

# Stick Control

By George Lawrence Stone, Revisited by Bob Armstrong

Many years ago I was told by one of my teachers to get a copy of the book "Stick Control" by George Lawrence Stone. Although I found at the time some of the stickings useful I actually found the work quite boring. The reasons for this were that I (or anybody else for that matter) didn't know how to use the book and also that everything emanated from the snare drum (which I must add is important but with a difference).

The book at the time was known as one of the "Berklee Bibles" and it compares in degree of difficulty with the 'Arban Tutor for Cornet' (ask any cornet player). If you don't own a copy of this classic book, I thoroughly recommend that you treat yourself to one. I would like to share with you some of the possibilities of this fascinating book if you have not thought of it already.

**It is very important that you do follow the guidelines laid down by the author, that way you will gain maximum benefit. Don't ignore this fact.**

What follows is only an approach that you might find interesting. If you don't like it or you feel uncomfortable on any particular idea then reject it. I am not saying "this is what you have to do". They are only ideas. The important thing is that if you are into something, go and paint your own pictures.

First and foremost the exercises are designed as "chop" builders and to give you fluency going in and out of different sticking formats. **Your main priority as a drummer is to play everything in time** so work with a click track or metronome with every exercise. Below is exercise one on page five:



"Nothing too much interesting here" you might think? But wait!

As you can see the sticking is very simple at this stage, also there are no accents. Your task here is to get each stroke that you play the same volume as the one before it and that all the notes are evenly spaced apart. Start at a moderate tempo and not too loud. As you feel yourself gain control of the exercise take things a little faster and start to apply more dynamics, from quiet to very loud and back again!! Dynamic control is a must. These are the only rules, from here on, you are limited only by the bounds of your imagination.

Next, and I hope this is obvious, get the thing moving round the kit. The more tonal changes that you hear going on the better. Don't just stay on the snare. As you move from drum to drum try to hear that you have got a very even balance on each instrument. All of the exercises to start with are written as 1/8th notes so it is here that we can begin to experiment. Take each sticking through the following rhythmic formations. The rules that have gone before still apply.

The following examples are using exercise 6 on page 5 of the book. When you feel more comfortable add bass drum in four, hi hat 2 and 4:

- A. As written 8th notes
- B. 8th note triplets
- C. 16th notes
- D. Quintuplets (five 16ths in the time of four 16ths)
- E. Sextuplets (six 16ths in the time of four 16ths)
- F. Septuplets (seven 16ths in the time of four 16ths)
- G. 32nd notes

The image displays eight staves of drum notation, labeled A through H, in 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a 4/4 time signature and a repeat sign. The notation consists of quarter notes with stems, and some notes have a bracket above them with a number indicating a specific stick control pattern or fingering. The patterns are as follows:

- A:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L
- B:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L (with a '3' above the first R of each group)
- C:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L
- D:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L (with a '5' above the first R of each group)
- E:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L (with a '6' above the first R of each group)
- F:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L (with a '7' above the first R of each group)
- G:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L
- H:** R L L R | L R R L | R L L R | L R R L (with a '3' above the first R of each group)

When things start to feel good try running the groups together, for example:

The image shows a single staff of drum notation in 4/4 time, combining elements from the previous staves. It starts with a 4/4 time signature and a repeat sign. The notation is as follows:

R L L R | L R R L | L R R L | L R R L (with a '3' above the first R of each group)

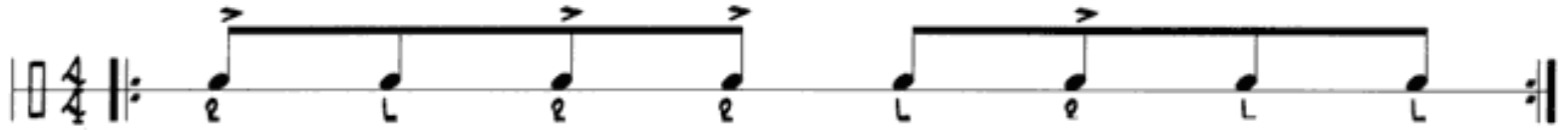
R L L R | L R R L | L R R L | L R R L (with a '5' above the first R of each group)

At this point it is important for us to discover that in every exercise there are two separate patterns going on, a right hand pattern and a left hand pattern.

Starting on the snare, "ghost" (play very lightly) the left hand notes and accent the right hand pattern.

The next group of examples are from EX.5 Pg 1.

