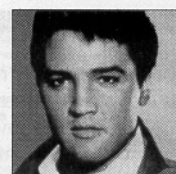


# DRUM MACHINE PROGRAMMING



NORMAN WEINBERG

## FORMAL IDEAS FOR BEAT PATTERNS

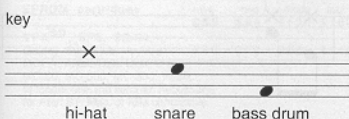
**N**O MATTER HOW MEMORABLE A drum groove might be, it can easily bore the listener if it's played over and over with no variation. This month, we'll look at how drummers combine simple patterns and variations to form phrases. Many drummers tend to think in terms of one- or two-bar patterns, but they usually make small changes to the beat

to create interest and construct phrases of different lengths.

Example 1 illustrates the AABA structure (using letters to signify identical measures). There is a good reason why this structure gives such a strong feeling of a four-bar phrase. Once the listener realizes that the second measure is an exact repeat of the first, they will expect this pattern to continue (a law of physics as well as musical perception). When the third bar changes rhythm, the listener will mentally group the first two measures together and start a new musical grouping. At first, one

might think that the fourth measure would be a repeat of the second, setting up a repetitive structure of two-bar phrases. But wait, the fourth measure is now a repeat of measure one. The

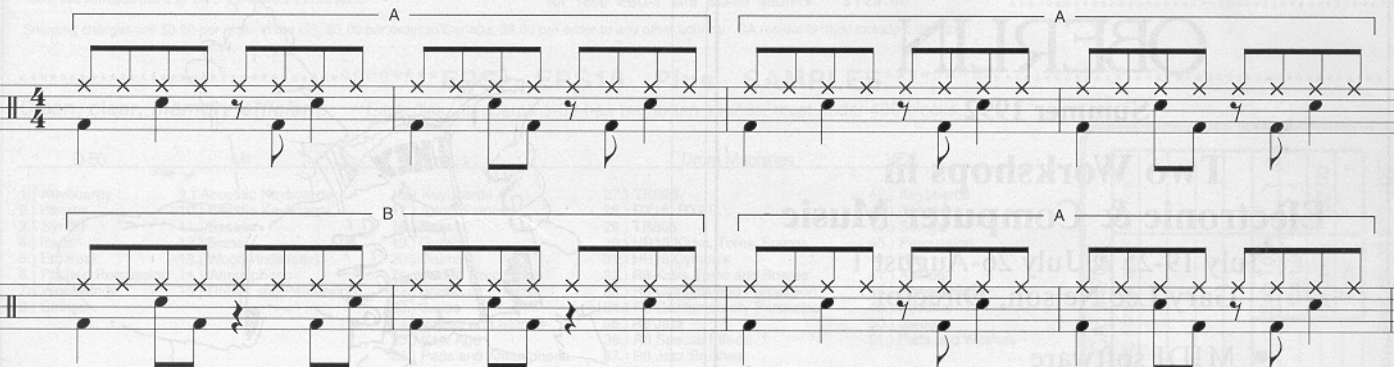
*Norman Weinberg teaches percussion and electronic music at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas. His latest book, The Electronic Drummer, is distributed by Hal Leonard Publishing.*



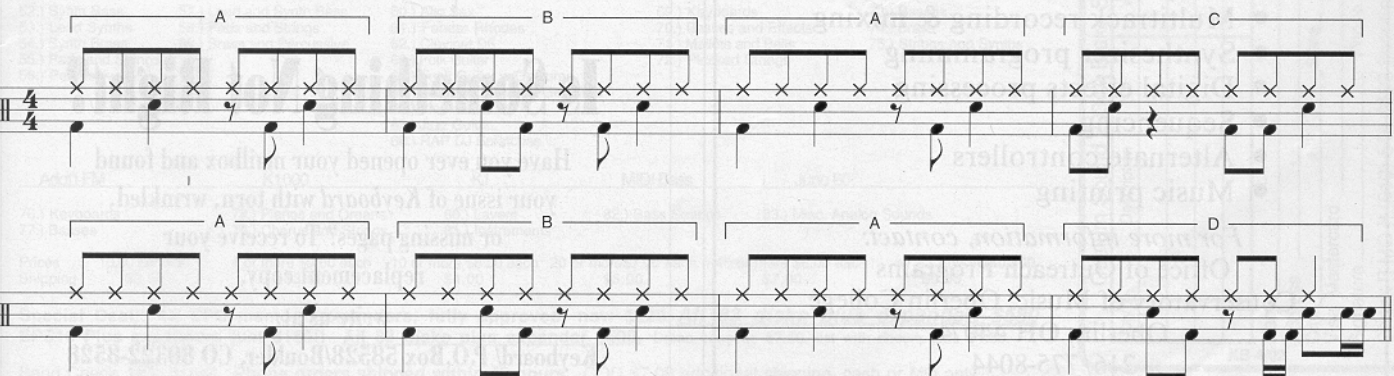
Ex. 1. Here is an example of a four-bar AABA structure.



Ex. 2. This exercise shows how the AABA form can be used in an eight-bar phrase.



Ex. 3. An even more complex eight-bar structure: ABACABAD.



## DRUM MACHINE PROGRAMMING

four-bar phrase is now heard as a single unit, as the listener relates the last measure to the first.

Example 2 shows how the same form can be used in an eight-bar phrase. Here, each A and B is two bars long. Note that in this phrase, the second bar of the A idea is a simple variation of the first. Both bars of the B section are also subtle variations of the first measure.

A more complex structure is shown in Example 3. This is an eight-bar phrase that could

be charted as ABACABAD. This structure establishes a strong degree of unity by returning to the "A" idea every other measure. Of course, this form could be expanded to a sixteen-bar phrase by starting with a two-measure pattern.

The most common formal design for a four- or eight-bar drum pattern is AAAB. More often than not, the B section will include a short fill that lets the listener (as well as the other musicians in the group) know that something new is about to happen. Fills are like signposts at the ends of phrases and generate a feeling of

forward motion and progression. Example 4 is a four-bar version of this type of structure.

As mentioned in last month's column, most rock and roll drummers tend to "drumstrate" their parts. They plan which beats will be played during the different verses or choruses. Instead of playing the same eight-bar phrase for each verse, they'll play slightly different variations of the basic groove to convey a sense of progression. The last example shows how a drummer might change a basic pattern during repetitions of a verse to increase energy and activity. ■

Ex. 4. More often than not, the B section of an AAAB pattern will include a short fill that signifies something new is about to happen. Here we have a four-bar version of this type of structure.



Ex. 5. Rather than sticking with the basic pattern during repetitions of the verse, try variations like these to increase energy.



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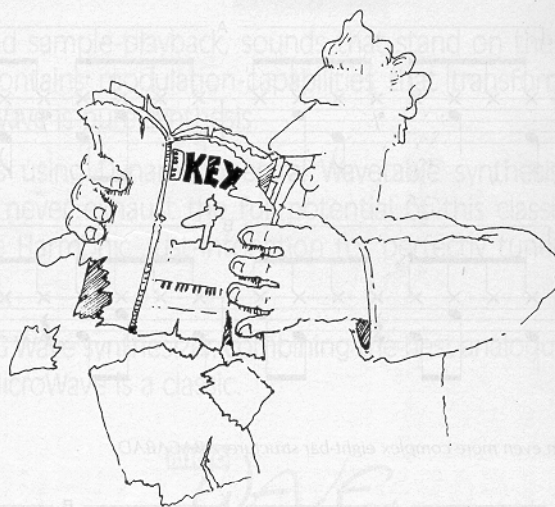
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