

creative construction

Indie / Alternative Rock Drum Play-Along Method - Vol. 1



**eBook
includes
16 MP3
downloads**



by Chris Prescott

Welcome

The idea behind this book is to help drummers learn how to write drum parts that connect with other musicians. A big part of this is listening for rhythms and melodies that inspire us to create our own parts. This can be found in any of the other musical accompaniments. There is no right or wrong way to make music, but in my own listening and playing experience I have found some approaches that are very effective. With this book and play-along music you can practice and learn some of these ideas.

A great way to start is to play along with your favorite music. You can study another drummer's style, compositional choices and time feel all at the same time. Plus, it often beats playing along with a metronome because it's just more fun! (Of course, playing along with a metronome is very useful and important practice in its own way.) Once you can play along with some of your favorite CDs, you'll likely be able to play these songs with your friends. But what does it take to create your own part or to improvise within the loose confines of an original song? The information in this book can give you some ideas about how to tackle this.

The ideas and suggestions in this book are based on my own playing style and things that feel right for me. Playing drums is a very physical task and not everything that feels right for one person will be right for the next. I always tell my students though to try things out before deciding it's not for you. Just like food, right?!? Beside the construction of beats, I also have made some notes about fills and places you may want to place them within the song form. There are some classic or standard ways of going about this, but again these are just suggestions and you should feel free to follow your own inspiration or intuition.

Good luck and have fun!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "CHRIS P." with a stylized flourish at the end.

-Chris Prescott

Acknowledgments

Huge thanks to all those who helped refine, inspire and talk through the book's concepts and explore the possible ways to represent this information. Thank you Kerri Danil, Jeff Smith and all at La Jolla Music, Zach Smith, Ken Abellon, Irwin, Duncan Moore, Paul Drake, Nathan Smith, Zoe Prescott, and Gabe Feenberg.

The Play-Along Tracks

Each of the play-along tracks has a certain task or challenge for you to work on. There are two different versions of each song to use, one with a guide drum track and one without. You can choose whichever version meets your needs or ability. The tracks that contain a skeleton of a drum part will be easier to follow but might not allow you enough freedom to create your own unique part. I have included a few downbeats on the "1" and the snare backbeats on "2" and "4" to help orient the way the measures were intended to lay out. Please note that the drums that are found in these recorded songs are not the actual drum parts you are intended to learn but rather simply a guide for time orientation. As you become more comfortable try the versions without the drums so you can really try to follow the music on your own. Have patience, it can be a little tricky at first. Each song has a voice counting in the beginning of the song so you can get oriented with the tempo and where to begin playing. In the version "with drums", the counts sometimes indicate where to change between sections as well.

I have made some notes about the rhythms that are found in these songs and ways to use this information to create your own part. Ideas for drum beats are shown as a starting point but ultimately you should write and choose your own parts for these songs. Try to listen carefully for rhythms to connect with musically. The song forms are outlined in very basic charts in the end of each chapter. I have made similar charts when trying to learn large amounts of material along with brief notes about what beats to play. Having some notes with you at a band rehearsal or audition can really help things go more smoothly. It's great practice to make basic charts for other songs that you like and may want to cover with your band. Basic reading and writing skills have been extremely useful in my life as a professional drummer as well as a perpetual student. It's a good skill to have and it's easy to learn.

Following the Form

In the simplified charts provided the song form is described in both measures and chord cycles. Whenever possible you should orient yourself based on the music you are hearing rather than counting measures. By listening to the music in play-along tracks you will have a better understanding of the song and will likely make better musical choices. In some instances irregular sections can be followed more precisely by counting measures, but in general try to use your ears to follow the form. Hopefully after several listens the chord changes will be familiar and you can easily anticipate the transitions between sections. Remember that the form charts included are not in standard notation but rather a shorthand style that I have found extremely useful in learning material quickly.

Interpreting Your Part

There are many approaches to writing a drum part. One way is to offer a solid, simple support for the song by playing only essential rhythms. This usually includes maintaining the standard backbeat of beat 2 & 4. Another choice could be to create a counter-rhythm that reacts to the melodies of the other instrumental parts by offering a new rhythmic idea. Another approach is to mimic aspects of the song's rhythmic and melodic content. You may directly connect your drum part with this content through listening carefully to the musical accompaniment. This last method is explored and specifically outlined in this book.

