

# Jim Blackley's "Essence of Jazz \*" Annotated

## by Richard Best

### First, a Personal Note

I've studied with Jim Blackley three times now, once when I was a teenager, again 12 years later, and finally in 2012-13, with me in my 60s and Jim well into his 80s. This last time my goal was to brush up on my technique and also to see if I could discover what Jim does that makes him such an effective teacher. I can't say that I truly understand his unique gift, but I have noticed a significant difference between his approach and that of other teachers.

Jim sets the bar where it needs to be set — neither too high nor too low — shows you how to get there, and then gets out of the way. He is a man of few words at the best of times, but he's even less vocal when teaching. I believe that Jim's minimalist approach is the key ... that coupled with his profound understanding of time, technique and music, and his ability to let his students get on with it. Indeed Jim wants you to spend as little time with him as necessary, and will not hesitate to 'fire' a student when the time is right. His approach pretty much confirms my own philosophy, that teachers don't really teach, they can only set the stage to facilitate learning.

### A Note About Practice & Pacing

Jim schedules a two-hour lesson once every four weeks. This is a dramatic departure from the usual half-hour-a-week plan. It's a more mature and professional approach and perhaps not for beginners. One would think that a month spent on a single set of exercises would be excessive, but there will be times when even that is not enough to fully grasp the significance of this material. As for total practice time, Jim simply asks that you "Do what you can" and, above all, "You can't be in a hurry."

**IMPORTANT:** A fundamental component of the Blackley approach is to practice everything painfully slowly. In general, set your metronome to 60 bpm or even 40 bpm. At slow tempos, you have lots of time to concentrate, and indeed you will often have to concentrate very hard to keep it together. Slow practice will have a big impact on your sense of time. More importantly, you will be able to hear and attend to every stroke, and you will soon know if your hands and feet are striking together, whether you are rushing or dragging some notes, or whether you tend to drift from the tempo.

To follow Jim's schedule, practice each exercise for a full 5 minutes by the clock. Ideally spend 6 days a week for 4 weeks before moving on. The subtext here is that each exercise is to be practiced for two hours (5 min. x 6 days x 4 weeks = 2 hours). Anything less and you may not get the result you want. Count out loud, use phonetics when recommended, and pay special attention to weak and strong (short and long) tones, signified by '•' and '—'. Note that you will at times be referred to other sections of the book. I have tried to make these jumps as clear as possible.

### Preferred Play-along

Jim uses a play-along CD with his students and recommends "Meet The Bass Player," produced by Allan Cox. This compilation features 12-bar and 32-bar jazz backing tracks of bass and guitar at tempos ranging from 40 bpm to 340 bpm in 4/4, 3/4 and 5/4. Practicing with this or a similar aid will be invaluable in helping you to hear the musical lines and to work closely with a bass player. (You can order copies of the CD from the creator's website: [www.allancox.co.uk](http://www.allancox.co.uk).)

\* **The Essence of Jazz Drumming** by Jim Blackley  
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## Chapter 1: Musical Forms (pp. 19-22)

The vast majority of music is built out of 4 and 8 bar phrases. Popular music is dominated by three forms: 12-bar blues, which is three phrases of 4 bars each; the 32-bar structure, which is four 8-bar phrases; and 'pop' tunes, which are constructed from 4 and 8 bar phrases in various combinations. There are other forms and variations galore, but understanding and practicing in 4, 8 and 12 bar phrases will go a long way toward helping you to learn tunes and understand music.

In order to play a tune, it's important to *really know it*. Learning the melody and the form and being able to recognize chord changes will help you to keep your place in the tune and also to anticipate things.

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

The four rhythms in this section form the basis of all swing type music. Each exercise is to be played as slowly as possible, counting triplets throughout, preferably out loud. When tackling the extensions, it may help to play them mechanically at first. Once comfortable, move the extensions around the set as if soloing.

