

Stick Control Unleashed Part I

Introduction

It's rare that a day goes by that I haven't spent some quality time with G. L. Stone's timeless work, "*Stick Control For The Modern Snare Drummer*". Most drummers have a copy of *Stick Control*, and if you're not among that crowd, I suggest you pick up a copy on your next trip to the drum store. In addition to being comprehensive and well laid out, the book is just loaded with potential for redeployment.

The exercises in *Stick Control* are great for getting your hands moving, so why not use them to get the other limbs involved as well? The following interpretations move the stickings around the entire drum set. While the idea is to get all four limbs working, it's best to go easy at first, i.e. start with two limbs, then add the third (and then the fourth) when ready.

Core Concepts

It's remarkable how often a mere 'sticking exercise' blossoms into a great rhythm. When working with *Stick Control*, keep this in mind. Your goal is not only to move the hands and feet but also to create and discover rhythms. Every page is filled with ideas, and every line is a building block for your own patterns.

Because the exercises focus equal attention on both hands, most will work 'as is' for both right and left handed players. The suggestions below assume right handed play. In variations that call for full set playing, the right or 'lead' hand will usually play the cymbal and the left hand would play the snare. Think in terms of your lead hand playing a musical or outer line; the other hand would then play a supportive role, sometimes called the 'inner line'. Also practice shifting your attention from the outer line to the inner line.

If you are a left handed player, you'll find that most exercises require no adjustment. There are a few where you might want to reverse the sticking if the outer and inner lines seem inside out (e.g. start on beat 3 of the figure). Open handed players should experiment with both right and left handed play.

Always think rhythm, and listen for the rhythmic potential in each line. A lot of the patterns can be applied directly to music without modification. So always be asking, "How can I use this?"

I like to concentrate on the first three pages of the *Stick Control* (pages 5-7), which offer up lots to work with. Once you've mastered the ideas presented here, see if you can apply them to other pages in the book.

Legend

Because these ideas cover so much ground, there is a lot of variation in the instructions. In general, 'R' refers to your right limbs, and 'L' refers to the left ... with some exceptions. Here are the codes that will help you decipher the suggested patterns.

RH = Right Hand

LH = Left Hand

RF = Right Foot

LF = Left Foot

Cym = Cymbal

SN = Snare

BD = Bass Drum

HH = Hi-Hat

Stick Control For the Snare Drummer

by George Lawrence Stone ©1935

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Strength Building

I. Running In Place

This mod is a great work-out for building strength, control and articulation. The figures can also be used as warm-up routines. Simply play hands and feet together. That is, play the right hand and right foot together on cymbal and bass drum (assuming right-handed play), and the left hand and left foot together on snare and hi-hat. Take it slowly and focus on control and evenness. Listen for and eliminate 'flams' between hands and feet.

So: R = RH + RF (Cym & BD)
L = LH + LF (SN & HH)

1. Interpret as 8th notes.
2. Interpret as 16th notes.
3. Interpret the lines as quarter notes at a fast tempo.

Line 1, page 5

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Line 6, page 5

R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L

II. Top and Bottom

This is a good way to generate a lot of noise as well as build strength. It also contains some useful rhythms and soloing material. Play the R strokes with both hands together on cymbal and snare. Play the L strokes with both feet together on bass drum and hi-hat. Interpret first as 8th notes and then as 16ths.

So:

R = RH on Cym, LH on SN
L = RF on BD, LF on HH

Line 1

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Line 6

R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L

Advanced

- For all R strokes, play both hands together as above, but for the L strokes play only the bass drum, adding the hi-hat on 2 & 4.

III. Funky Foot

This is a work-out developed by legendary teacher Alan Dawson. For the R strokes, play alternating strokes with the hands. Play all L strokes on the bass drum. As a snare exercise, this is great for hand and foot co-ordination, but the figures are just loaded with potential for linear-type patterns when the lead hand plays a cymbal or hi-hat.

R = R L R L etc.

L = BD

So R L R L / R R L L becomes BD RH BD LH / BD BD RH LH

1. Begin playing as 8th notes, with the lead hand on the hi-hat.
2. When comfortable, play the RH strokes on the cymbal and add the hi-hat on 2 & 4.

Line 1

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Add Hi-hat

Line 6

R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L

Add Hi-hat

Advanced

1. Interpret the figures as 16th notes, adding the hi-hat on 2 & 4.

Line 1

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L etc.

Line 6

R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L etc.

2. Reverse the figures, so R = bass drum and L = alternating hands.

