

ACCENTS and SECONDARY or SUB-ACCENTS

One of the principle results of the use of Linear Rhythm Concept is the creation of accent lines, with syncopation often the natural result. This is very desirable for musicians who want to create tension and "imbalance" in their lines, in order to facilitate that forward push that characterises this music.

The primary accent is most often the first event in the cell. If you are numbering them, it is always 1, similar to the beat count of a measure. That is not necessarily a given; for example, when drummers play a full-set linear phrase, they often use the hi-hat as the first event, and that has far less impact than the following snares, toms and kick drums that follow.

Example:

33334

Rlkr Lkr l krlk Rlkk

where the R/r is on the hi-hat, except on beat 4 where it goes to the snare and becomes a primary accent, the l is the snare, played very softly (ghost notes) except on beat 2 where it is the other primary accent [fatback: 2 & 4].

However, for now we are going to work with the concept of event 1 as the primary accent, for we can build more elaborate lines with this.

The three-cell and the four-cell are most typically expressed with only one accent, the primary one. We will look at some ways to manipulate the four-cell later.

The five-cell, and the more event-full cells (haha) very often have secondary accents, or sub-accents. When I teach a drummer to play a five-sticking, the first one I teach is the RLRL sticking. Try it, it's fun! (Until your wife tells you to stop beating on the table...)

I use a double-left at the end because most drummers (myself included) are right-handed, and need work on the left-hand more than the right. In any case, the result is that there is a "2/3" feeling to the five, made obvious if you accent the right-hand over the left as you play it.

If you have the new "Five Peace Band" CD with John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Christian McBride, Kenny Garrett and Vinnie Coluta, the first cut on the first disc starts out with McLaughlin playing a 55545 pattern on the guitar. On this cut, his five-cell is sub-divided into a "3/2" phrase. By the way, if you DON'T have this CD, hurry up and get it, make copies, put the original away and put copies in all of your CD players. Good for the head, good for inspiration!

This being McLaughlin, it soon turns into a huge syncopation against a 12/8 phrase that gets subdivided in all kinds of ways by the time they are through. Every once in a while the 55545 comes back as a counterpoint to the more jammed-out rhythms.

The six-cell can be divided in a few ways. Again, coming back to the sticking for that number, the RLRLRL produces a secondary accent on the third event, with the potential for either two accents back-to-back or a less-emphasised accent on the second of the two R strokes. Both are achievable with training.

That six-cell can of course be divided into 3/3, but then the six feeling is lost. Placing an accent on event five creates a "4/2" subdivision, the reverse of the "2/4" expressed above.

Seven-cells become even more interesting, as they lend themselves to two sub-accents.

The sticking I begin with is RLRLRL, where events three and five are accented in a "2/2/3" subdivision. I use this all the time on drums; it's very hip and syncopates easily with every interesting results.

Check out the old standard "Fascinatin' Rhythm", which uses a large 77774 spread out over four bars (32 8th notes). The melody is not an obvious seven-cell, but does have the "2/2/3" feel to a degree. Using a rest as the last event in a cell is another way to create the feeling of separation between the cells, as long as it's consistent, as it is in "Fascinatin' Rhythm".

Obviously seven-cells can be expressed as "3/2/2" and "2/3/2" as well.

To work with this, take any example from "Linear Picking Examples 1" and add the sub-accents. Notice that the middle column gives you the typical sub-accents as downstrokes, similar to the stickings described above. You can also work with extended phrases, like the 77774 used above, or some of the other 32 phrases previously described (article 1).

A third way of working with the phrases is to run a continuous loop, keeping repeating linear cells running and allowing beats to meet when they meet. This takes practice, but is doable once you are working with extended phrases anyway.

CELL-GROUP LOGIC

As you might be beginning to suspect, the real power of this system is in the creation and creative use of cells. Thus, it falls to us to begin to understand how to design a cell "set", i.e., a group of cells that have cell "integrity", or the same sense of starting and ending for each cell to define them.

Linear drumming is melodic, but in terms of actual "notes", there are only a few to work with (hh, snare, rak toms, floor toms, kick drums and cymbals). For us as guitarists, we are trying to interpret these with very different parameters.

To frame a linear cell for guitar, or any melodic instrument, we have to use the basic melodic parameters to define them. These are the basic choices an improviser has - to play the same note (repeated note, like RR or LL for drummers), play nothing (the use of an 8th-note rest in the Giant Steps exercises, for example), go up, or go down.

It is in these choices that we form our relationships between cells in a cell-set. If I start a cell with the highest note in the grouping, and end with the lowest note, I have begun to define the cells in relationship to each other.