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

The quarter note — the pulse — is the backbone of music. When playing the extensions, listen carefully to ensure that your sticking always expresses the quarter notes.

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

Adding a 'skip beat' establishes the essential hand movements for the down beat and up beat: SNAP-drop / SNAP-drop / SNAP-drop. Keep the quarter note pulse foremost and keep the skip beat as light as possible, which you execute by simply dropping the stick. If you are familiar with the Moeller technique, this is where it applies.

### 2.3 'Swing' Ride (pp. 28-29)

When moving from shuffle to jazz ride, keep the quarter notes as even as possible — i.e. no accents or emphasis on any of the beats — and keep the skip beats very light. Snap the stick on each beat, then keep the tip as close to the cymbal as you can to facilitate a very quiet skip beat.

### 2.4 Up Beats (pp. 30-31)

This is trickier than the preceding, so counting and careful listening are vital. Strive to keep a triplet feel and even articulation throughout. Relax, allow the sound to go over the bar line, and enjoy the resulting open space.

### 2.5 - 2.11: Syncopated 4-beat figures (pp. 32-45)

The lines here look simple, and in fact are, but they embody an extraordinary musical principle. Once you become comfortable with the figures and variations at a slow tempo, try them at progressively faster tempos, and be sure to practice them along with music. Think of 'long' tones on the cymbal. Note the snare drum sticking for the extensions.

I recommend practicing the figures several ways once the basic techniques are mastered:

#### 1. Basic Figures

- Play a standard 4/4 foot pattern
- Add a snare (SN) 'shot' on the syncopated up beat only, with and without feet in 4/4
- Add the bass drum (BD) on all the strong (long) cymbal tones, HH on 2 & 4

#### 2. Extensions

- Play a standard 4/4 foot pattern
- Add the BD on the long cymbal tones, HH on 2 & 4

**2.12: Hi-hat/bass Drum Variations** (pp. 46-47)

These are the foot patterns found in mainstream jazz and elsewhere. You should work to apply each pattern to all of the previous exercises until each foot pattern becomes second nature.

**2.13: 3/4 Time** (pp. 48-49)

These exercises are straightforward and should be practiced until internalized. It's important to count in 4, 8 and 12 bar phrases, e.g. One-2-3 / Two-2-3 / Three-2-3 / Four-2-3. Add feet, shots, etc. to the extensions as in the 4/4 exercises.

**2.14: 5/4 Time** (pp. 50-51)

As with the previous patterns, count in phrases. Notice the rhythmic feel of the classic 3+2 pattern as you count in 5. Add feet, shots, etc. as in the 4/4 exercises.

**Jazz Interpretation** (pp. 52-53)

For convenience, jazz swing is often written as simple eighth notes rather than dotted-eighth-and-sixteenth or triplets. For the remainder of the book, all written eighth notes are to be 'swung' (except where noted). Play the eighth-note figures with a strict triplet feel, counting 1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, etc.

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

While the written figures in this section are as familiar as our first drum lessons, the approach is a revelation. The author talks about the space rather than the figures, and if you approach these lines as explained on pages 57 and 61, you will find a wonderful airiness opening up within the time. You'll also find that your time sense will be significantly enhanced.

The text recommends playing to a 12-bar blues and also to a 32-bar tune, changing figures every 4 bars. Best results are achieved at very slow tempos: 40 - 60 bpm.

This section offers a wealth of creative opportunities. The figures can be played with any limb or combination of limbs, as shots on the snare or bass drum, with rhythmic extensions, as comping and soloing ideas, and more.

**Chapter 4: Sixteen Bar Rhythmical Resolutions in Common Time** (pp. 65-74)

Here's another deceptively simple looking section. This is more of a mental challenge than a physical or technical one. In fact, I recommend limiting the amount of time you spend at any one sitting. Work on a single page until you feel comfortable with all of the figures before going on to the next.

