

# Alternative Sounds and Techniques on Drumset

BY MICHAEL GOULD NOTATION BY ANDY THOMPSON PHOTOS BY DAVID SMITH

Since the evolution of the drumset from its military origins to what it has become today, drumset players have always been searching for new and innovative ways to create interesting sounds or techniques. The earliest sit-down drumsets always included “traps” or sound-effect instruments to add optional sounds to live performance or silent movies.

This article illustrates alternative sounds that can be achieved on drumset using only the cymbals and drums common to a drumset, and not using any implement other than a drumstick. These techniques can open new frontiers of sound creation and technique on drumset, or any percussion instrument.

Each sound or technique has a description, a notation example, and an illustrative picture. The notation follows Norman Weinberg’s *Guide to Standardized Drumset Notation*, published by PAS. When using these techniques, it is important to include them in a legend to help guide the performer in realizing a composition or chart. To make the notation within this article as clear as possible, a limited amount of instruments were used. A crash and hi-hat cymbal illustrate the cymbal notation, while a snare drum, high tom-tom, and floor tom illustrate the drum notation.

These ideas will hopefully inspire all drumset players to seek their own sounds and techniques, and help produce more originality in future development of the drumset. The inspiration for this article comes from my own experimentation and a project I gave to my students at the University of Michigan.

## CYMBALS

**Harmonic Scrape:** The tip of the stick is lightly dragged along the circumference of a cymbal, creating a variety of harmonics. Changing the amount of pressure on the cymbal will produce a variety of different harmonic effects.



**Wooden Ride:** The left-hand stick is placed on a cymbal while the right-hand stick strikes the left stick. The angle and pressure of the left stick on the cymbal can dramatically alter the sound.



**Extreme Edge Flick:** The shoulder of the drumstick hits the facing edge of the cymbal at a 90-degree angle. The attitude of the stick produces a distinct attack sound combined with a high harmonic. A variety of different harmonics can be produced by changing the angle of the stick against the cymbal.

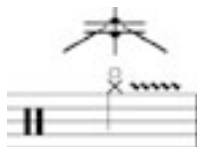


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**Hi-Hat Shake:** One or both sticks are placed between the opening of the top and bottom hi-hat cymbals. The performer moves the sticks in a vertical motion that alternatively strikes both cymbals, creating a “sizzle” effect.



**Wooden Hi-Hat:** A stick is held between the top and bottom cymbals while depressing the pedal with the foot.



**Cymbal Stab:** Strike the cymbal with a “stabbing” motion using the very tip of the stick. One may also leave the tip of the stick on the cymbal for a variety

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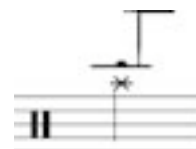
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ety of “sizzle” effects or to help produce a more “dry” sound.



**The Hammer:** The left-hand stick remains in the “Cymbal Stab” position

while the right stick strikes the butt of the left stick. This stroke is similar to hitting a nail with a hammer, and it produces a very dry and hard attack.



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**Mandolin Roll:** Two sticks are held in one hand and placed on top of and below the cymbal. A vertical wrist motion is used to produce a one-handed roll.



ing tom-tom. This may also be used to simultaneously strike two cymbals.



#### CYMBAL/DRUM COMBINATIONS

**Cymbal/Tom Bridge:** The shoulder of the tip of the stick hits a cymbal while the butt simultaneously hits a neighbor-

**Hi-Hat/Snare Click:** The shoulder of the stick strikes the hi-hat while the butt of the stick remains on the snare head. This may also be performed on a tom-tom with an adjacent cymbal.



#### DRUMS

**Rim Sweeps:** This stroke is similar to a cross-stick, in which the tip of the stick rests on the drumhead while the shaft strikes the rim. The Rim Sweep begins with the shaft or butt of the stick hitting the mounted high tom rim followed by the snare drum rim in a downward "sweeping" motion.



**Cymbal/Tom Stick Shot:** With the left-hand stick resting in a "stick shot" position on a tom-tom nearest a cymbal, the right hand strikes the left-hand stick. The pitch of the tom-tom can be fluctuated by applying pressure into the drumhead with the left-hand stick.



**Lion's Roar:** In a vertical position, the tip of the stick is placed against the

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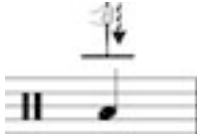
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head of the lowest tom-tom. Grip the stick as far as possible from the tip and slowly move your hand toward the tip of the stick. The friction of the hand moving down the stick creates a “growling” effect.



**Push Glissando:** This is performed in the same manner as a “cymbal stab,” except it is done on a drum. The tip of the stick pushes into the head to produce a *glissando* effect.



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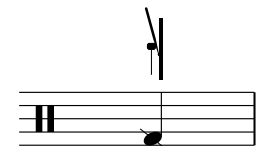
**Rim Rock, Rim Roll:** The “rim rock” leaves the tip of the stick on the head followed by a rocking motion into the rim and back to its starting position.



The “rim roll” uses one or two sticks to rapidly play between the rim and the drum head, which sounds like a closed roll (not pictured).



**Wooden Bass Drum:** Place a stick against the head of the bass drum and in front of the beater to produce a very dry, *staccato* sound.



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**Shell-Rim Roll:** With two sticks held in one hand, play on the rim and the drumshell in the same method as the "Mandolin Roll."



snare and the bottom head. This can produce a wide variety of "scrapes," "pops," and "muffles."



**Snare Kanjira:** With the snares off, use your fingers to play on both the



**Dead Strokes:** Press the stick into the head or cymbal immediately on contact (not pictured).



Contributors to this article include Tim Brown, Dan DeSena, Dan Fineberg, Jonathan Ovalle, Andy Thompson, and Lindsay Williams. Anyone interested in contributing other alternative sounds or techniques on drumset can send an e-mail to [gould@umich.edu](mailto:gould@umich.edu).

**Michael Gould** is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Michigan. He has toured nationally as percussionist/drumset specialist with the Dallas Brass and can be heard on the Seabreeze label with jazz artist Miles Osland. Additional credits include performing with Marvin Stamm, Alan Vizutti, a national tour of the musical *Big*, the Lexington Philharmonic, Nevada Symphony, and the Las Vegas Percussion Quartet. Gould is a member of the PAS Pedagogy Committee. **PN**



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