

Bill Bruford



WHEN IN DOUBT, ROLL!

Transcriptions of Bruford's greatest performances, with Bill's personal commentary and suggested exercises

MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.

When In Doubt, Roll!

by Bill Bruford

Transcriptions by Michael Bettine

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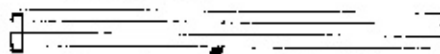
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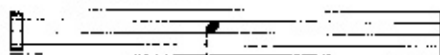
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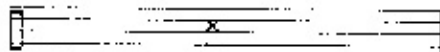
Bass drum



Snare drum



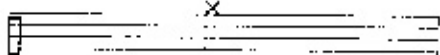
Rimshot



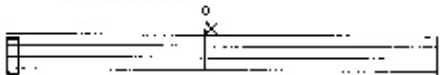
Toms



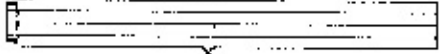
Hi-hat



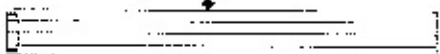
Open hi-hat



Hi-hat w/foot



Ride cymbal



Crash cymbal



P R O L O G U E

"Entertainment is like balancing eggs. The man who can balance two eggs, one on top of another, only has an audience until someone comes along who can balance three eggs."

—Barry Fantoni

This book is not a drum instruction volume that purports to tell you how to play the drums, nor is it a glowing testament to the author's genius, rounded off with suitable snapshots of his triumphant performance at a White House Charity Ball. It is, however, an attempt to describe how one drummer has managed to survive all the lunacy that goes with a professional musician's existence over the last 18 or so years, and still retain the desire to sit at the drumset and play. It is a compendium of 18 of that drummer's better recorded efforts in notated form, together with some scene-setting, and some explanation of how and why he arrived at the end product, and if the narrative casts a somewhat jaundiced eye on the reasons drummers play the things they play, the author makes no apologies for that.

For the compulsive practicers amongst my readership, I have included a few exercises that may or may not be related to the music that precedes them in the chapter. I have taken the liberty of presupposing an intermediate standard of music reading and drumset ability; there are, of course, many instruction books on the market that cater to the beginner. The exercises are really more a series of suggestions that serve as kicking off points to other ideas, and certainly are not to be considered as some sort of law handed down from Moses. Some you will find meaningful, and some meaningless.

I'm trying to open doors, and it's up to you to walk through them. Should you, dear reader, in absorbing this slim volume, happen to come an inch or two closer to understanding music and musicians, or should you stumble across some trick, some knack, or some philosophy that you could use or, indeed, find anything that will make your day a little easier or a little more humorous, then my efforts shall have been more than amply rewarded.

Bill Bruford

HEART OF THE SUNRISE

"I'm not what I should be
I'm not what I want to be
I'm not what I hope to be
But I'm certainly not, by the Grace of God,
what I used to be"

—John Newton

"Heart Of The Sunrise," recorded by Yes in late 1971, caused a small uproar among rock music's more conservative followers. Suspicious of "slick, academy trained" musicians, traditionalists on both sides of the Atlantic felt that music like this indicated an attempt to purloin their favorite three-chord folk music and turn it into High Art. Needless to say, at the time, most of the musicians involved couldn't even agree on what day of the week it was, let alone whether or not their musical endeavors were altering the course of popular art. Viewed with the benefit of 17 years' hindsight, all this was no more than an amusing little storm in a teacup.

This sort of music was, however, an attempt to admit more possibilities in pop musicianship than had hitherto surfaced and, as such, was an imaginative place for a drummer to be. Like the various King Crimson's that were to follow, the only rule for the drummer was that there were no rules. Surprise, shock, attack, understate, or overstate, but whatever you do, avoid the twin cardinal sins of being either boring or predictable. As a young player, I needed no second bidding, and have striven to avoid sinning ever since! "Heart Of The Sunrise" was recorded before "clicks" and other rhythmic devices giving metronomic time had found their way into studios, and sections of the music were allowed—even expected—to breathe, to expand, and to contract. And in as much as the members of the group ever discussed metronomic accuracy (which was not at all), they operated under the old principle of "If it feels good, it must be in time." The rather antiseptic obsession with accuracy and cleanliness of performance that is so prevalent in today's recording scene seems to have been rather charmingly absent in 1971. The end result was a good deal less perfectionist and technique obsessed than critics of the day preferred to admit.

