

# Jim Blackley's "Essence of Jazz" Total Program

## by Richard Best

### I. Intro

Acclaimed teacher Jim Blackley spent 35 years compiling and refining the material in this text. Every line has been thoroughly field-tested by some of the best players around. The material is based on core concepts, which are continuously built on as you work through the book. Keeping track of all the exercises and variations in this book can be a challenge. I have tried to list all of the recommended exercises in the book, and offer this summary as a bit of a road map for self study.

Note that there are quite a few cross references between the book's sections, some sections include summaries of previous material, and some sections 'reuse' other sections. I have attempted to list and summarize all the recommended exercises while clarifying and rationalizing any cross references and duplication.

Abbreviations:

HH = Hi-hat  
BD = Bass Drum  
SN = Snare  
Cym = Ride Cymbal

2+2 = 2 bars time / 2-bar figure = 4 bars  
6+2 = 6 bars time / 2-bar figure = 8 bars  
10+2 = 10 bars time / 2-bar figure = 12-bars  
4+4 = 4 bars time / 4 bars of figure = 8 bars  
8+8 = 8 bars time / 8 bars of figure = 16 bars

### II. Musical Forms (pp. 19-22)

### III. Chapter 2: Basic Time (pp. 23-54)

#### A. 2.1: Quarter Notes (pp. 24-25)

- A.1. Basic figure, no feet
- A.2. Shuffle extension, no feet
- A.3. Triplet extension, no feet
- A.4. Add basic feet to above

#### B. 2.2: Shuffle (pp. 26-27)

- B.1. Basic figure, no feet
- B.2. Triplet extension, no feet
- B.3. Add basic feet to above

#### C. 2.3: Swing Ride (pp. 28-29)

- C.1. Basic figure, no feet
- C.2. Shuffle extension, no feet
- C.3. Triplet extension, no feet
- C.4. Add basic feet to above

- D. *2.4: Up Beats (pp. 30-31)*
  - D.1. Basic figure, no feet
  - D.2. Shuffle extension, no feet
  - D.3. Triplet extension, no feet
  - D.4. Add basic feet to above
  - D.5. Add BD to strong tones, HH on 2 & 4
- E. *2.5 - 2.11: Syncopated 4 beat figures (pp. 32-45)*
  - E.1. Basic figure, no feet
  - E.2. Shuffle extension, no feet
  - E.3. Triplet extension, no feet
  - E.4. Add basic feet to above
  - E.5. Add BD to strong notes, HH on 2 & 4
  - E.6. Add BD to tied notes only, HH on 2 & 4
- F. *2.12: Hi-hat/Bass Drum Variations (pp. 46-47)*
  - F.1. Apply foot patterns 3, 4 and 5 to all exercises sections, 2.1 - 2.11
- G. *2.13: 3/4 Time (pp. 48-49)*
  - G.1. 3/4 figures in 3/4 time, no feet
  - G.2. 3/4 figures with all foot patterns
- H. *2.14: 5/4 Time (pp. 50-51)*
  - H.1. 5/4 figures in 5/4 time, no feet
  - H.2. 5/4 figures with all foot patterns
  - H.3. Play to 12-bar blues in 5/4
  - H.4. Play to 32-bar tune in 5/4

#### **IV. Chapter 3: Two Bar Phrases of Down Beats & Up Beats (pp. 55-64)**

- A. *Down Beats (pp. 57-59)*
  - A.1. As written in 4-bar phrases (note the repeat sign), feet basic time
  - A.2. Play to slow blues in 4-bar phrases
  - A.3. Play to 32-bar tune, changing figures every 4 bars
  - A.4. Play to 32-bar tune, changing figures every 8 bars
  - A.5. Apply remaining foot patterns
  - A.6. Add BD to Cym in unison, HH on 2 & 4
  - A.7. Sing phonetics to all figures
  - A.8. Comping against swing ride
    - A.8.a Play figures on SN, HH on 2 & 4
    - A.8.b Play figures on BD, HH on 2 & 4
- B. *Up Beats (pp. 62-63)*
  - B.1. As written in 4-bar phrases (repeat sign), feet basic time
  - B.2. Play to slow blues in 4-bar phrases
  - B.3. Play to 32-bar tune, changing figures every 4 bars
  - B.4. Play to 32-bar tune, changing figures every 8 bars

