

JAZZ DRUMSET ETUDES

A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING SOLO TECHNIQUES AND MELODIC VOCABULARY • VOL. 1

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HOW TO USE THE BOOK

Jazz Drumset Etudes, Volume 1 is divided into three sections, each containing 20 studies that focus on a variety of musical approaches and concepts. While every etude presents a different challenge and underlying structure, each individual etude revolves around a unique musical statement in order to form a sense of musical continuity. Before you proceed, it is important to understand how the three sections are related.

Section 1

When sitting behind the drumset it is very easy to feel the urge, or the obligation, to hit every drum and cymbal at least once just because it is there. Additionally, as drummers gain more experience they begin to form habits or routine drum fills without being fully aware whether or not their drumming choices fit the music. In order to work on breaking these habits and start thinking musically, every etude in Section 1 is written for the snare drum. The challenge of this section is to make each etude sound as musical as possible on one drum. This means exploring various tones, sounds, and effects to add variety to what could be considered a monotonous, mechanical snare drum exercise.

For starters, play each etude without accompaniment from the hi-hat or bass drum. Then, add the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4 throughout. Once the etude can be played with ease, practice feathering the bass drum on every quarter note, without the hi-hat. Next, play the bass drum on every quarter note *and* the hi-hat on 2 and 4. Finally, use any other foot ostinato to accompany the snare drum melody. No matter how you choose to accompany yourself, the main focus must be on making music.

Section 2

Traditionally, the main two components of the drumset were the snare drum and bass drum. Section 2 expounds upon the same etudes from Section 1 by orchestrating them between the bass drum and snare drum. Each of these etudes has been composed with a dialog in mind—a conversation between the two drums. Practice slowly to work out any technical issues and listen for the melodic content. These can be practiced with or without the hi-hat on 2 and 4.

Section 3

This section takes all 20 etudes from Section 1 and orchestrates them for a standard four-piece drum kit with a main ride cymbal and an additional cymbal on the left side. Some of the rhythms have been slightly altered to promote a better flow around the kit. Many of these etudes were written with the essence of classic jazz drummers in mind, such as “Papa” Jo Jones, Shelly Manne, Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, Mel Lewis, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams. But to really study jazz drumming, there is no substitute for simply listening to these drummers for hours and hours.

Each etude should be practiced at a variety of tempi. As with any piece of music that is being studied, it always helps to start at a slow tempo and gradually increase the speed. Here are some ways to get more out of all the etudes in the book:

1. Vary the style/interpretation (i.e., play the etude with a swing feel or with an even eighth feel).
2. Change the dynamics (i.e., invert the written dynamics—play *piano* whenever there is a *forte*).

3. As detailed in the Section 1 explanation, use different feet ostinati, but apply them to any of the exercises to maximize their usefulness. You can:
- As written, play the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4.
 - Play quarter notes on the bass drum with the hi-hat on 2 and 4.
 - Play quarter notes on the bass drum with no hi-hat.
 - Play a Samba bass drum pattern.
 - Create your own.
4. Use Section 1 and Section 2 to practice comping.
5. Practice simply “playing time” and then use any phrase as a solo idea.
6. Use any phrase as a springboard for your own ideas.
7. Add embellishments such as flams and ruffs.
8. Use any of the etudes to work on sight-reading skills.
9. Sing each etude!

No matter which approach you use to practice these etudes, always strive to play musically.

Recording yourself is one of the best ways to improve. Listen for things like rhythmic/dynamic accuracy, consistency of tempo, musical shading, and the “feel” of how each note moves to the next. Do your phrases have a legato flow to them, similar to how a horn player would phrase? Many of these etudes are written using musical forms, such as blues, Rhythm Changes, or other AABA song forms. In writing these etudes, I often had the style of certain horn players or prominent jazz drummers in mind.

Because the world of rhythm is so vast, this first volume of etudes is limited to rhythms that are no shorter than an eighth note. Additional volumes will delve into further subdivisions, such as triplets, sixteenth notes, and beyond.

DRUM LEGEND

Bass Drum	Floor Tom	Snare Drum	Snare Drum R/L rim shot	Snare Drum cross-stick or rim shot	Small Tom	Hi-Hat w/foot	Hi-Hat closed	Hi-Hat open	Ride Cymbal	Crash Cymbal

1 The first two etudes use basic on-the-beat quarter notes and off-the-beat eighth notes. It is very important to focus on rhythmic accuracy while still maintaining a relaxed swing feel. Also, please pay close attention to the indicated dynamics.

1 *f*

5 *Fine*

9 *p*

13 *f* *D.C. al Fine*

2

1st x *cresc.*
2nd x *dim.*

5 1.

9 2.

13 *f* *p*

17 *f* *p*

21 *dim. to the end*

10 This etude uses space to add surprise. Additionally, some phrases start later than expected, making the melody more interesting.

5

10

15

20

11 This melody is pretty cut and dry with a simple AABA form. Take note of the melodic contour that is created by integrating the bass drum at the end of the main motif.

R/L

R/L

R/L

R/L Rim Shot

Fine

R/L

D.C. al Fine