**Example No.1 In 8th notes showing the R.H accents**



**Example No.2 In 16th notes showing the R.H accents**



**Example No.3 In 8th note triplets showing the R.H accents (this runs over two bars)**



**Example No.4 In 16th note triplets showing the R.H accents**

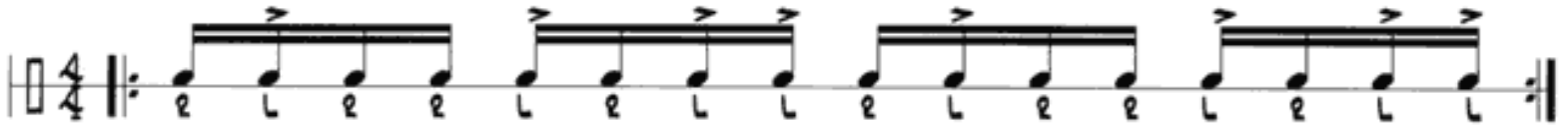


Now lets have a look at the same groupings showing the L.H accents

**Example No.1 In 8th notes showing L.H accents**



Example No.2 In 16th notes showing L.H accents



Example No.3 In 8th note triplets showing L.H accents



Example No.4 In 16th note triplets showing L.H accents



**REMEMBER!!!** As soon as you feel comfortable get these accents moving round the kit.

These ideas work, so if you are coming up with an idea then get some time playing going, either jazz or rock, it's up to you. Play for a few bars and then incorporate your idea into a fill. Try to hear a musical line/phrase as you play as opposed to just 'thrashing around'. Think musically.

Now lets try linking a Right hand pattern with a Left hand pattern. Have Fun!!

**Example No.1 Exercise 6. Pg 5. In 8th note triplets**



**Example No.2 Exercise 6 Pg 5. In 16th notes**



**Example No.3 Exercise 6. Pg 5. In 16th note triplets**



The following examples show the right hand pattern played on the ride cymbal with the bass drum in unison with the right hand, (left hand on snare 'ghosted').

**Example1. Ex 6. Pg 1. In 8th note triplets**



**Example No.2 Two bar combination Ex 65. & Ex 66. Pg 7. First bar in 16th notes, second bar in 16th note triplets.**

Example No. 3. Two bar combination Ex 24. Pg 1.  
First bar quintuplets, second bar 8th note triplets

Example No. 3. Two bar combination Ex 24. Pg 1.  
First bar quintuplets, second bar 8th note triplets

Example No. 4 Combination of Ex's 6. & 7. In seven eight time

Example No. 4 Combination of Ex's 6. & 7. In seven eight time

Example No. 5 Combination of Ex's 5. & 6. In seven eight time

Example No. 5 Combination of Ex's 5. & 6. In seven eight time

Example No. 6 Combination of Ex's 6. & 7. In nine eight time

Example No. 6 Combination of Ex's 6. & 7. In nine eight time

Example No. 6 Combination of Ex's 6. & 7. In nine eight time

Here are some other ideas you might like to ponder over!

Example No.1 Exercise 5. 16th note groove idea. (the B.D line is only a guide, not compulsory)

Example No.2 Exercise 6. Pg 5. 16th note groove idea

Example No 3. Combination of Ex's 5 & 6. Pg 5. 16th note groove idea

Example No 4. Ex 5. Pg 5. Played over two bars with the second bar played backwards by one 16th note, (Beat Displacement).

Example No 5. Ex 24. Pg 5. In triplets, Jazzy fill, right and left hands in unison, and Bass Drum in the spaces.



**Example No 6. Ex 217. Pg 5. Samba feel.**

In the following example play all the rim shots on open Snare (no damping!!) and play about one to two inches from the rim with the shoulder of the stick so that you get a very high pitched ring. Very Brazilian!. Left hand in the centre of the drum, ghosted!. The right hand notes designated ^ to be played in the centre of the drum. Play Hi Hat on 2 & 4 and please note the Bass Drum accents! Very important for the Samba.



**Example No 7. Same pattern but play the floor tom on beat '3' in the first bar and the *an* of '2' and the *an* of '3' and beat '4' in the second bar. This introduces the 'Surdo'.**



**Example No 8. Same pattern but distributing some of the right hand notes to the Ride Cymbal.**



**Example No 9. Ex 1. Pg 5. Samba feel. Left hand plays between Hi Hat and Snare. Right hand between Ride Cymbal and Floor Tom.**



**Example No 10. Try the above patterns (and your own of course!) using the 'Baion' Bass Drum line. Play the High Hat on 2 and 4.**



There is tons of material in this book for you to discover. **BE BOLD, BE STRONG.**  
I can thoroughly recommend a look at some of the 3/8 exercises towards the back. These are great played across 4/4 and make very good solo material.

Don't take this book, or any other book for that matter, at it's face value. Read between the lines and see what else is there, you could be very suprised at what you find! Use your imagination, that way what you find and what you have to say will be yours and your identity.  
Have fun and good luck.

If I can be of help with this or any other problem then please feel free to contant me via email @:

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