Each page contains 16 bars of rhythmic phrases. Approach the written lines individually and try to hear each 2-bar phrase as a 'call and response'. Think of bar 1 as a set-up and bar 2 as the response or resolution. Bar 3 would be the next set-up, and bar 4 would provide its resolution.

Play the figures slowly — 40 bpm and definitely no faster than 60 bpm. If you practice to a 32-bar jazz tune, you'll easily hear how these ideas fit into a musical framework.

For additional options, play the lines as comping patterns on the snare against a swing ride, feet in 4/4. Also play in four bar phrases: two bars of straight time followed by a two-bar figure.

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

This section is conceptually straight forward, and Jim's explanation says it all. The key is to hear the various figures within a musical context. There are a number of things to be gained from this material. The figures employ cross-rhythms: the playing of one time signature alongside another. Simply put, the figures are 3 beats long whereas the bars are 4 beats. In two bars of 4/4, you can play a 3-beat figure twice with two beats left over. The result is the classic 3+3+2 pattern that can be found liberally in all forms of music. When playing these figures, count '1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2' as well as in straight 4.

The chapter also introduces the concept of musical 'turn-arounds' based on the 3-beat figures. The goal is to play a 4-bar phrase beginning with 2 bars of straight time and then a 2-bar figure to wrap up the phrase and set up the next one. Note the single quarter note on beat 4 of bar 2. Also note the figures that tie over to the first beat of the next phrase. Rigorous practice of 2 bars of time plus a 2-bar figure will reap huge rewards. All of these figures become effective, dynamic and musical when used at the end of, for example, an 8-bar phrase, i.e. play 6 bars of time and wrap up with a 2-bar figure. This is a key principle in all music.

### **Section A - Three Beat Figures In Common Time (pp. 77-79)**

This section presents 16 variations on a 3-beat ride pattern. Practice these in 4/4 time as instructed, noting the rest on beat 4 of the bar. Think of creating 'long tones' (—) where indicated. When comfortable, substitute phonetics for counting.

### **Section B - Three Beat Figures In Each Position (pp. 80-81)**

The lines on page 81 displace the 3-beat figure over two bars in eight positions. When ready, apply this concept to all of the figures in **Section A**. Try to hear the groups of 3 as you play: 1, 2, 3, 4 / 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.

### **Section C - Two Bar Turnarounds (pp. 82-85)**

Practice the 16 phrases as 2-bar turn-arounds in 4, 8 and 12 bar phrases (2+2, 6+2, 10+2), paying attention to how you enter and exit the phrases. When beginning a figure, omit the final up-beat from the previous bar; when finishing a phrase, allow tied notes to run over the bar line and 'consume' the down beat of the next bar. Listen for the 3+3+2 pattern.

### **Extra Study (p. 83)**

By now you should be hearing the phrases as rhythmical and musical lines. Some will be obvious, some obscure. Some you'll be eager to try with music, others may not appeal to you at all. The important thing is to add all of the patterns to your technical arsenal. Likewise, the Extra Study will present some ideas that excite you and some that may not seem useful, but practice them all. You never know which idea will emerge at the right moment when playing. Maximum benefit will come from adding turn-arounds at the end of longer phrases — e.g. 8 bars (6+2) and 12 bars (10+2) — and while playing to music and using the phonetics.

### **Section D: Rhythmical Extensions Of Three Beat Figures (pp. 87 -91)**

We now return to the 3-beat figures in 3/4 time and introduce extensions on the snare drum. Play the extensions along to a slow blues in 3/4 paying attention to the sticking patterns. Count triplets throughout and listen to your articulation. Snare strokes should be light, with contrasting weak and strong (short and long) tones on the cymbal.

### **Section E: Three Beat Figures Over Two Bars of 4/4 (pp. 92-93)**

While the 3-beat figures and extensions are useful on their own, they really come to life when used as turn-arounds in 4/4 time. When playing the two-bar set-up, notice the quarter note leading into the turn-around and any tied notes at the end of a phrase. Note also the sticking for the various extensions. Apply this concept to all of the figures in **Section C** in 4, 8 and 12 bar phrases.