- B.5. Add all foot patterns
- B.6. Comping against steady swing ride
  - B.6.a Figures on SN, HH 2 & 4
  - B.6.b Figures on BD, HH 2 & 4
  - B.6.c Figures on HH

## V. Chapter 4: Sixteen Bar Rhythmical Resolutions in Common Time (pp. 68-74)

- A.1. As written
- A.2. Add feet in basic time
- A.3. Play to 12-bar blues, HH 2 & 4
- A.4. Play to 32-bar tune, HH 2 & 4
- A.5. Add remaining foot patterns (p. 47)

## VI. Chapter 5, Sections A - E: Three Beat Figures in Common Time (pp. 75-93)

- A. **Section A: Three Beat Figures (pp. 77-79)**
  - A.1. As described
  - A.2. Add basic foot patterns (p. 49)
  - A.3. Play to blues, changing figures every 12-bars
  - A.4. Play to 32-bar tune, changing figures every 8 bars
  - A.5. Play with phonetics
- B. **Section B: Three Beat Figures In Each Position (pp. 80-81)**
  - B.1. As written, moving all 16 figures through 4 positions
  - B.2. Add basic foot pattern
  - B.3. Play to blues, changing figures every 12-bars
  - B.4. Play to 32-bar tune, changing figures every 8 bars
- C. **Section C: Two Bar Turnarounds (pp. 82-85)**
  - C.1. As written in 2+2 format
  - C.2. As turn-arounds in 8-bar phrases (6+2)
  - C.3. As turn-arounds in 12-bar phrases (10+2)
  - C.4. Phonetics only
  - C.5. Comping against ride, HH on 2 & 4 where applicable
    - C.5.a Lines 4, 8, 16
      - (C.5.a.1) Figures on SN
      - (C.5.a.2) Figures on BD
    - C.5.b Lines 3, 7, 11-15
      - (C.5.b.1) Strong on BD, weak on SN
      - (C.5.b.2) Strong on SN, weak on BD
      - (C.5.b.3) Strong on HH, weak on SN
      - (C.5.b.4) Strong on SN, weak on HH
      - (C.5.b.5) Strong on BD, weak on HH
      - (C.5.b.6) Strong on HH, weak on BD

(C.5.b.7) 4-bar phrases (2+2) over blues

(C.5.b.8) 4-bar phrases (2+2) over 32-bar tune

C.6. Extra Study (p. 83), HH on 2 & 4 where applicable

C.6.a Figures with both hands

C.6.b Cym & BD together

C.6.c Add SN on strong tones

C.6.d Add BD on strong tones

C.6.e Add HH on strong tones

C.6.f Weak on SN, strong on Cym

C.6.g Weak on SN, add BD to Cym on strong

C.6.h Weak on SN, add HH to Cym on strong

C.6.i Add BD to Cym on tied notes

C.6.j Phonetics only

D. **Sections D & E: Rhythmical Extensions Of Three Beat Figures in 3/4 time (pp. 87-91)**

D.1. In 3/4 time over 8 & 12-bar phrases, feet basic time

D.1.a As written, Cym only

D.1.b Shuffle Extensions

D.1.c Triplet Extensions

D.2. Combining **Section E** and **Section C**, feet basic time

D.2.a Apply **Section E** model (2+2 configuration) to all lines in **Section C**

D.2.b Shuffle Extensions as 2-bar turnarounds, in 6+2 configuration

D.2.c Shuffle Extensions as 2-bar turnarounds, in 10+2 configuration

D.2.d Triplet Extensions as 2-bar turnarounds, in 6+2 configuration

D.2.e Triplet Extensions as 2-bar turnarounds, in 10+2 configuration

D.2.f Sing all figures using phonetics

D.3. Comping against a steady ride, odd numbered lines

D.3.a Play triplet extension SN notes only, in 2+2 configuration

D.3.b Play triplet extension SN notes on BD, in 2+2 configuration

D.3.c Play triplet extension SN notes on HH, in 2+2 configuration

D.4. Soloing (trading 2's)

D.4.a Play shuffle Extensions as 2-bar solos, in 2+2 configuration

**D.4.b** Play triplet Extensions as 2-bar solos, in 2+2 configuration

E. **Section E: Three Beat Figures Over Two Bars (pp. 92-93)**

E.1. Apply model to 16 figures in **Section C** (pp. 84 & 85) as outlined in **Section D**

