

Buzzing is no Drag

Ideas For Left Hand Comping

by Albe Bonacci

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	× × R.C.
S.D.	●
B.D.	●

I think we all like to listen to great music and of course great drummers, but what interests me the most is the drummer's utilization of space. Space can be used - or not used - to help us define our style, make us sound unique or in some cases more recognizable.

Along with the players great time, feel and personal sonic choices (tuning etc.) is the players interplay or what he /she does between the notes that makes us individuals.

Things such as ghost notes, the smaller lower volume notes that can make a beat more fun and more developed, challenging and give an opportunity for more uniqueness. So these examples are in no way intended to disregard space or simplicity.

A thing I like to do is play small drags or buzzes in some rhythms, as much for my benefit as the listener's. In Jazz music this kind of thing happens all the time. You almost never hear jazz playing without the left hand interplay, or "comping" right hand for you lefties out there.

So perhaps we could call this straight eight and sixteenth note comping/interplay.

Here are the basic strokes and stickings necessary for these examples:

Example 1 - The 16th note triplet half drag. This is the slower rate of the three examples.

R LL R R LL R

Example 2 - The 32nd note half drag a little faster rate.

R L R LL R L R LL

R LL R L R LL R L

Example 3 - A buzz stroke (multiple bounces close together). Same sticking as above.

LL... LL...

LL... LL...

The 32nd note half drag a little faster rate. Count the triplet like this, "1&2&ti ta," and the 32nd "1e&a, 2e&a," w/ two lefts being played on the a. Make sure to count at first, these are similar sounding and close in rate and easily misplayed.

As with a lot of concepts there are some technical considerations as well. With the drags we want to keep them lower in volume compared to the back beat 2&4 so a drop/squeeze or drop/pull technique might work well.

As far as the buzz strokes, I recommend moving the stick more to the edge of the snare drum where it is tighter, then pushing the stick into the head semi lightly keeping the bounces close together and controlled. The drags are only two notes and the buzzes are multiple bounces. This is important -- don't just drop the stick and hope for the best. Buzz notes can vary depending on tempo and the note value they are placed on. Sometimes the buzz stroke works best with a German style palms down technique with just thumb, forefinger and middle finger or even thumb and forefinger only.

One last hint, tempo is very important. At fast tempos these can be too hard to hear the rate difference, especially 16th to 32nd note rates. A slow to upper mid tempo seems to reveal each one better.

Let's take a look at some choices.

(WE CAN ALSO TRY THIS IN A SAMBA-TYPE STYLE)



(HALF-TIME SHUFFLE)



(HERE'S A 12/8 THING)

