



JAZZ ARRANGING: DRUMS

INFO & MUSIC

SAXOPHONES

JAZZ THEORY

COMPOSING

LOGIC PRO

CONTACT

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DRUMKIT NOTATION

In mainstream jazz arrangements, drummers are nearly always given a very basic "guide" part. The part should be constructed to give the maximum information without becoming at all cluttered or awkward to read. This is not because drummers are not good readers, but so that they can concentrate on listening and improvising a creative and sensitive performance. Fills are usually left up to the performer. Most parts can be written with just bass drum, cymbal (hi hat or ride), snare and in some cases tom toms, though the latter should be used for specific rhythms rather than written solos.

Ex 1: Basic drum notation. Note that many drum kits will only have two tom toms.

If a basic swing ride rhythm is required, it is common to write just bass drum and cymbal pattern for one bar followed by repeat bars. The bass drum part should follow the bass part, eg if the bass player has a walking bass, you should write four bass drum beats and if the bass player is playing two beats to a bar you should write two bass drum beats for the drummer. (The drummer does not necessarily play the bass drum – this is just so the drummer knows what the bass player is doing). The cymbal part should specify which cymbal (hi hat or ride) is to be played and whether any type of sticks other than normal should be used (eg brushes or mallets).

Ex 2: Simple drum part

The above is sometimes written like this:

Ex 3

Ex 2 is better as it is easier to follow and you will be able to hear the drum part in Logic (The repeats signs hide the actual MIDI notes).

Once a basic rhythm has been established it is allowable to use slashes. This is especially useful after a departure from the basic rhythm.

Ex 4: Slashes used to denote return to basic rhythm

This example uses two score styles in Logic. Bars 1 – 4 are the basic "#Drums" style, bars 5 –

8 use the "Drums-slash" style. This allows you to hear the MIDI part but the notes are hidden.

PHRASING AND ACCENTS

When a drummer is required to accentuate rhythmic passages or accents in the brass or saxophones, they can either be given these as an exact part to play (see above ex. 4) or as cues. If a drummer is given cues, they have more freedom to interpret the part.

Ex5: Drum part with cues



The image shows a musical staff for a drum part in 4/4 time. The staff is divided into eight measures. Measures 1 and 2 are marked with diagonal slashes, indicating a 'Drums-slash' style. Measure 3 starts with a '(TPT5)' cue, followed by four eighth notes with accents, and then a quarter note with an accent. Measures 4 through 7 are marked with diagonal slashes, and measure 8 is marked with a '8' and diagonal slashes, indicating a 'Drums-slash' style.

In this example bars 1-2 and 5-7 use the score style "Drums-slash", bars 3-4 use the style "#Drums-combi". In this case a drummer would choose which drums to play and probably precede the phrase with a short fill.

STYLISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Backbeat

The backbeat (ie beats 2 and 4 in 4/4) can be accented with:

- Snare drum - typically rock and roll, loud climaxes in jazz and "dance" jazz styles such as swing, jump and r&b.
- Hi hat foot pedal and/or sidestick on snare - subtler and quieter jazz styles

Bass drum

The bass drum is often written purely as a guide to indicate what the bass player is doing. If a bass player has a "walking line" it is usual to write for bass drum beats in a bar of 4/4. (a drummer will rarely actually play this except in certain styles such as "jump". If the bass player is playing 2 beats to the bar, it is usual to write two beats for the bass drum.