## Chapter 6, Section F: Sixteen 3 Beat Resolutions in Common Time (pp. 95-103)

This section introduces the core concept of the 'Blackley Method'. It's not a new or unique idea. It emerged from the freer interpretation of time that was pioneered by Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and others. The value of this section is the freedom it will give to your approach to time and rhythm, and as comping and soloing ideas.

The figures are in 4/4 whereas the rhythms are in 3/4. The result is a pattern — a polyrhythm or cross-rhythm — that resolves naturally every three bars. The trick is to know your place when playing 4, 8 and 12 bar phrases in 4/4 while playing a pattern in 3/4. This makes it very necessary to count the bars as well as the pattern. In time you'll find that you will be mentally counting and feeling 4 and 3 at the same time.

### 1. Figures & Applications

The sixteen 3-beat figures, summarized on page 97, are to be played continuously over complete phrases of 4/4 time. The result is a 3/4 pulse that 'weaves in and out' of the established time. This is not the same as 3:4 (3 against 4). You are in fact simultaneously playing two different time signatures at one tempo. Page 98 illustrates where the 3/4 down beats fall over 12 bars of 4/4. Note that the pattern resolves naturally after 3, 6, 9, and 12 bars but not after 4 or 8 bars.

Before embarking on this rhythmic journey, have a look at page 99 where you'll find tips on approach. You'll also find a number of variations for applying the patterns to comping and soloing. Be sure you master the basics before tackling these advanced ideas.

### 2. Three-beat Sets

Practice the lines on pages 100 and 101 beginning with 12-bar phrases. Make sure that your line resolves on the down beat of the first bar of each chorus. Once you are comfortable with this, play in 8-bar phrases: 4 bars of time then 4 bars of the 3/4 figure in 4/4. Then play in 16-bar phrases: 8 bars of time + 8 bars of a figure. In both cases you must 'force a resolution' at the end of the phrase. Play the phrases as written until they flow naturally. Note the single quarter note on the beat leading into the figures; allow tied notes to carry over the bar line. Practice counting in both 4/4 and 3/4.

### 3. Extensions

Apply the extensions, summarized on page 103, to each of the figures over 12 and 8 bar phrases as above. Whether you leave the extensions until after you've completed the figures or work on them in conjunction with the basic patterns, you'll find a wealth of possibilities in the extensions. Also work on 8 bar (4+4) and 16 bar (8+8) combinations.

### 4. Extra Study

The ideas on page 102 build on the concepts presented on page 99. These patterns are very useful for comping, soloing and especially for playing musical lines. Also experiment with playing the figures along with horn lines.

- Cymbal & snare together
- Cymbal & bass drum together
- Add snare on strong tones
- Add bass drum on strong tones
- Add hi-hat on strong tones
- Play strong tones on cymbal, weak tones on snare
- Play strong tones on cymbal & bass drum, weak tones on snare
- Add bass drum on tied notes only
- Add snare on tied notes only

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

This is very large section, but don't be intimidated by its size. Each of the familiar 3-beat motifs is presented with variations and extensions: 32 pages worth, covering 128 figures and 256 extensions, not to mention the comping ideas.

The section takes a simple idea — two bar phrases built from 3-beat and 2-beat figures — and explores the concept extensively. Each motif can be used as an effective turn-around for an 8-bar phrase, and this is how the lines are to be practiced at first. By now 8-bar phrases should be second-nature.

### **1. Sixteen 2-bar phrases in 8 positions**

Work through all the examples on the even numbered pages from 108 through 138. Notice that you are no longer merely 'playing time'. Play the lines along with music and listen.

### **2. Extensions**

Beginning on page 108 and through to page 139, one of the figures is presented on the left hand page in all of its 8 positions. On the right-hand pages you'll find the extension model for that group. Work through the figures as written, and when you're confident of the figures, apply the extensions. Concentrate on mastering one set at a time, working from page 108/109 through to page 138/139.