For me, this so-called "symphonic" style and approach to popular music making was taken to its logical and natural conclusion during my time with Yes. Its subsequent decline and fall from grace may be attributed more to the demands of a popular folk art—namely that, by definition, the technical means required to make "folk" music must be available to

ie "folk" rather than specialized
ite musicians—than to any
trinsic flaw in that particular
ath of musical endeavor.

he drumming itself, along with
ie playing of the other
struments, now of course
ounds cheerfully dated. In the
ears since the recording, a whole
ew vocabulary has grown up,
hich any good modern player
ould employ to do an updated
ob if asked to rerecord the tune
oday. "Heart Of The Sunrise"
ands, therefore, as a measure of
istance traveled, not only for me
ersonally, but also for drum styles and fashions.



o 6 6 o >

6 o 6 6

6 o 6 o o

6 6

3 > >

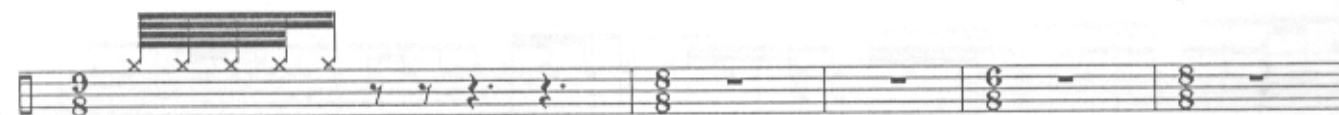
This page contains eight staves of musical notation. The notation is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 6/8. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamic markings include a forte (*f*) marking on the first staff. Articulation marks such as accents (>) and slurs are used throughout. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 2, 3, and 6. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

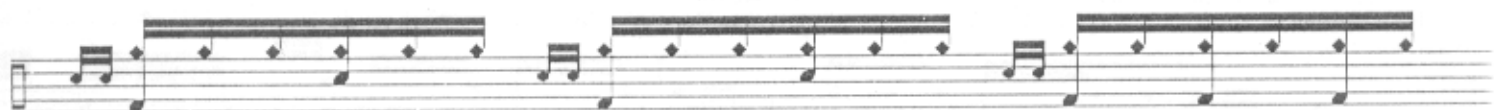
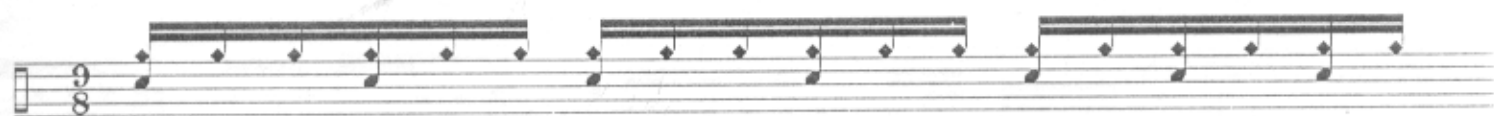
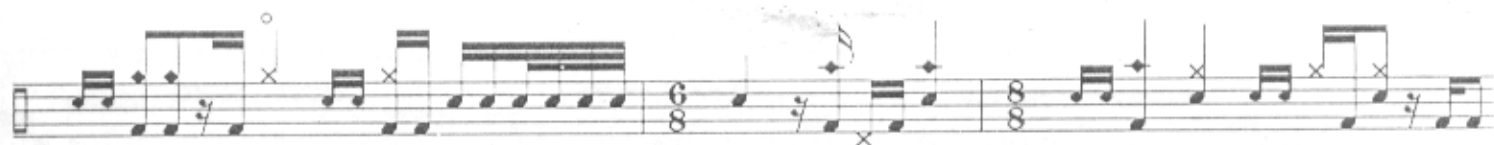


pp cresc.











