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Chapter 1

Grooving With Independence

The most common obstacle in developing good time is the lack of a strong independence vocabulary. It is essential to develop good independence between all four limbs and your voice. The slightest delay or anticipation in any one limb can cause the time of any beat to “stutter” or “hiccup,” which will in turn cause a hesitation or disruption in the groove. The best way to avoid these disruptions and develop good independence is to perform as many limb combinations as possible. This takes a good amount of practice but, in time, the communication between the brain and muscles becomes more familiar, and the movement between limbs becomes more natural. This increases your independence vocabulary causing the hesitations and delayed reactions among the limbs to lessen. Developing a good independence vocabulary is the first step towards improving time and groove.

There are many books and videos that focus only on the development of independence. I recommend that you practice with as many of these materials as possible. The more independence mastered by your brain, muscles, and limbs, the better.

The Fifth Limb

The first step to building your independence vocabulary is developing what I like to call the Fifth Limb. In a fun way, your ability to vocalize while playing can be considered an additional “limb” to your hands and feet, simply by counting the subdivisions out loud while you play each exercise. Though this may seem weird to do at first, do not take it lightly. Counting out loud will assist you in developing an internal clock and will help build a foundation for your independence vocabulary.

Choosing what to verbalize depends on the tempo of the groove but, in most cases, the smallest or basic subdivision is the best. For example, if the tempo is very fast, vocalizing all the sixteenth-note subdivisions may not be feasible; however, in a slow tempo, it works perfectly.

The following exercises are to help you strengthen your Fifth Limb. While playing, you have to think of the basic subdivisions of the groove while verbalizing the specific subdivision shown above each exercise. Remember to practice ALWAYS with a click or metronome. On the MP3 CDs, I perform one example of each subdivision type, so you can get an idea of what it should sound like when you first practice these exercises.

Chapter 6

Time Movement and Feel

The time movement of a song is based on the emotional statement that the composer is trying to achieve. Put simply, the groove will determine the emotion of the song. The major concentration of this book, up to this point, has been on the technical abilities of improving time. However, being a good musician is more than being technically efficient. Ultimately, time movement is about feel and should not be considered as a mere technical endeavor.

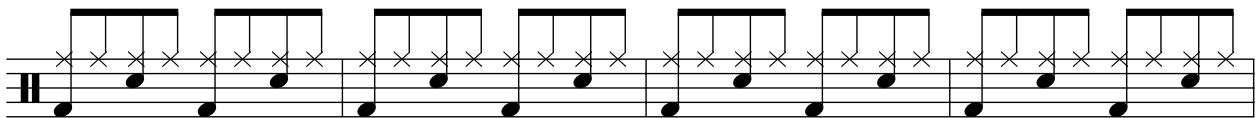
The most common time movements, or “feels,” are described as “playing on top,” “playing behind,” and “playing in the middle” of the beat. Understanding how to hear and feel the difference between these three concepts will make you a better drummer and a better musician. Remember to apply an emotional approach to these exercises rather than only a technical one.

A great way to capture the feel of a specific time movement is to use the Fifth Limb technique. Your voice can play an important part in capturing the appropriate groove. Try singing the most fundamental subdivision of each groove when practicing.

In these exercises, you will hear a cross-stick on the CD with the appropriate time feel. The cross-stick appears on beats 2 and 4 and is there to help you realize the proper time feel. Play along and try to match the cross-stick.

Try recording yourself practicing these exercises. Listening to yourself is one of the best ways to zone in on problem areas.

The following beat will be used for each of these exercises:



Playing on Top of the Beat

Playing “on top” of the beat gives the sense of pushing ever so slightly. Your playing pushes the band forward but does not rush. This type of time movement is used most often to convey an uplifting, excited, or happy mood.