### **3. Suggestions for Practice**

*Option 1:* Play through one of the figures and its extensions in one position — i.e. begin on page 108 and work on line 1 and its extensions on page 109, then move on to line 1 on pages 110/111, then line 1 on pages 112/113, etc. Continue through to pages 138/139, then go back to page 110 and work on line 2. This is the recommended method.

*Option 2:* Work through all the figures on one left-hand page then work on the extensions. When done, move on to the next group.

*Option 3:* Work on all the figures on the left hand page from page 108 through to page 138, then go back and apply the extensions.

### **4. Implied Time Concept (p. 107)**

Rather than continually banging out 4/4 time, you can 'imply' the time by playing mixed groupings and only occasionally acknowledging the down beat. Take any of the 2-bar figures and play it 3 times in place of the standard ride rhythm, then play any other figure as a 2-bar turn-around to yield an 8-bar phrase. For 12 bars, play one figure 5 times and then another figure once. This is especially interesting when played with music tracks.

### **5. Comping**

On some of the odd numbered pages starting on page 133 you'll find a number of ideas for using the figures for comping.

### **6. Adding Silence**

The final section (pp. 140-152) introduces rests, i.e. silence or space. As with the previous section, the figures are on the left hand page and their extensions are on the right. Note that the silence is carried through the extensions, so lay out completely during these beats.

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

Thus far we've suggested other rhythms and other time signatures within the line. In this section, we will allude to other tempos — double time feel and half time feel — relative to the base tempo. These techniques can be used to add interest and also to make patterns more playable and a better fit with the ensemble at certain tempos. The patterns are derived from what you've already learned, and are presented here in their most basic form. Note that the practice tempos vary among the exercises.

### 1. COMMON TIME (pp. 156 & 160)

Page 156 presents an overview of how the 16-bar resolutions relate in COMMON time. The figures on page 157 are to be played as written, i.e. 4/4 time with a triplet feel.

### 2. DIMINISHED TIME - Implied double time (pp. 158 & 161)

The 16 figures on these pages appear in 4/4 but are 'voiced' in 8/8 time, and are therefore played at twice the 4/4 tempo. This results in a double time feel, not actual double time. Note that the original 16-bar pattern is now only 8 bars long. Note also that DIMINISHED time feel can be interpreted in two ways: as 16th notes, or as 16th note triplets (see page 165).

### 3. AUGMENTED TIME - Implied half time (p. 159)

When playing AUGMENTED figures, your 'implied tempo' will be in 2/2 and the figures will sound at half the original tempo. The basic tempo will generally be quite fast (e.g. 180 bpm or greater). The text recommends that you revise your counting method at fast tempos: instead of 1,2,3,4 / 2,2,3,4 / 3,2,3,4 / 4,2,3,4, treat each bar as if written in 1/1. So your counting over a 4-bar phrase would be: 1e&a / 2e&a / 3e&a / 4e&a. Note that each 16-bar phrase becomes 32 bars of AUGMENTED time.

### 4. Basic Time Studies (pp. 163-167)

Here the four *Time Studies* are presented in DIMINISHED notation. Practice with both a 16th note feel and a 'jazz feel' (i.e. 16th note triplets). Both forms are useful depending on the tempo and mood of the tune.

### 5. Advanced Concepts (p. 165)

Once confident of switching between COMMON and DIMINISHED or AUGMENTED time, go back to **Section G** and work on the exercises on pages 108 through 114 as both DIMINISHED and AUGMENTED lines. Also apply the extensions as comping figures against a steady ride rhythm, where the ride cymbal plays the base tempo and the snare hand (and bass drum) plays the AUGMENTED or DIMINISHED figures. Pay attention to phrase length.