f

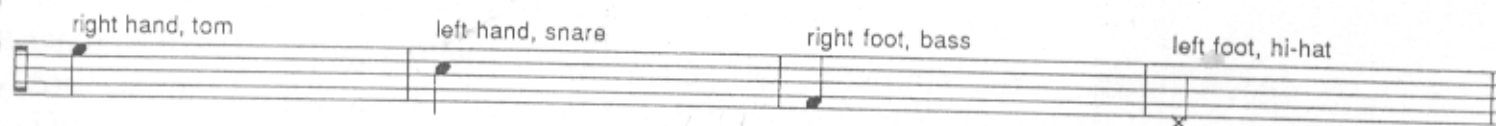


f



E X E R C I S E S

Consider, for the purpose of exercise, your feet as being just two rather smelly hands, and incorporate them in simple sequences of notes in rotating order. Any instruments can be played, and this sounds quite good with two bass drums, but I have shown it with the more conventional hi-hat in the left foot.



Clockwise

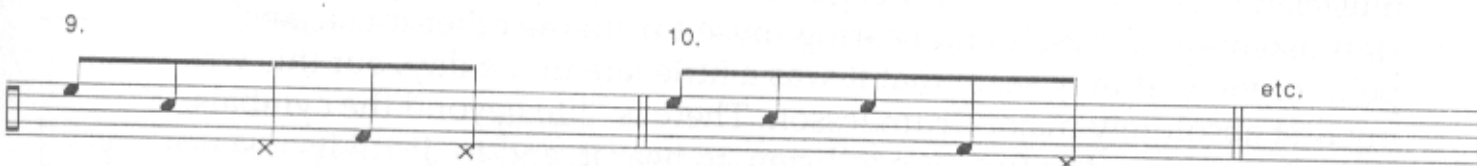


Anti-clockwise



Play the above exercises simply at first, and then in groups of two and three, developing a large vocabulary of them. Try all eight in a row.

Progress by adding one note (instead of a four-note phrase, try five notes), using the same system as above.



These units of three, four, five, or any number of notes, can then be linked to form musical phrases. The following is Example 10 played twice.



F R A C T U R E

"Of course one can 'go too far' and except in directions in which we can go too far there is no interest in going at all; and only those who will risk going 'too far' can possibly find out just how far one can go."

—T.S. Eliot

The demands on the percussionist in King Crimson in 1972-74 were actually extremely different from those on the man in Yes, even though commentators habitually lumped the two groups together as part of the so-called "Art Rock" movement. Very simply, King Crimson had its roots in playing and Yes in singing. Of course, both groups did plenty of both, but the percussion in the former was required to be a major color—often a front-line instrument—while in Yes, the drumming was perceived, usually dimly, through a wall of vocal sonorities.

The antecedents for "Fracture" lay in European improvised music—not necessarily, but possibly, jazz—and twentieth-century classical music, at least as much as rock. I had come upon Jamie Muir, who was a stalwart in the London avant-garde scene, and his influence was profound. His merciless tongue reduced me, on more than one occasion, to tears of humiliation, as he made me painfully aware that there was more to rhythm and drumming than the acquisition of an ever-faster, ever-smoother paradiddle. With him, I came to realize the responsibilities of a musician, and that technical acquisition does not a musician make. Very slowly, I began to lower my defenses and ego, and start listening to myself and hearing myself from the other musicians' point of view. It may seem that it was a little late in the day, but this was my first absolutely major drum lesson. There is "life beyond the cymbals," and it is a drummer's function to listen, to hear it, and to distill its essence into rhythm.