## VII. Chapter 6, Section F: Sixteen 3 Beat Resolutions in Common Time (pp. 97-103)

A. *Apply to all figures on pages 100-101, feet basic time*

A.1. As written, continuously (refer to p. 98)

A.2. Play along to blues

A.3. Play along to 32-bar tune

*B. Solo Concepts (p. 99)*

- B.1. Note: Also see Extra Study & Extensions
- B.2. Play 4 bars time/4 bars solo
- B.3. 8 bars time/8 bars solo

*C. Comping against ride (p. 99)*

- C.1. First Subset: 4, 8, & 16
  - C.1.a Figures on SN, HH 2 & 4
  - C.1.b Figures on BD, HH 2 & 4
  - C.1.c Figures on HH
- C.2. Second Subset: 3, 7, & 11-15 (HH on 2 & 4 where applicable)
  - C.2.a Play strong on BD, weak on SN
  - C.2.b Play strong on SN, weak on BD
  - C.2.c Play strong on HH, weak on SN
  - C.2.d Play strong on SN, weak on HH
  - C.2.e Play strong on HH, weak on BD
  - C.2.f Play strong on BD, weak on HH
  - C.2.g Play above to blues
  - C.2.h Play above to 32-bar tune

*D. Extra Study & Extensions (pp. 102-103)*

- D.1. Play figures with both hands in unison, feet in basic time
- D.2. Play figures with BD & Cym together
- D.3. Add SN on strong tones, HH 2 & 4
- D.4. Add BD on strong, HH 2 & 4
- D.5. Add HH on strong, no BD
- D.6. Add HH on strong, with BD
- D.7. Strong on Cym, weak on SN
- D.8. Same, add BD on strong
- D.9. Same, add BD on tied notes only
- D.10. Apply above to blues and 32-bar tune
- D.11. Apply above concepts to figures from **Section D** (pp. 88-91)

**VIII. Chapter 7, Section G: Sixteen Musical Motifs in Common Time (pp. 107-152)**

- A. *As written*
- B. *To slow blues, 12 bars each figure*
- C. *8-bar phrases: 1 pattern 3 times + another pattern once*
- D. *12-bar phrases: 1 pattern 5 times + another pattern once*
- E. *Shuffle Extensions, as above*
- F. *Triplet Extensions, as above*
- G. *Odd numbered figures in 2+2 format, 'inner line' only (see pp. 169-181)*
  - G.1. Play inner line on SN

- G.2. Play inner line on BD
- G.3. Play inner line on HH
- H. *Sing phonetics to above*
- I. *Comping against ride*
  - I.1. Figures on SN
  - I.2. Figures on BD
  - I.3. Figures on HH
  - I.4. Strong on BD, weak on SN
  - I.5. Strong on SN, weak on BD
  - I.6. Strong on HH, weak on SN
  - I.7. Strong on SN, weak on HH
  - I.8. Strong on BD, weak on HH
  - I.9. Strong on HH, weak on BD
  - I.10. Play each line over 8 and 12-bar phrases
- J. *Implied Time Concept*
  - J.1. Any 2-bar figure 3 times + any other figure once (6+2)
  - J.2. Any 2-bar figure 5 times + any other figure once (10+2)

## IX. Chapter 8, Section H: Three Basic Forms of Musical Notation (pp. 153-167)

- A. *Common Time (p. 157)*
  - A.1. As written
  - A.2. Play to slow blues
  - A.3. Play to slow 32-bar tune
- B. *Diminished Time (p. 158)*
  - B.1. Play as written (double time feel)
  - B.2. Play to ballad or slow blues
- C. *Augmented Time (p. 159)*
  - C.1. Play as written, count in '1/1' (half time feel)
  - C.2. Play over up-tempo tune
- D. *Common Time (p. 160)*
  - D.1. Play as written
  - D.2. Play over blues
  - D.3. Play over 32-bar tune
- E. *Diminished Time (p. 161)*
  - E.1. Play as written
  - E.2. Play over ballad or slow blues
- F. *Basic Time Studies (pp. 163-166)*
  - F.1. Play as written, 16<sup>th</sup> note feel
  - F.2. Play as written, 16<sup>th</sup> note triplet feel
  - F.3. Play figures in **Section G** as Diminished time
  - F.4. Play figures in **Section G** as Augmented time

