

## Put Some Sauce On It!

### Improving Your Groove, Feel, And Pocket

by **Alto Bonass**



**S**lang terms are often used in music but are rarely **shrunk down and defined.** For instance, what is a groove? Is it a beat? Is it time? Or is it a rhythm?



Let's say a groove is a rhythm. Now, what is a rhythm? My dictionary defines rhythm as "an ordered sequence alternation of strong and weak elements in the flow of sound." This definition translates perfectly to drumming, especially in regards to groove. I firmly believe that a good groove uses a unique combination of strong and weak sounds depending on the style and tempo.

For example, here's a simple beat we all play:



Now let's "put some sauce on it" and make the beat really groove by adding some strong and weak sounds. First, play accents on the backbeats (2 and 4). This can take some time to develop consistently, but it will make the same drum really pop even at low volumes.

Next, let's give a little drive to the back on the quarter-note pulse. Again, this is a technique issue involving playing a down stroke for the accents and an upstroke for the unaccented strokes. Also, try using the shoulder of the stick for the accents and the head for the up. This should give your beat a more moving yet secure sound. It looks like this:



Now let's create a few 16th-note patterns that apply the same idea. Here's the first. Be careful with the sticking. There are three lifts in a row with an accent—on the middle note.



The next pattern contains an added accent on the "off" of beat 2 and 4, giving the beat a little forward momentum.



For the next example, move the right hand to the ride cymbal and play the offbeats on the bell. (You can also play the offbeats on a China cymbal, a cowbell, or a floor tom.)



When playing the ride, don't leave your feet too stiff. Try playing it on 2 and 4, in quarter notes, or as offbeats. Also experiment with splash sounds. Get creative and think up your own ideas.

Now let's add the bass drum. Try combining each of the previous patterns with the following figures:

#### Bass Drum Group 1



### Bass Drum Group 2

2a 

2b 

2c 

2d 

### Bass Drum Group 3

3a 

3b 

3c 

3d 

3e 

### Bass Drum Group 4

4a 

4b 

4c 

4d 

Here are two more ostinatos with some bass drum figures already added. Combine these ostinatos with all of the previous bass drum patterns. In doing so, you'll increase your coordination while improving your feel.

F 

G 

Remember, a rhythm needs to contain strong *and* weak elements. Without this variation, there is no pocket and certainly no groove. Have fun, and don't forget to "put some sauce on it."

*Albe Bonacci has recorded for television, radio, and film, and with such songwriters as Jack Segal, Diane Warren, and Desmond Child.*