First you must figure out what you are hearing. I have provided notated examples pulled in from the rhythms of the guitars, bass, keyboards and so on. The easiest way to connect with these rhythms is to add those notes into your bass drum part. What we play on the cymbals and snare tends to be very similar from pattern to pattern. The bass drum part is what often makes the drum beats unique from one another. Taking this adaptation further, one could start to abandon the backbeat concept and move the snare hits onto different notes in the measure. All of these adjustments could connect directly with the instrumental rhythms that we are listening to. If you have trouble seeing this correlation between the initial rhythms that are provided and the following drum set exercises, it is extremely important to count out the examples. Another good way to see the relationship is to circle the notes in the drum part that are shared in the initial rhythmic ideas.

Fills

A good place to put drum fills is between the various sections of the song's form. For example you may enter into the song with a brief fill or play one as you lead up to the chorus. When you are getting used to a song it's a good idea to keep the rhythms simple and then add complexity as you gain confidence. Build up to it slowly if you stumble at first. It's also very common to come out of your fill with a crash cymbal. Remember that most of the time this crash is accompanied with the bass drum. A crash by itself is missing the solid thump of the lower, bass frequencies and the higher sounds of the cymbals are thin by themselves. Another variation can be to come out of the drum fills and dip into a quieter dynamic section. This might be a good place to leave the fill out and try to pull your volume down immediately. These choices are made in response to the other instruments. Use your instinct and decide what's right for the song. There are many ways to handle this so make sure to experiment and see what you come up with.

Cinco Patos

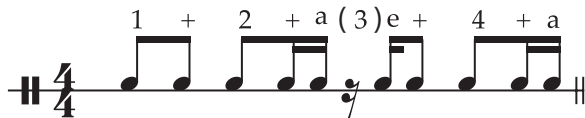
CD track numbers: #1 with drums / #9 without drums - BPM: ♩ = 94

Instruments: Acoustic guitar, Synth bass (Minimoog), Piano, Cello (mellotron), Arp synthesizer, Percussion (shaker and tambourine)

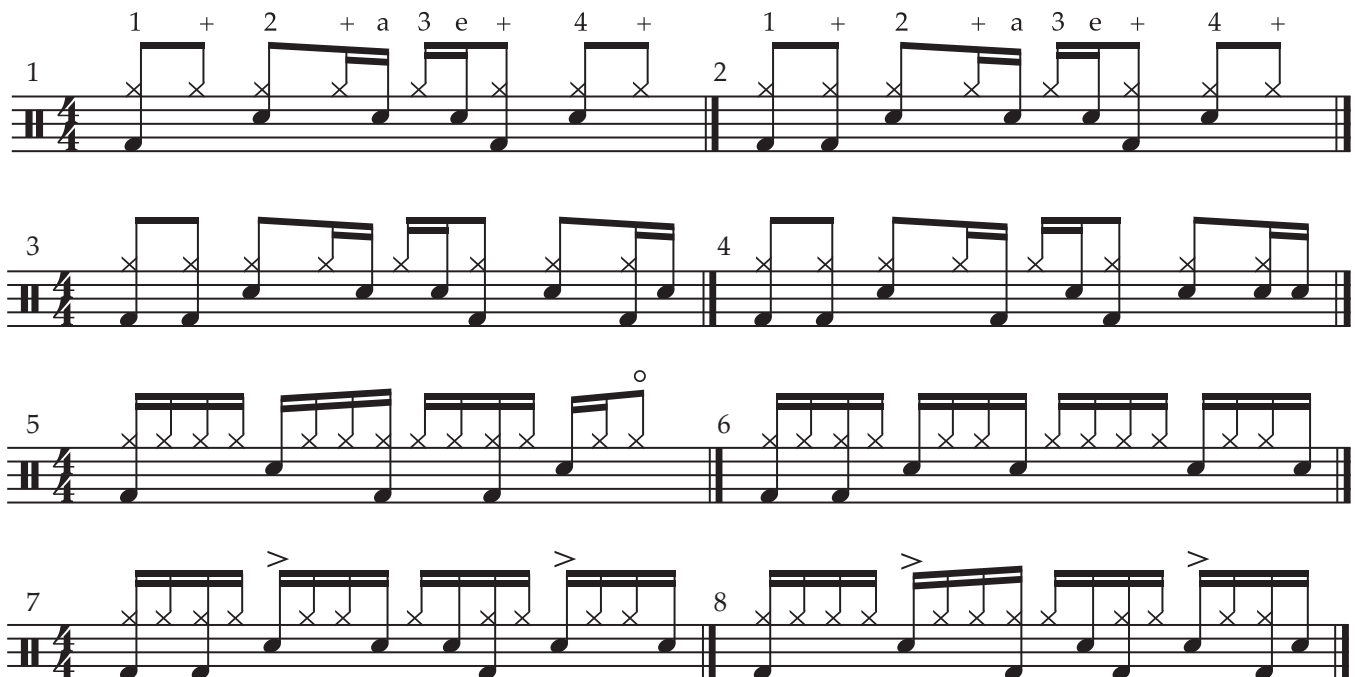
Task: Work on playing with syncopated melodies and sections of open space.