*G. Extensions & Variations*

- G.1. Cym & SN in unison
- G.2. Cym & BD in unison
- G.3. Add SN to Cym on strong tones
- G.4. Add BD to Cym on strong tones
- G.5. Add HH to Cym on strong tones
- G.6. Strong tones on Cym, weak tones on SN
- G.7. Strong tones on Cym & BD, weak tones on SN
- G.8. Add BD to Cym on tied notes only
- G.9. Add SN to Cym on tied notes only

**X. Chapter 9, Section I: Introduction to the Inner Line (pp. 169-181)**

*A. Sing the outer line*

*B. Sing the inner line*

*C. Play outer line on Cym, inner line on SN*

*D. Play outer line on SN, inner line on Cym*

*E. Extra study*

- E.1. Play outer line on Cym & BD, inner line on SN
- E.2. Play outer line on SN, inner line on Cym & BD
- E.3. Play outer line with hands in unison, inner line on BD
- E.4. Play outer line on BD, inner line with hands in unison
- E.5. Play outer line on HH, inner line with hands in unison
- E.6. Play outer line with hands in unison, inner line on HH
- E.7. Play outer line with 'cross stick' on SN, inner on BD (place the tip of one stick on the drum head and strike with the other stick)
- E.8. Play outer line on BD, inner line cross stick on SN
- E.9. Play with brushes, as explained

*F. Comping*

- F.1. Play outer line on BD, inner line on SN
- F.2. Play outer line on SN, inner line on BD
- F.3. Play outer line on HH, inner line on SN
- F.4. Play outer line on SN, inner line on HH
- F.5. Play outer line on BD, inner line on HH
- F.6. Play outer line on HH, inner line on BD

*G. Notation Forms (pp. 180-181)*

- G.1. Play as written in Common notation
- G.2. Play as Diminished notation
- G.3. Play as Augmented notation
- G.4. Reverse hands
- G.5. Sing top line
- G.6. Sing bottom line

- G.7. Apply above to pages 170-179
- G.8. Reverse hands
- G.9. Play to suitable blues
- G.10. Play to suitable 32-bar tune

## XI. Chapter 10, Sections J - K: Three Bar Resolutions (pp. 183-190)

- A. **Section J: Twelve three-bar resolutions**
  - A.1. Play to slow blues in 4/4 (pp. 186-187)
- B. **Extra Study: 3/4 Practice**
  - B.1. Page 185 as written, in 3/4
  - B.2. Apply all foot patterns (p. 38)
  - B.3. Combine two figures to create 4-bar phrases
  - B.4. Play over blues in 3/4
  - B.5.** Play over 32-bar tune in 3/4
- C. **Section K: Combined phrases**
  - C.1. As written, repeated pattern
  - C.2. Over blues, repeated pattern
  - C.3. Over 32-bar tune, repeated pattern
  - C.4. Play in 4+4 format
- D. **Random figures (p. 190)**
  - D.1. As written
  - D.2. Play over blues
  - D.3. Play over 32-bar tune
  - D.4. Play in 8+8 format

## XII. Chapter 11, Sections L - N: Five Beat Figures in Common Time (pp. 191-210)

- A. **Section L: Sixteen five-bar resolutions**
  - A.1. As written, over 4/4
  - A.2. Play figures continuously over 12-bar blues
  - A.3. Play figures continuously over 32-bar tune
  - A.4. Sing phonetics
  - A.5. Extra study: 5/4 Practice
    - A.5.a Add 5/4 foot patterns (p. 51)
    - A.5.b Play continuously over blues in 5/4
    - A.5.c Apply to material in **Section F** Extra Study (p. 102)
  - A.6. Five-bar resolutions
    - A.6.a Play over 12-bar blues
    - A.6.b Play over 32-bar tune
  - A.7. Solos
    - A.7.a 4 bars time, 4 bars solo
    - A.7.b 8 bars time, 8 bars solo