Also practice the extensions with variations:

- Cymbal & snare together
- Cymbal & bass drum together
- Add snare on strong tones
- Add bass drum on strong tones
- Add hi-hat on strong tones
- Strong tones on cymbal, weak tones on snare
- Strong tones on cymbal & bass drum, weak tones on snare
- Add bass drum on tied notes only
- Add snare on tied notes only

\* The terms DIMINISHED and AUGMENTED refer to the time value of the notes. DIMINISHED time decreases the note values, so eighth notes would be interpreted as 16<sup>th</sup> notes. Similarly, AUGMENTED time increments the notes' time values, so eighth notes would be interpreted as quarter notes.

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

The figures we've been working on form the basis of *musical lines*, and our focus to this point has been on hearing those lines in a musical context. When playing the extensions, the outer or musical line stayed out front. Now we're going to shift our attention to the *inner line*, i.e. the snare drum figures within the extensions.

### **1. The Inner Line**

When playing the exercises on pages 172 to 179, listen for the inner line. Also sing the inner line using phonetics. When you've completed the series, go back to page 172 and invert the figures, the cymbal line becoming the snare line and vice versa.

(Note: It's a good practice to selectively focus on different elements of your playing. When playing a rhythm with all four limbs, try shifting your attention from one part to the next. Focus on the cymbal, then the snare. Listen to the bass drum part, then isolate the hi-hat. An interesting exercise is to vary the volume of the part you're focusing on, leaving the others unchanged.)

### **2. Extra Study & Comping**

There are a number of suggestions on page 171 on how to interpret the figures. In all cases, practice switching your attention between the musical line and the inner line.

### **3. Augmented/Diminished Notation**

Page 180 shows one figure in standard or COMMON notation. On page 181 the same figure is shown in AUGMENTED and DIMINISHED form. Apply this model to all of the patterns on pages 172-179 (refer to Chapter 8, **Section H**, if necessary). Remember to shift your attention to the inner line. Once these lines are competent, try reversing the figures, i.e. cymbal = inner line, snare = outer line.

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

This chapter gives a mere hint at what can be done with the 3-beat figures. **Section J** presents 3-bar resolutions created by combining 3-beat figures. Play each of the lines in 4/4, keeping track of the 'bars of 3'. Played against a 12-bar blues, the patterns will resolve naturally on the first down beat of each chorus. When comfortable, play 8-bar phrases by playing 4 bars of time then 4 bars of the phrase, adjusting the down beat resolution as necessary. You can also try playing 8 bars of phrase 1 then 8 bars of phrase 2, 8 bars of phrase 1 then 8 bars of phrase 3, etc.

**Section K** takes the idea a step further by mixing different 3-beat figures to create 4-bar phrases in 4/4 time. Practice these in two ways: play the 4-bar pattern repeatedly, then play as 4-bar turn-arounds in 8-bar phrases (4+4). Pages 189 and 190 extend the concept by adding ties and expanding the phrases to 8 bars. Practice as above, then experiment with your own combinations.

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

Hopefully the work thus far has opened some new vistas for you. Incorporating 3-beat figures into 4/4 time will have given you a strong sense of where you are in the time and the tune, as well as giving you a wealth of rhythmic ideas for playing time, comping and soloing. This next section presents 5-beat figures using the same formula as the 3-beat figures: 5/4 atop 4/4. Once you're comfortable with the figures in 5/4, you can then apply them as cross-rhythms in 4/4. Note that the figures resolve after five bars.

### **1. Five-beat figures in 5/4 Time - Pre-work**

Page 192 summarizes the 5-beat figures. Practice these in 5/4 time paying attention to your articulation of the weak and strong tones. Apply the standard 5/4 foot patterns as found on page 51.