You'll need to listen carefully when the instrumentation changes in order to follow the form and keep your place in the song. Adjust your drum part based on the density of the textures. For example if there are many instruments playing simultaneously, you may want to fit your part in with the existing rhythms without covering up what's going on. In the more sparse areas you can find a way to let the drums come out front. Remember that this may be a subtle way of playing or changing your beat and not necessarily a place to play tons of fills! Let the open space breathe a bit because this is an important dynamic shift in the song. Another notable characteristic of this song is the use of syncopation in the melodies (guitar, piano, bass). These are great places to add bass drum notes or extra snare hits. Begin by keeping the backbeat of 2 & 4 and connecting with the syncopated rhythms. You can do this by playing the bass drum on the notes that fall on the beats aside from 2&4. If one of the melody rhythms ends up on the backbeat you can play the snare as you normally would. Taking this further, you can abandon the backbeat concept and play the snare more freely on any part of the measure that seems appropriate.

Interpretation Ideas - Verse Guitar Strumming Rhythm

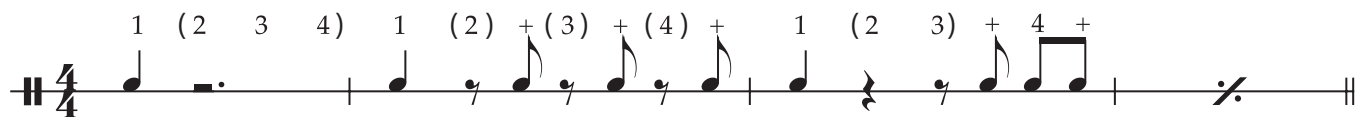


By adding in some of these rhythms to the snare and bass drum parts we can connect with the guitar's strumming. Try a single stroke (RLRL) pattern on the hi-hat during the sixteenth note cymbal examples:



Interpretation Ideas - Verse Piano Melody 1

(4-measure phrase):

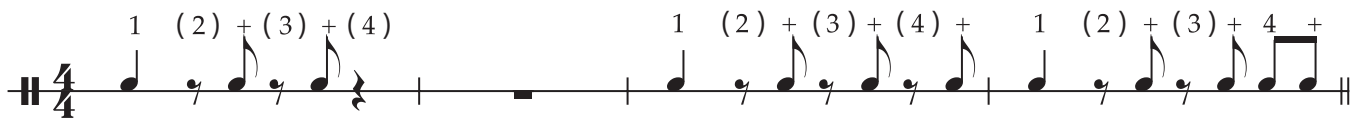


Interpreted as:

Six variations of the 4-measure phrase, numbered 9 through 15, arranged vertically. Each variation is on a single staff with a treble clef. The variations show different rhythmic and melodic interpretations of the original phrase. Variation 9: Quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Variation 10: Quarter note D5, quarter note E5, quarter note F5, quarter note G5. Variation 11: Quarter note A5, quarter note B5, quarter note C6, quarter note D6. Variation 12: Quarter note E6, quarter note F6, quarter note G6, quarter note A6. Variation 13: Quarter note B6, quarter note C7, quarter note D7, quarter note E7. Variation 14: Quarter note F7, quarter note G7, quarter note A7, quarter note B7. Variation 15: Quarter note C8, quarter note D8, quarter note E8, quarter note F8. Each variation ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Interpretation Ideas - Verse Piano Melody 2

(4-measure phrase):



Interpreted as:

16 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

17

18

19

Quarter note cymbal variation:

20

21

Sixteenth note cymbal idea based on the same rhythm (written with RLRL in mind for the hi-hat):

21

Interpretation Ideas - Chorus Guitar Rhythms

The guitars are strumming mostly straight eighth notes through the chorus but there are a few rhythms to pick out in the second measure: Note that each chorus chord cycle is 6 bars of a drum pattern. It's a good idea to think of it in terms of the other instrumental phrases and not focus on counting individual measure of time. Be musical, not mathematical!

