

NOT What to Play!

A Drummer's Guide to Crafting a Drum Part

By Denny Seiwell

Foreword by **Paul McCartney**



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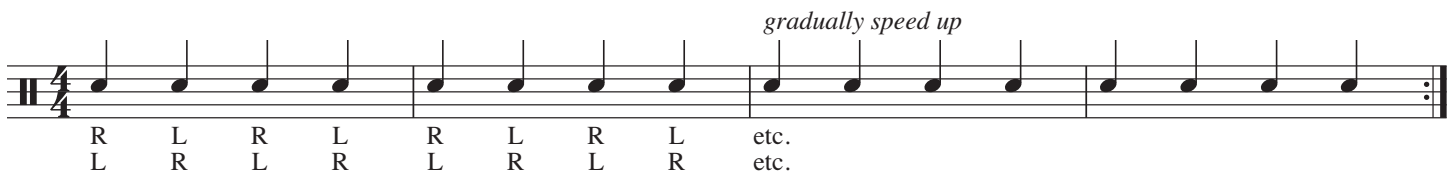
During the many years I've been playing and teaching drums, I always wanted to simplify the original 26 Standard Drum Rudiments (now included in the Percussive Arts Society's 40 International Rudiments) into the strokes I felt were necessary in order to actually play the instrument. By trial and error, I came up with the following concept that employs all of the necessary strokes you must learn. I believe that if you spend just 10 minutes each day working on the following lessons, it will greatly improve your overall drumming.

LESSON 1: SINGLE-STROKE ROLL

Let's produce our first stroke: the single-stroke roll. First, place the tip of the stick on the head and lift the stick to approximately eight inches above the drum. Bring the stick down, using the hinging motion just described, and return immediately to the up position. When alternating strokes, the right stick (or dominant stick—this would be the left if you're left-handed) strikes the drum and rebounds to a position a few inches above the head. When the left (right) stick comes down, the right stick goes from the low position to the full-up position.

If you're right-handed, your left hand is most likely the weaker of the two. Don't worry, as the following exercises are written to help improve the weaker hand. Start slowly, and increase the speed of the single strokes (RLRLRL) without tensing up in the arms or hands. If tension occurs at a faster speed, stop and start again. Try to produce an even sound with each stick.

The following exercise is the very first thing you must learn in order to start gaining control of the stick bounce.



The exercise is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It consists of four measures of music. The first two measures each contain four quarter notes, alternating between the right and left hands (R, L, R, L). The third measure contains four quarter notes, also alternating (R, L, R, L), with the instruction "gradually speed up" written above it. The fourth measure contains four quarter notes, alternating (R, L, R, L), with "etc." written below it. Below the staff, the strokes are labeled: R, L, R, L, R, L, R, L, etc. etc.

LESSON 2: TWO- OR DOUBLE-STROKE ROLL

Now that we have a grip, stick path, and the ability to stroke from the wrist (not the arm), we must now learn how to control the bounce and stop the sticks. To help achieve this, let's learn the two-stroke roll (also referred to as the double-stroke roll). This stick stroke was taught to me by using the phrase "mama (RR) dada (LL)."

Start by dropping the right stick on the drumhead and letting it bounce just once to produce the second stroke. Make sure you stop the stick after the second note is heard ("mama"). Next, produce the same stroke with the left hand, making sure to stop the bounce after the second note ("dada"). Learning to control the bounce can be challenging at first, but once mastered it will make your drumming much easier. It is the bounce stroke that allows the speed and ease of play.

In the following exercise we will learn how to bounce and control the sticks. As with the single-stroke roll, let's start by making the same stick path (8 to 12 inches) from the head or playing surface (practice pad). Starting with the right hand, make the initial stroke, and immediately follow it up with a bounce stroke. Do not produce both strokes with the wrist. The goal is to drop the stick lightly and allow it to bounce back up one time only (RR). Next, do the same with the left stick (LL). Then, alternate hand-to-hand (RRLl), accelerate slowly, and make sure each stroke is at the same volume level and timbre. As you get faster, the bounce will become easier, but remember to maintain equal space between the left- and right-hand up-and-down strokes. You are now on your way.