## 2. Five-beat figures over 12 bars

Page 193 illustrates how the 5-beat figures evolve over a 12-bar structure in 4/4 time. Note that there is no useful resolution. At the end of each phrase or chorus you must adjust your playing by dropping beats from the pattern. You must also count in five while keeping track of 4/4 time and the form. The 16 figures are presented on pages 195-198. Work on these in 8 and 12 bar structures in several ways:

- Play 4 bars time + 4 bars of a figure
- Play 8 bars time + 8 bars of a figure
- Play 12 bars time + 12 bars of a figure
- Cycle through the patterns, playing figure 1 for 8 bars then figure 2 for 8 bars, etc.
- Cycle through the patterns, playing figure 1 for 12 bars then figure 2 for 12 bars, etc.
- Play each figure continuously over entire 12-bar and 32-bar choruses.

## 3. Ideas for soloing, comping

Page 194 gives some suggestions for practice and application. These ideas can be applied to all of the exercises on pages 192 and 195-198, and also to the exercises on pages 200-207 and 208-210.

## 4. Five-beat figures with extensions

Once again, let's switch to 5/4 time. Pages 200 through 207 contain the 5-beat extensions, which are to be practiced in 5/4 time. This work will go a long way toward making you a capable 5/4 performer. Note the long and short tones and the sticking patterns. When ready, have a look at the ideas on page 199 and add them to your practice routine.

## 5. Five bar resolutions in 4/4 time with extensions

Pages 208 and 209 present the 5-beat figures over their natural resolution of 5 bars in 4/4 time, along with their extensions. Only two sets are written out for you, so you'll need to go back to pages 200-207 and work out the remainder. These exercises can be practiced in 8-bar phrases a number of ways:

- 4-bars of 4/4 + the first 4 bars of a 5-bar pattern
- 3 bars of 4/4 + one complete 5-bar pattern
- 5 bars of 4/4 + 3 bars of a 5-bar pattern
- 8 bars of 4/4 + 8 bars of a 5-bar pattern (16 bars)

## 6. Extra Study

Refer to page 102 in **Section F** for a wealth of practice ideas, including:

- Cymbal & snare together
- Cymbal & bass drum together
- Add snare on strong tones
- Add bass drum on strong tones
- Add hi-hat on strong tones
- Strong tones on cymbal, weak tones on snare
- Strong tones on cymbal & bass drum, weak tones on snare
- Add bass drum on tied notes only
- Add snare on tied notes only

## 7. Adding space to five-beat figures

Page 210 adds silence to the 5-beat resolutions. In each case, a group of 3 or a group of 2 has been omitted. Apply this concept to all of the figures on page 192 using a variety of the interpretations suggested above.

## Chapter 12, Sections O - P: Two Bar Motifs in Augmented Notation

(pp. 211-222)

As you've no doubt guessed, AUGMENTED notation is ideal for comping at fast tempos. In this section you will be playing stripped down versions of the 3-beat figures. To further master up-tempo playing, begin at the indicated tempo and then move your metronome (or play-along tunes) up the tempo scale. Your goal is 300 bpm — more if you can manage it. When playing along to fast jazz tunes, you'll quickly see how the figures fit in musically. Try playing different phrase lengths of swing ride followed by a phrase of a figure, i.e. 2+2, 4+4, 8+8, and 12+12. Also work on 6+2 and 10+2 forms.

Pages 214 and 216 list some advanced options that can be applied to all of the exercises in **Section O** and **Section P**. The extensions begin on page 217. Pages 219 through 221 introduce periods of silence and variations on the extensions.

## Chapter 13, Section Q: Six 3 Beat Figures in Augmented Notation

(pp. 223-227)

Here the 16 three-beat figures are reduced to just 6. These are the more syncopated of the patterns, and they lend themselves nicely to the AUGMENTED form. Pages 226 and 227 contain ride cymbal patterns in 3-bar sets, and are to be played in 8-bar phrases. This can and should be interpreted in three ways:

- Play 8 bars of time and then 8 bars of a figure
- Play the figure over 8 bars and repeat, adjusting the down beat on each new phrase
- Play the figure continuously over an entire 32-bar tune, keeping track of 8-bar phrases

The **Extra Study** on page 225 provides lots of ideas for mixing it up and also for comping using the extensions and variations against a steady swing ride.