"Fracture" actually is a live recording. The group was always short of studio material, and partly to fulfill recording commitments, we became adept at hiring mobile trucks and recording live, omitting the applause, and passing these tracks off as studio work. This particular track was recorded at the famous Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, home of the Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra. We all know the Dutch to be liberal in their attitude to the arts, and there was therefore nothing incongruous about two percussionists from the orchestra, unbeknown to me, attending our midnight concert. Neils LeLarge and Jan Pustjens, observing the young wild man on stage brutally punishing a large

rectangular playing area of thundersheets, gongs, RotoToms, ratchets, woodblocks, etc., detected a distinct affinity with the twentieth-century percussion music their classical percussion group was beginning to tackle, and made a mental note that, should they ever need a tour of life on the rock side of the fence, here was the ideal guide. Twelve years were to pass before they contacted me to work with their New Percussion Group of Amsterdam playing original works. The concert was held at the same concert hall on February 25, 1985.

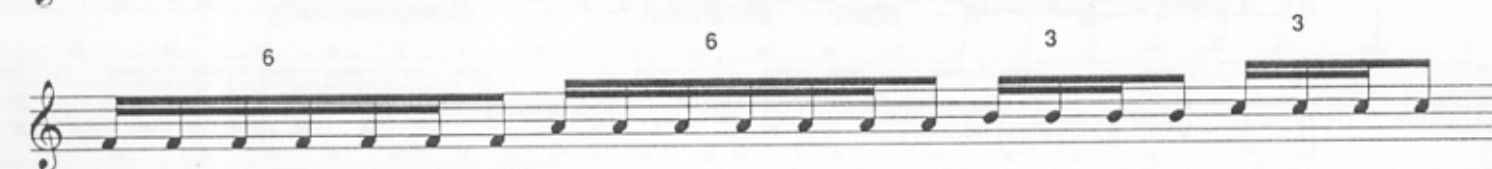
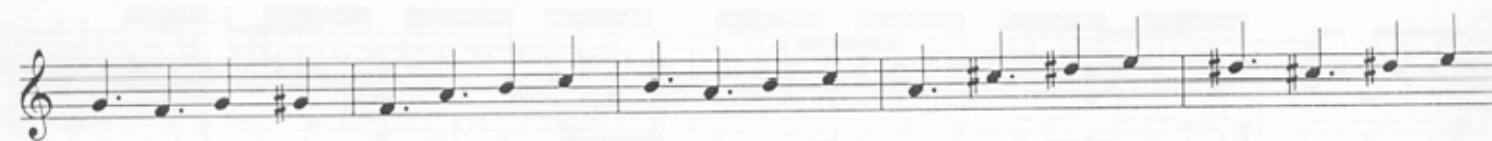
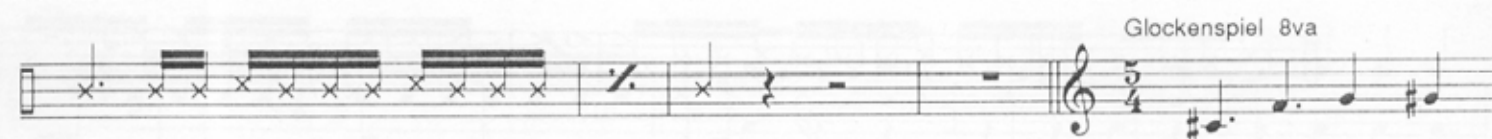
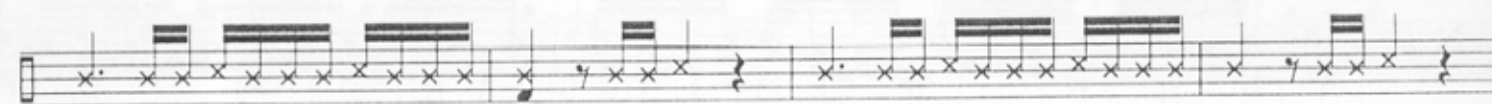
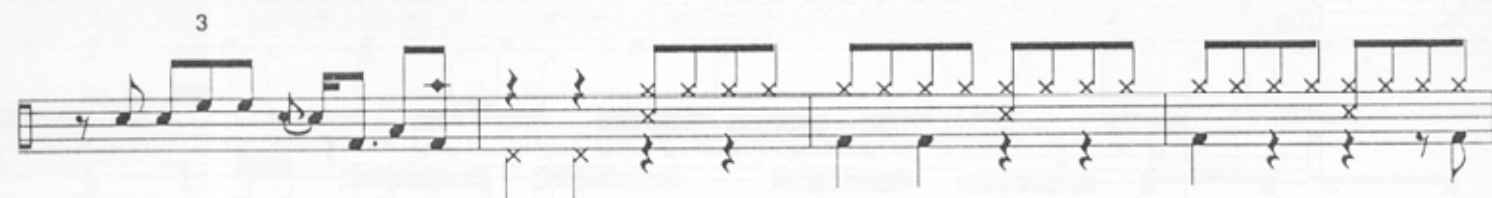


