cymbals, hi-hats, etc. Here's one of my favorite patterns:



Another idea might be to string a couple of different bars together to create longer, more involved fill and solo passages. The whole idea is to experiment as much as possible. Perhaps you'll come up with something that's never been played before!