## Chapter 14, Section R: Six 5 Beat Figures in Augmented Notation

(pp. 229-233)

Here the 5-beat figures, also reduced to the 6 most versatile, are to be played in AUGMENTED form. Play in 8-bar phrases alternating with 8 bars of time. The basic figures are presented on pages 230 and 232. You'll find the extensions on pages 231 and 233. When comfortable, refer back to **Section Q** (pages 224-225) for more practice ideas. Point number 3 on page 225 suggests alternating the strong notes between the bass drum and hi-hat. Note that some of the sticking patterns require the cymbal hand to move to the snare. Note also the cut time foot pattern on pages 230-232.

## Chapter 15, Sections S - U: Three Bar Resolutions in Augmented Notation

(pp. 235-247)

This chapter introduces the 3-beat figures in AUGMENTED form with more open space than in previous exercises. In each case, a very strong 3 pulse soars over the underlying time. This interpretation of the figures is very common in up-tempo jazz. The idea is summarized on pages 236-237. Pages 238 to 240 contain the figures and their extensions plus variations on the extensions. Work on 16-bar (8+8) alternating phrases, and then try 16+16.

**Section T** mixes it up a bit. Pages 241-244 contain partial extensions, which drop one or two of the strokes to add silence to the figures. As above, practice in both 8+8 and 16+16 forms.

**Section U** takes the first figure from **Section T** and moves it through its 12 possible starting positions. Apply this principle to all of the figures on pages 241 through 244.

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

You have now been working on playing 3-beat and 5-beat figures within 4/4 time in a host of variations. This idea can be developed further by inserting almost any grouping into any time signature. Note that the result must remain musical. This section gives four examples, and if you're up to the challenge, you can apply the concept to any of the patterns in this book. Playing along to suitable music will provide a framework to help you to know your place in the time and in the tune's structure.

Page 252 illustrates a 5-beat pattern over 3/4 time. As you work on this, try to hear both the 5-beat pattern and the 3-beat pattern. Once you're comfortable with the basic pattern, begin applying the concept to the other 5-beat figures found on page 192.

Page 253 outlines how an 8-beat figure (3+3+2) evolves over 3/4 time. Listen for the 8-beat pattern as you work on the lines. You can find more 8-beat figures to try on pages 108-121 in **Section G**.

More challenging still is to superimpose 3-beat and 8-beat figures over 5/4 time, as found on pages 254 and 255. Practicing to a tune that's in 5/4 or with a metronome that marks 5/4 will help you to better identify the bars of 5. You can take this concept further by applying it to the figures on pages 88-91 for 3-beat figures, and 108-121 for 8-beat figures.

## **Chapter 17, Section W: Practical Steps to a Musical Hi-hat Technique (pp. 257-259)**

Playing the hi-hat with one hand underneath may seem like too antiquated a notion, but it will give you excellent control of both sound and articulation. Although the technique can get quite involved, it begins by simply opening and closing your hand around the cymbals. The instructions on page 258 assume right-handed play, and either traditional or matched grip will work. Note that the 'o' stands for OPEN and the '+' stands for CLOSED.

- Items 4, 5 and 6 refer you to the figures that can be useful with this technique.
- Item 7 outlines a brush application that will give you a few ideas for comping and soloing with brushes.

## **Conclusion (p. 261)**

If you have made it to the end of Jim's book, applied all the principles, and practiced all the exercises and variations, you certainly will be somewhat older. You will also have demonstrated an enviable level of effort and dedication. Congratulations. You have joined a rare fellowship of drummers who have been inspired by Jim Blackley's philosophy, creativity, and love of the craft.

As Jim says, "When you practice, you think. When you play, you react." Once you get to the bandstand, the time for thinking is passed. So sit up straight, listen, and let your new skills lead the way, relying on your most essential musical tools: knowledge, experience and wisdom. And above all, listen!

-RB