- A.7.c 12 bars time, 12 bars solo
- A.8. Comping (HH on 2 & 4 where applicable)
  - A.8.a Figures on SN
  - A.8.b Figures on BD
  - A.8.c Figures on HH
  - A.8.d Strong on BD, weak on SN
  - A.8.e Strong on SN, weak on BD
  - A.8.f Strong on HH, weak on SN
  - A.8.g Strong on SN, weak on HH
  - A.8.h Strong on BD, weak on HH
  - A.8.i Strong on HH, weak on BD
  - A.8.j Play above over blues
  - A.8.k Play above over 32-bar tune

**B. Section M: Extensions**

- B.1. Apply Extension model to all 5-beat figures over 4/4 time
- B.2. Play to blues, resolving figure every 12 bars
- B.3. Play to 32-bar tune, resolving figure every 8 bars
- B.4. Play continuously to blues
- B.5.** Play continuously to 32-bar tune

**C. Section N: Adding Space**

- C.1. Apply Extension model to all 5 beat figures over 4/4 time
- C.2. Play to blues, resolving figure every 12 bars
- C.3. Play to 32-bar tune, resolving every 8 bars
- C.4. Play continuously to blues
- C.5. Play continuously to 32-bar tune

**XIII. Chapter 12, Sections O - P: Two Bar Motifs in Augmented Notation (pp. 211-212)**

**A. Section O: Augmented figures in 3+3+2 format (pp. 213)**

- A.1. Play all figures as written, up tempo, feet basic time
- A.2. Play over 32-bar tune in 8-bar phrases
- A.3. Play continuously over 32-bar tune
- A.4. Augmented figures in Eight positions (p. 215)
  - A.4.a Play all figures as written, up tempo
  - A.4.b Play over 32-bar tune in 8-bar phrases
  - A.4.c Play continuously over 32-bar tune
- A.5. Extra study (feet basic time where applicable)
  - A.5.a Both hands in unison
  - A.5.b BD and Cym together
  - A.5.c Cym and HH together
  - A.5.d Cym, SN and BD in unison
  - A.5.e Cym, SN and HH in unison with and without BD in 4

- A.5.f Cym, SN and HH in unison with and without BD in 4
- A.6. Comping against ride, HH on 2 and 4
  - A.6.a Figures on SN
  - A.6.b Figures on BD
  - A.6.c Figures on HH
  - A.6.d Extensions (pp. 216-217)
- B. **Section P: 32 Variations on Extensions (pp. 218-221)**
  - B.1. Play in 8+8 format between Cym and SN
  - B.2. Add BD to Cym

#### **XIV. Chapter 13, Section Q: Six 3 Beat Figures in Augmented Notation (pp. 223-227)**

- A. *Play figures as written in 8-bar phrases counting in 1/1*
- B. *Play to up-tempo 32-bar tune, 1 chorus of each figure*
- C. *Extra Study (HH 2 & 4)*
  - C.1. Add SN to strong tones
  - C.2. Add BD to strong tones
  - C.3. Weak on SN, strong on Cym
  - C.4. Add BD to Cym on strong tones
  - C.5. Add HH to Cym on strong tones, no BD
  - C.6. Comping vs. ride Cym
    - C.6.a Figures 2 and 4
      - (C.6.a.1) *On SN*
      - (C.6.a.2) *On BD*
      - (C.6.a.3) *On HH*
    - C.6.b Figures 1, 3, 5 and 6
      - (C.6.b.1) *Between SN and BD*
      - (C.6.b.2) *Between BD and SN*
      - (C.6.b.3) *Between SN and HH*
      - (C.6.b.4) *Between HH and SN*
- D. *Extensions (p. 225)*
  - D.1. As written, 8-bar phrases
  - D.2. Play over up-tempo tune
  - D.3. Extra Study
    - D.3.a Add BD to strong
    - D.3.b Add HH to strong
    - D.3.c Alternate BD and HH on strong

#### **XV. Chapter 14, Section R: Six 5 Beat Figures in Augmented Notation (pp. 229-233)**

- A. *Play figures as written in 8-bar phrases counting in 1/1 (pp. 230, 232)*
- B. *Extensions (pp. 231, 233)*
  - B.1. Play as written, feet basic time, counting 1/1 in repeating 8-bar phrases