With "Fracture," I wanted to do it all. It was my first heady taste of instrumental music, and I had a very large palette of sounds that I could spread over a very large aural canvas. There was space, not necessarily to fill, but certainly to play with. King Crimson always possessed a good sense of dramatic poise, of the threat of something *about* to happen. Whether something actually happened or not seemed immaterial, so strong was this feeling of being able to play for hours with this tense, dramatic feel, which the group came collectively to describe as "lurking." I was poised either at the pitched instruments (xylophone, glockenspiel) doubling the whole-tone guitar melody, or at the unpitched percussion (metals, woods, noise makers), or at the drumset for maximum weight, and the smooth rhythmic flow between these areas became a necessary part of the complete percussive performance.

Special symbols for "Fracture" only:

Triangles	Ratchet	RotoToms	Thundersheet	Cowbells	Bell plates	Gong	Bell
<hr/>							
<hr/>							
<hr/>							

This page contains ten staves of musical notation, likely for guitar. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and triplets. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff features a key signature change from one sharp (F#) to two sharps (F# and C#), indicated by a double bar line and the new key signature. The third staff contains a series of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, possibly indicating natural harmonics. The fourth staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The fifth staff features a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The sixth staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The seventh staff contains a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The eighth staff features a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The ninth staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The tenth staff contains a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks below them. The notation is written in a standard musical staff format with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).