The exercise is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It consists of four measures of music. The first measure contains two groups of two eighth notes: "ma" (R, R) and "da-da" (L, L). The second measure contains two groups of two eighth notes: "ma-ma" (R, R) and "da-da" (L, L). The third measure contains two groups of two eighth notes: "ma-ma" (R, R) and "da-da" (L, L), with the instruction "gradually speed up" written above it. The fourth measure contains two groups of two eighth notes: "ma-ma" (R, R) and "da-da" (L, L), with "etc." written below it. Below the staff, the strokes are labeled: R R L L R R L L R R L L etc. L L R R L L R R etc.

UNCLE ALBERT/ADMIRAL HALSEY

This tune was recorded for the *Ram* album at CBS 52nd Street Studios in New York City. Paul first sang the lyrics and played the song on acoustic guitar so we could come up with our parts. The other guitar player on this session was Hugh McCracken.

This song required a lot of finesse. While rehearsing the song, Paul asked me to find an unusual drum part that would orchestrate the vocals rather than using just a normal beat. I found that using a figure between the snare, floor tom-tom, and hi-hat worked nicely for the verses, followed by a more traditional part on the choruses. The part needed to be played very lightly between the snare and hi-hat, with plenty of pauses for vocals.

Within several passes of the tune we had our parts worked out, and started recording. Usually, we never spent more than a few hours on any given tune. However, this tune had a second part with a tempo change and a new feel, and so I came up with an "English" (laid back) feel which worked well with the second section. After this section, the song breaks into a faster, third tempo before going back to the second tempo. Getting the feel of this tempo change took more time than just about anything else in the rehearsal. Finally, the third tempo comes back for the finale, and fades amongst "mad" drum fills.

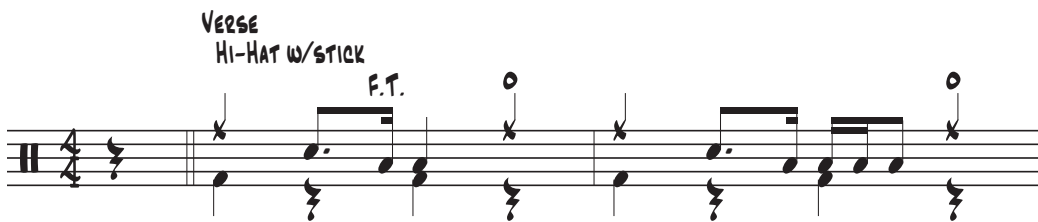
"Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" by Paul McCartney and Linda McCartney

From: *Ram* (1971)

Drummer: Denny Seiwell

Excerpt 1

VERSE
HI-HAT W/STICK F.T.



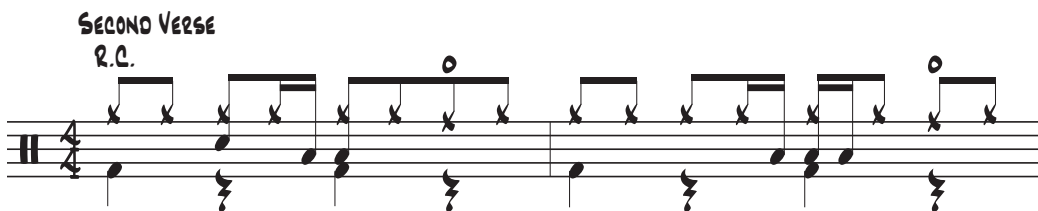
Excerpt 2

INSTRUMENTAL AFTER FIRST VERSE
H.H.



Excerpt 3

SECOND VERSE
R.C.



Excerpt 4

INTRO & TEMPO 3 ADMIRAL HALSEY
H.H.