The place to focus on here is measure 2. The measures before and after can be whatever you want. The straight eighth note strumming opens up possibilities since anything will work. It's like a blank canvas, you can go any direction you see fit. As with everything, it's just a matter of preference.

Here are some more 1-measure ideas of something to play during the syncopation of measure 2:

22

23

24

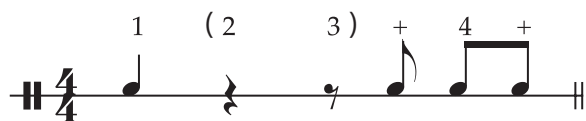
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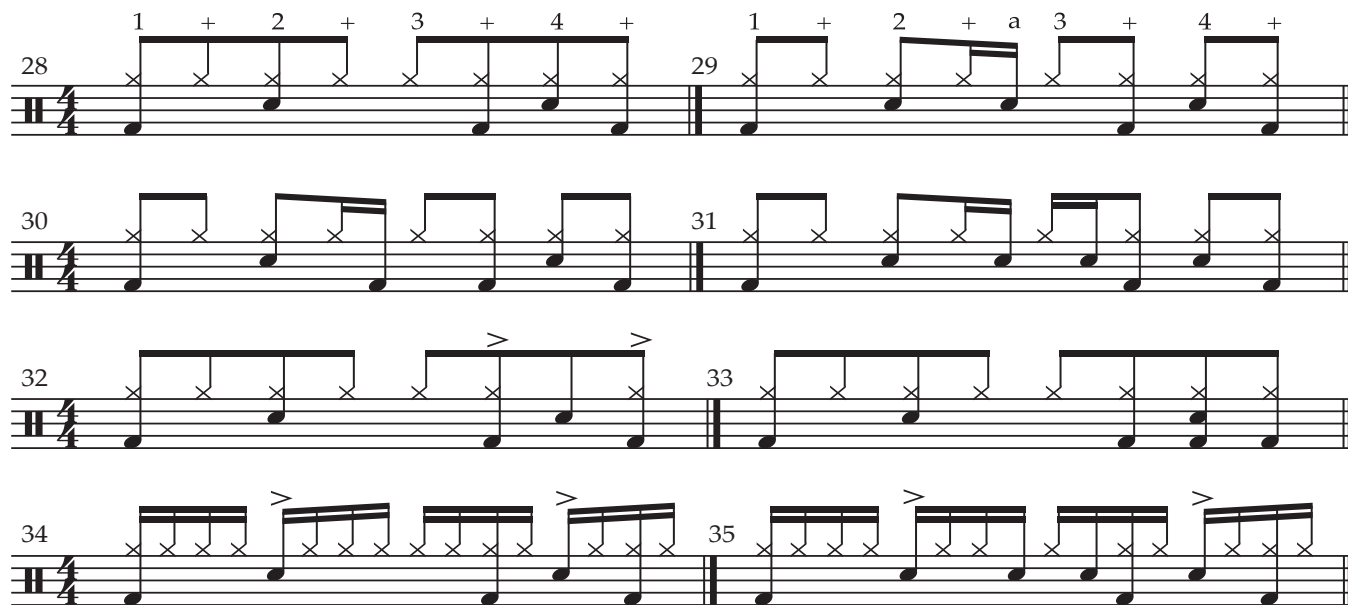
27

Interpretation Ideas - Bass Rhythm

Try to listen to the bass line since it plays a repeating, rhythmic pattern:



Here are some possible interpretations of this rhythm:



Write Down Your Ideas

Four sets of empty musical staves for writing down ideas.

Cinco Patos Form:

(Track 1 w/ drums
& 9 without drums)

Time

Verse 1

- 4 Bars** Acoustic Guitar - 1x through the chord cycle
- 8 Bars** Piano melody one - 2x
- 8 Bars** Arp synthesizer / low piano notes / bass (piano one continues) - 2x
- 8 Bars** Piano melody two enters (no Arp) - 2x
- 8 Bars** Arp enters (piano melody two continues) - 2x

0:00

Chorus 1

- 6 Bars** Piano/Guitar - 1x
- 12 Bars** Cello enters - 2x
- 6 Bars** Chorus end section
* 4 bars of melody plus a 2-bar held note section

1:31

Verse 2

- 8 Bars** Piano low notes, very sparse - 2x
- 8 Bars** Piano melody two (no accompaniment) - 2x
- 4 Bars** Piano melody one with guitar - 1x
- 4 Bars** Piano continues as the Arp enters - 1x