Glockenspiel 8va

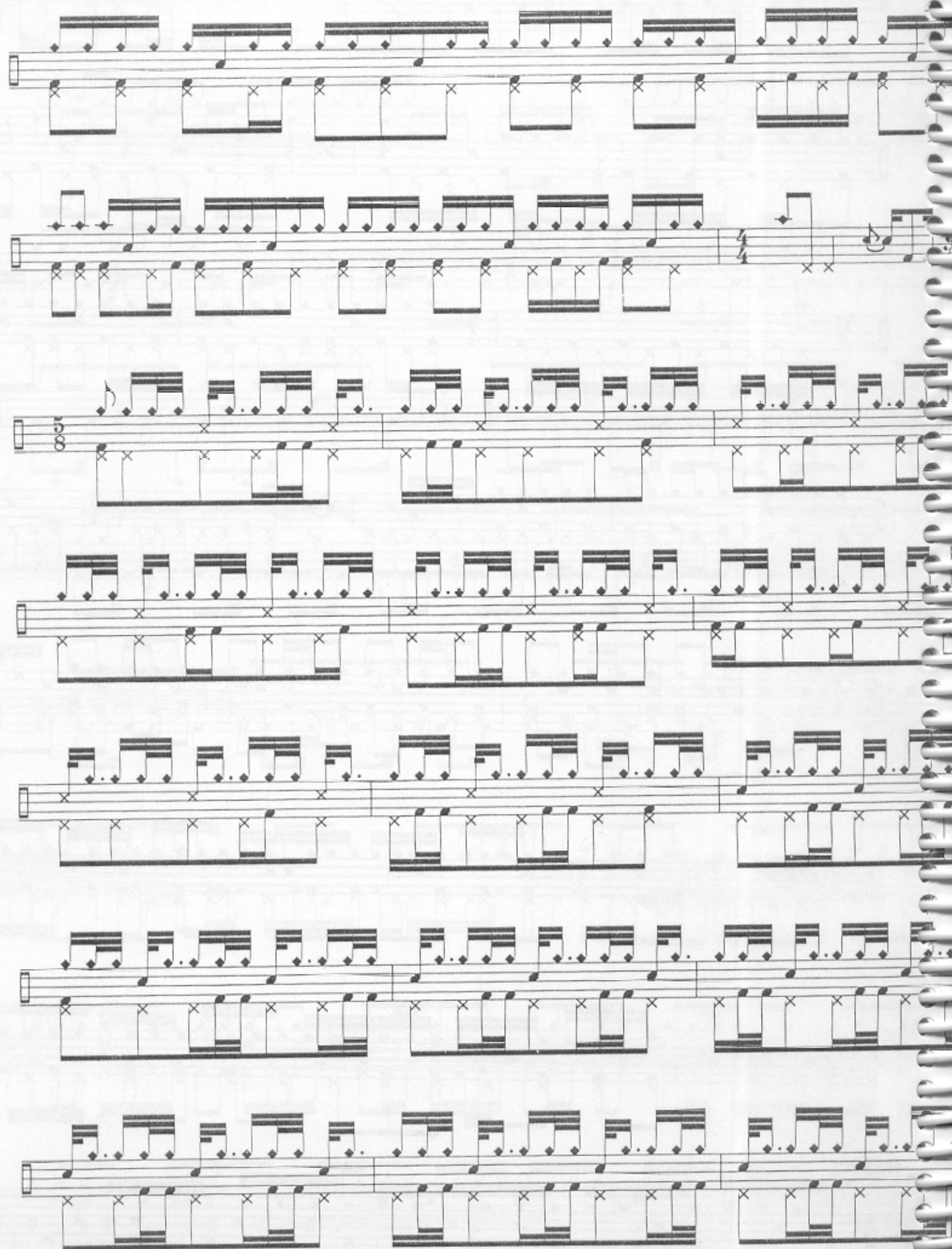
Xylophone

The musical score consists of ten staves. The first staff begins with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings like accents (>) and slurs. The second staff features a series of eighth notes with accents. The third staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The fourth staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The fifth staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The sixth staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The seventh staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The eighth staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The ninth staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs. The tenth staff has a series of eighth notes with slurs.

Free form, no meter

This page contains ten staves of musical notation, likely for guitar. The notation is complex, featuring many 'x' marks which typically represent fretted notes or specific techniques in guitar notation. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The subsequent staves show various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and some staves have a '6' in the bottom left corner, possibly indicating a 6/4 time signature. The notation is dense and spans across the page.