- B.2. Play to up-tempo tunes in 12-bar and 32-bar forms
- C. *Comping & Extra Study (from **Section Q** pp. 224-225)*
  - C.1. Add SN to strong tones
  - C.2. Add BD to strong tones
  - C.3. Weak on SN, strong on Cym
  - C.4. Add BD to Cym on strong beats
  - C.5. Add HH to Cym on strong beats
  - C.6. Comping (pp. 231-233)
    - C.6.a Figures between SN and BD
    - C.6.b Figures between BD and SN
    - C.6.c Figures between SN and HH
    - C.6.d Figures between HH and SN
- D. *Extensions (see pp. 225, 231-233)*
  - D.1. As written, 8-bar phrases
  - D.2. Play over up-tempo 12-bar and 32-bar tunes

## **XVI. Chapter 15, Sections S - U: Three Bar Resolutions in Augmented Notation (pp. 235-247)**

- A. ***Section S: Augmented figures (p. 237)***
  - A.1. Play figure in 3 positions, as written
  - A.2. Resolutions
    - A.2.a Play in 8-bar phrases
    - A.2.b Substitute BD for SN
    - A.2.c Substitute HH for SN
    - A.2.d Play over up-tempo tune
- B. ***Section T: Partial Extensions (pp. 241-244)***
  - B.1. Play as written, 8-bar phrases
  - B.2. Play to up-tempo tune, 8-bar phrases
  - B.3. Substitute BD for SN
  - B.4. Substitute HH for SN
  - B.5. Extensions (pp. 238-240)
    - B.5.a Play as written, 8-bar phrases
    - B.5.b Play over up-tempo tune
- C. ***Section U: Partial Extensions cont'd***
  - C.1. Play as written, 8-bar phrases
  - C.2. Play over up-tempo tune

## **XVII. Chapter 16, Section V: Superimposing Various Time Signatures (pp. 249-255)**

- A. *Five over Three*
  - A.1. Play all figures from page 162 (**Section L**) over 3/4 in 8+8 phrases
  - A.2. Same, over 12-bar phrases

- A.3. Apply all 3/4 foot patterns to above (see p. 38)
- A.4. Play to suitable music in 32- and 12-bar forms
- B. *Eight over Three*
  - B.1. Play figure no. 1 from pages 108 through 138 (**Section G**) over 3/4 in 8-bar phrases
  - B.2. Same, 12-bar phrases
  - B.3. Apply all 3/4 foot patterns to above (p. 38)
  - B.4. Play to suitable music in 32 and 12-bar forms
- C. *Three over Five*
  - C.1. Play 3-beat figures **Section F** (p. 97) over 5/4 time in 8-bar phrases
  - C.2. Same, 12-bar phrases
  - C.3. Apply all 5/4 foot patterns to above (p. 51)
  - C.4. Play to suitable music in 32 and 12-bar forms
- D. *Eight over five*
  - D.1. Play figure no. 1 from **Section G** (pp. 108-138) over 5/4 in 8-bar phrases
  - D.2. Same, 12-bar phrases
  - D.3. Apply all 5/4 foot patterns to above (p. 51)
  - D.4. Play to suitable music in 32 and 12-bar forms

## **XVIII. Chapter 17, Section W: Practical Steps to a Musical Hi-hat Technique (pp. 256-257)**

- A. *Note: Feather BD where appropriate*
- B. *Play figures as written in 8 and 12-bar phrases*
- C. *Apply to variations (line 1 only) from **Section G**, pages 108 through 136. For this and the following exercises, play strong sounds as open ('o') with top stick, weak tones as closed ('+') with bottom stick.*
- D. *Extra Study.*
  - D.1. Play strong sounds as 'o' with top stick, weak tones as '+' with bottom stick.
  - D.2. Apply to remaining figures in **Section G**
  - D.3. Apply to **Section C** (pp. 84-85)
  - D.4. Apply to **Section F** (pp. 100-101)
  - D.5. Apply to **Section L** (pp. 192-198)
  - D.6. Apply to **Section I** in 16-bar motifs (pp. 172-181)
  - D.7. Add BD to strong tones in above
- E. *Brushes*
  - E.1. Play with brushes as explained, no BD
  - E.2. Play with brushes as explained, feet basic time
- F. *"Linear"*
  - F.1. Play (+) on SN, (o) on Cym, HH 2 & 4, no BD
  - F.2. Play (+) on SN, (o) on Cym, feet basic time