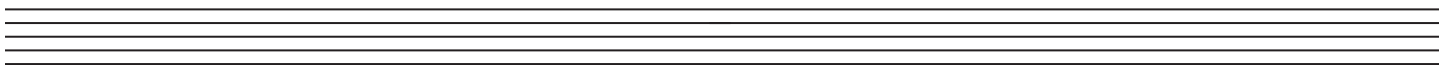
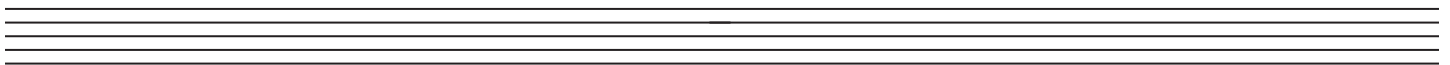
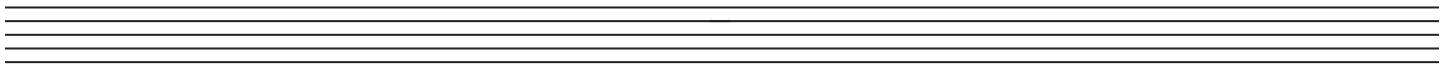
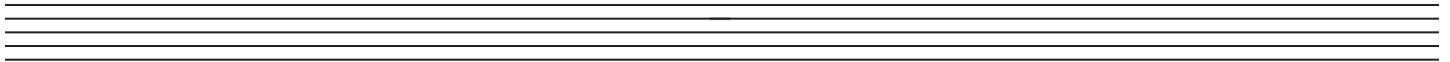
} Open
space

2:33

Chorus 2

- 12 Bars** Piano/Guitar - 2x
- 12 Bars** Cello enters - 2x
- 6 Bars** Chorus end section
* 4 bars of melody plus a 2-bar held note section

3:34



About the Author

Chris Prescott is a San Diego-based musician who has been teaching since 1990. Over the years Chris has performed and recorded on more than 50 releases on both independent and major labels, as well as recorded music for television and films. Some of the bands he has toured and recorded with include Pinback, Rocket from the Crypt, Systems Officer, No Knife, Tanner, Fishwife and the Jade Shader among others. During the past 20 years Chris has performed in over 160 cities in places as far-reaching as Japan, Europe, Canada, Mexico and the United States. Chris holds a degree in Music/Jazz Studies from University of California, San Diego, and graduated Summa Cum Laude in addition to receiving several other college honors. In his spare time he enjoys recording in his home studio, fishing, the outdoors and spending time with his family.

Audio Liner Notes:

All tracks were recorded in the Belly of the Whale Studio in Encinitas, CA during the Summer of 2009

Chris Prescott composed, performed and recorded all of the songs.

Mastering assistance - Zach Smith

Guest musicians:

Gabe Feenberg - Wurlitzer and Trombone on "Keiki Died Blues"

Zoe Prescott - vocal on "Keiki Died Blues"

Nathan Smith - piano on "Cinco Patos"

Track listing - "with drums" versions:

- 1. Cinco Patos**
- 2. Swinging Shovels**
- 3. A Strange Time**
- 4. Keiki Died Blues**
- 5. Decisions Decisions**
- 6. Dynamite Safety**
- 7. Mule Tea**
- 8. Anticipation**

Track listing - "without drums" versions:

- 9. Cinco Patos**
- 10. Swinging Shovels**
- 11. A Strange Time**
- 12. Keiki Died Blues**
- 13. Decisions Decisions**
- 14. Dynamite Safety**
- 15. Mule Tea**
- 16. Anticipation**

For any assistance please email: info@chrisprescott.com

Creative Construction is a drum set method that helps drummers write parts that connect closely with other musicians. Through musical examples you will learn to listen and make effective choices in creating your own musical contribution.

Each of the play-along songs are written to exercise specific skills, such as odd time signatures, playing with dynamics, syncopated rhythms, shifting tempos and more...

The book includes:

- 🥁 **CD / MP3 audio consisting of 8 original songs. Each song is presented both with and without drums. (16 tracks total)**
- 🥁 **Tips on playing fills and how to come up with variations of your own.**
- 🥁 **Introduction to odd time signatures (5/4, 6/8 and 3/4)**
- 🥁 **Ideas on song form, arrangement and using simple charts**
- 🥁 **Concepts in listening and musical interpretation**
- 🥁 **A method for writing your own original drum parts that connect well with other musicians**