Sub-accents come into play in the larger cell numbers here as well. A three-cell in our example would have to go HIGH-MIDDLE-LOW to meet our conditions defined above. The four-cell might allow for a flip, like HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, SECOND-HIGHEST, LOWEST, but otherwise must begin high and end low. This SECOND-HIGHEST as the third event could be used as a secondary accent, although it can get kind of simplistic (sounding like a string of "2"s).

Once we get to the five-cell, however, we can play with the "2/3" or "3/2" choices more.

Examples:

HIGHEST, MIDDLE, SECOND-HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, LOWEST (2/3)
HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, SECOND-HIGHEST, MIDDLE, LOWEST (2/3)
HIGHEST, MIDDLE, SECOND-LOWEST, SECOND-HIGHEST, LOWEST (3/2)
HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, MIDDLE, SECOND-HIGHEST, LOWEST (3/2)

These can also be done with four notes:

HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, SECOND-HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, LOWEST (2/3)
HIGHEST, SECOND-HIGHEST, SECOND-LOWEST, SECOND-HIGHEST, LOWEST (3/2)
where the second-highest is accented as event four.

This kind of logic can be carried over into the six-cells and seven-cells as well, with some experimentation and experience.

For larger cells, like the six- and seven-cell, the Giant Steps patterns can be used to create some interesting melodic cells. For these examples, we will use the scale degree numbers to define the patterns (GS 1 is 1235, 1234531 for example).

The 1235 grouping here will really only work as a four-cell, but the four-beat GS 1 grouping can be turned into a six-cell. By looping 123453, and simply starting the group over when returning to 1, the six-cell sound becomes clear. This works with 135432 as well.

By the way, one way to get more "juice" out of a four-cell is to displace it, or begin it in a different rhythmic place in the time. By shifting a 1235 grouping to begin on the & of four, then & of two, you create a feeling of anticipation that will flow with the harmony. This can be done with all the Giant Steps Exercises. Other displacements also produce interesting results.

GS 3 & 4 two-beat have three notes, the ascending or descending triad (135, 531) to form a simple three-cell, and the four-beat groups (12345678 & 87654321) can be edited to produce seven-cells (1234567, 7654321). GS 5 & 6 two beat turn into three-cells if you loop them (123, 321), and the four-beat cells produce seven-cells (1231345, 1321345).

Examine the rest of the Giant Steps Exercises and see what you can dig out of them. Play various chord types with them, or sequence them through scales (kind of like going up or down the harmonized scale for that key or chord).

You can also experiment with adding rests to phrases to get cells, like 1235(rest) for a five-cell. Remember to be consistent!

ALIGNING LINEAR CELLS AND HARMONIC PROGRESSION (ANTICIPATION)

As you begin to work more with linear cells, you will find yourself producing longer and more intricate phrases of linear lines. One consequence of this is that you will begin to have to contend with the underlying harmony. Playing groupings of five harmonically will offset your melody-harmony relationship, and force you to choose between being late leaving a previous chord or being early moving to a new chord.

Jazz and American Music rely heavily on the concept of anticipation, the notion of arriving ahead of rhythmic expectation. This typically occurs an 8th note ahead of a new chord change. This pushy tilting of the rhythm structure moves the beat along and provides an almost-constant rhythmic tension that is indigenous to American Music.

Thus, the obvious decision here is to work with making your changes at appropriate times AHEAD of the upcoming chord change.

When working out exercises, this can be planned ahead. For example, in our previous 77774, the second seven-cell would occur an 8th-note before the onset of measure two, and if that is a new chord, it would invite anticipation. The third seven-cell would fall on the fourth beat of measure two, inviting a quarter-note anticipation into the third measure and potential chord change. You would begin the fourth seven-cell on the and-of-three of measure three, bringing in the fourth chord change on bar four a full dotted-quarter-note early. The four-cell acts as a cadence, bringing you around to the beginning of the four-measure cycle again.

Be aware that on this level you will be practicing things that seem virtually impossible to improvise. Two thoughts here. First, your first exposure to these new complexities can be overwhelming. So what else is new? Second, as you move to higher and higher levels of playing, you begin to realize that the more difficult

the task you set in practice, the easier everything is in your day-to-day normal playing. This also helps to develop that long-term patience required to be a jazz musician with a life.

I have also found that, given time, the impossible becomes possible, and the possible becomes the new standard. I do things now that I never thought I would be able to, and yet I can perceive vistas that seem completely unobtainable from where I am now. which is half the fun.

Of course, the primary way this will get into your playing is through the exposure of your ideas to your ears; thus, listen to the ideas as you play them, and find players that use this technology. I have already mentioned McLaughlin & Corea, and there are lots of others who have played and still play with these concepts in all kinds of ways.

As always, if you or any of your team are caught and questioned, I will deny any knowledge of your existence....

peace - f