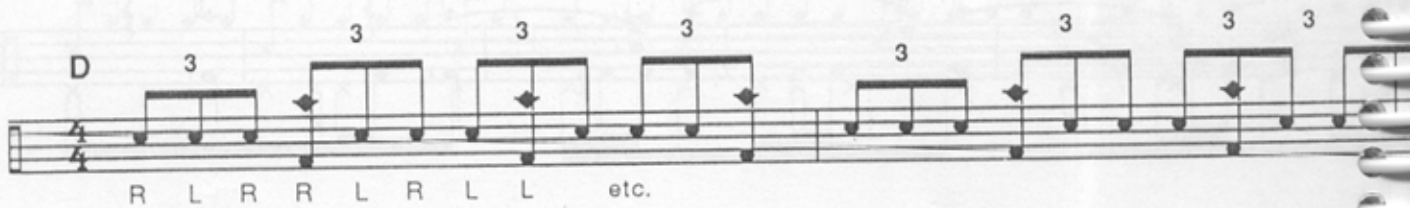
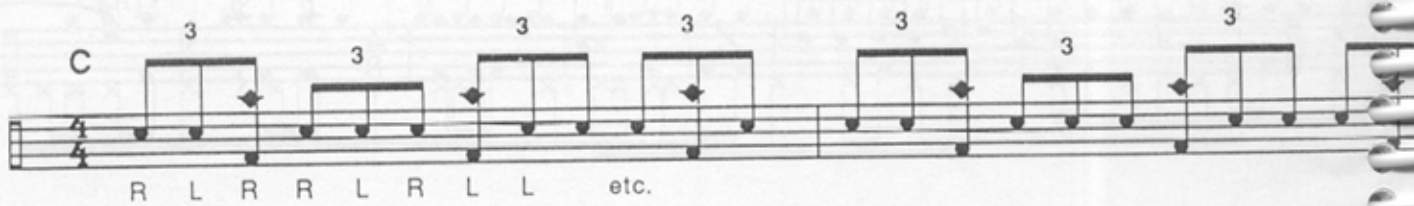
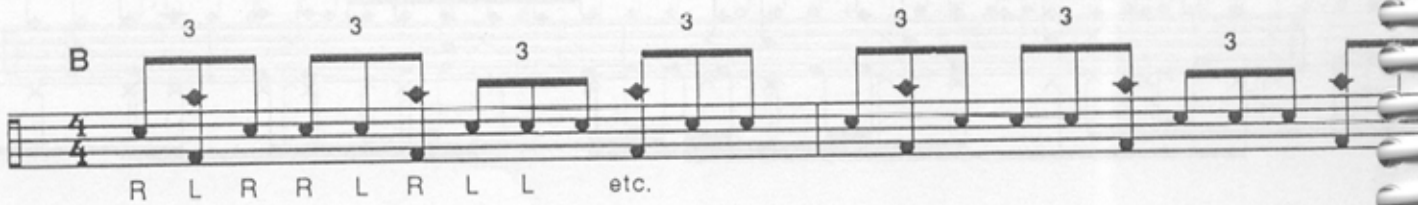
This page of musical notation is a guitar score consisting of eight staves. The notation is a mix of treble and bass clefs. The first two staves are in bass clef. The third staff changes to a 3/4 time signature. The fourth staff changes to a 4/4 time signature. The fifth staff changes to a 3/4 time signature. The sixth staff changes to a 15/8 time signature. The seventh staff has a repeat sign. The eighth staff ends with a double bar line and a sharp sign. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including triplets, sixteenth notes, and eighth notes. There are also some dynamic markings like accents and a crescendo hairpin.



The image displays a musical score for guitar, organized into five systems. Each system consists of two staves: a standard musical staff with a treble clef and a guitar-specific staff below it. The guitar staff uses 'x' marks to denote fret positions for each string. The musical notation includes a variety of note values (eighth, sixteenth, and quarter notes), rests, and articulation marks such as accents (>) and slurs. The fifth system concludes with a double bar line. The overall style is that of a technical exercise or a short piece for guitar.

EXERCISES

Here's the familiar paradiddle in triplet form. The accent, which has been put in the bass drum and crash cymbals (left and right), moves back one note in each exercise.



A simple and effective variation calls for replacing all right-hand snare drum notes with right-hand floor tom notes. Exercise A would become:



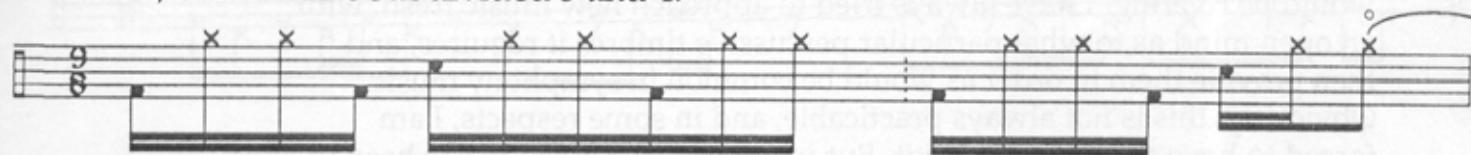
B E E L Z E B U B

"See deep enough and you see musically; the heart of nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it."

—Thomas Carlyle

By 1978, after several years of watching and observing how other people did it, I decided to take the plunge and form my own group. Allan Holdsworth (guitar), Dave Stewart (keyboards), and Jeff Berlin (bass) brought with them to the music a very high level of technical competence, and we dispatched "Beelzebub," our first recorded effort, with considerable bravado and only a few mistakes.

The main reason I formed a group was to provide a vehicle for my own compositions. I felt my drumming had always been at its best when I was able to design the setting in which it would be heard, and it seemed a short distance from that to the completion of the whole composition. In fact, I was to learn very shortly that writing for a small group is an exhausting and difficult technique, but for now, my sights were set on an unusual 9/8 drum line subdivided 5 and 4:



With "Beelzebub," I wanted to split the group into two halves of equal strength, with the top line melody in one meter and the rhythm section unrelated in another. The principle theme has three phrases only, A-B-A, with B being the same as A, only the notes are played in reverse order. There is nothing at all new about this sort of thing. These are standard, everyday techniques in more advanced forms of music. There are three demands for the bridge section: (a) that the staccato nature of the melody so far should give way to something more legato over a richer harmonic background; (b) that the rhythm section should find a variation on its pattern for purposes of contrast; and (c) that both halves of the group should converge here and play in the same meter. The solution to (b) provided the solution to (c): the 9/8 figure would extend itself to 12/8 subdivided 5, 4, and 3. A look at the full score of this piece should make this clearer. (The score follows the drum part.)

The actual instruments employed for percussion in any group or orchestra often are determined as much by transport costs and



performance space as by the wishes of the percussionist. My own group was obviously not going to be party to such generous funding as a

King Crimson or a Genesis, especially if it persisted in playing music like "Beelzebub," so at its onset, I decided to forgo the elaborate back and side racks of additional percussion that I had carted around the world with me in former groups, and moved instead to the quick, clean "clang" of the then relatively new RotoToms. Somehow, the middle range tom-toms on an ordinary kit stared back mournfully at me as I sat down to play, and defied me to extract anything startling from them. But with my flat-mounted RotoToms, they looked as if what they had to say would be riveting! I have always tried to approach new music fresh, with an open mind as to what particular percussive timbres it requires, and then provide them to order as would be common in symphony music. Obviously, this is not always practicable, and in some respects, I am forced to have a regular drumkit. But in general, the attitude has been to let the music dictate the percussion instruments rather than vice versa. Even though I am ostensibly a drumset player, my thinking is more in keeping with that of a European symphony percussionist.

Trying to write a piece of music and bring it to life for other musicians and to elicit their best effort to make the thing work can be arduous, but it is a very useful exercise for drummers. They will have to understand the other participants' skills and tastes, strong points and weak spots, individual problems, likes and dislikes, and focus the attention of the group on the one goal of getting music to occur. It gives them distance from and objectivity towards their own contributions, and they'll find out all sorts of things about their own musical characters extremely quickly. This is not for the feint-hearted, but extremely rewarding when it all works.

This page of musical notation is a single system for a piano piece, consisting of ten staves. The notation is complex, featuring a variety of rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) at the beginning and *ff* (fortissimo) later on. The piece changes time signatures several times: 9/8, 5/8, 4/8, 12/8, 6/4, and 3/4. There are also repeat signs and a final cadence. The notation includes many 'x' marks, likely indicating fingerings or specific articulation points. The overall style is that of a technical exercise or a piece from a 20th-century repertoire.