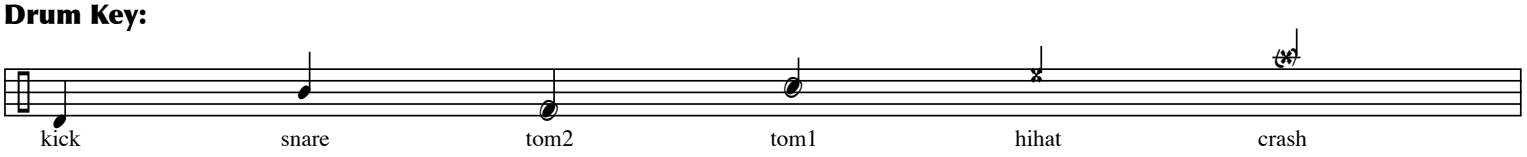
Module #14: Drum Fills (Intermediate)

Drum Key:



Fill Variations:

The next couple of pages are many variations based on a single rhythmic phrase. The phrase is 2 beats of time (whatever groove you want. It's just quarters for the sake of the PDF) and 2 beats of a fill. Again, in context you'll most likely be playing 4, 8, or 16 bars of time before actually playing a fill.

The fill in these examples is '3 & 4E&'. It's a very simple idea but it can be very effective and used in many different ways to accomplish the goal of connecting phrases, building intensity, tapering dynamically as you head into a softer section, or even out for a breakdown section, etc. One of the challenges is that it is so "simple" rhythmically. Simple can be a lot more difficult to make energetic, provide momentum and build intensity if it isn't played properly. Again, like most of the GrooveIsKing material, it's all about concept, the depth of an idea and how well it's executed. Again, go back and check out the tunes discussed in the last Microwave Module for examples of powerful, intense, effective, monumental and often simple fills that are played with the right energy, inspiration, emotion, and guts that make it so effective and sound so much bigger and like so much more than it is. It's all about intent and conviction.

CHECK LIST:

1. SOLID TIME:
First and foremost, the time needs to remain rock solid. Don't abandon your inner clock/pulse when you go to play a fill. This is a very common issue with inexperienced players. This can be caused by a number of reasons. Usually people get too wrapped up in their "awesome" fill while seeing how many heads turn to check out the moster drummer. Seriously though, it is common for players to be thinking so much about the fill that they get excited and rush the figures causing the feel to be lost. Losing the time and feel is about the worst thing that can happen during a fill...or ever. Be sure that when going back to a verse the energy and time doesn't drop. Also, don't let the exciting chorus jump 5 beats oer minute because of adrenaline. Really strive to keep the tune solid and really monitor this on transitions as this is typically where that happens.

2. MUSICAL APPROPRIATENESS:
Be sure that the fill is musically appropriate. Don't ram as many notes as possible, as loud as you can during a tender ballad. Don't play an Allan Holdsworth fill in a Rolling Stones tune. These are obvious examples but seriously, what constitutes musical appropriateness? You always have to immerse yourself in whatever style you're playing (or want to play) and learn what the vocabulary is for that genre/style. Really analyze every part that every instrument is playing, especially the drums, of course. As you do this you'll really begin to understand how to approach that style.

3. CONTROL and DISCIPLINE:
While some gigs call for shooting from the hip and a certain spirit of uncertainty, most pop and rock gigs do not. Don't jump blindly into a fill without having some general idea about what you're going to play, or at least where you're heading. You don't necessarily have to play 'patented licks' but you should have a certain parameter setup so that whatever you play fits into the style and is something you can execute cleanly without sacrificing the time and feel.

Once you see how we've done the variations for this example, hopefully you'll have a good idea about how to vary your own ideas.
Here is the basic rhythmic example used for this fill idea:

On the first page we just have basic variations of voicings, dynamics, and note exclusion. The second page uses ornamentation, meaning it uses the same parts but adds "ornaments" such as flams, diddles, rolls, texturing, etc. Another possibility includes combining those elements for a 3rd page of ideas. We'll leave that up to you and your creativity.

Other considerations are, crashing on one after the fill, no crash on one after the fill, playing kick with the crash, leaving the kick out on the crash, build through the fill, tapering out of the fill, layering other voices on the ideas, filling in the empty space with ghost notes, light rolls, etc. The possibilities really are endless so have fun trying.
Again, now that you see what we mean by variations and how to do it, you give it a try using your ideas.
Happy Drumming!!

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Basic Fill Variations:

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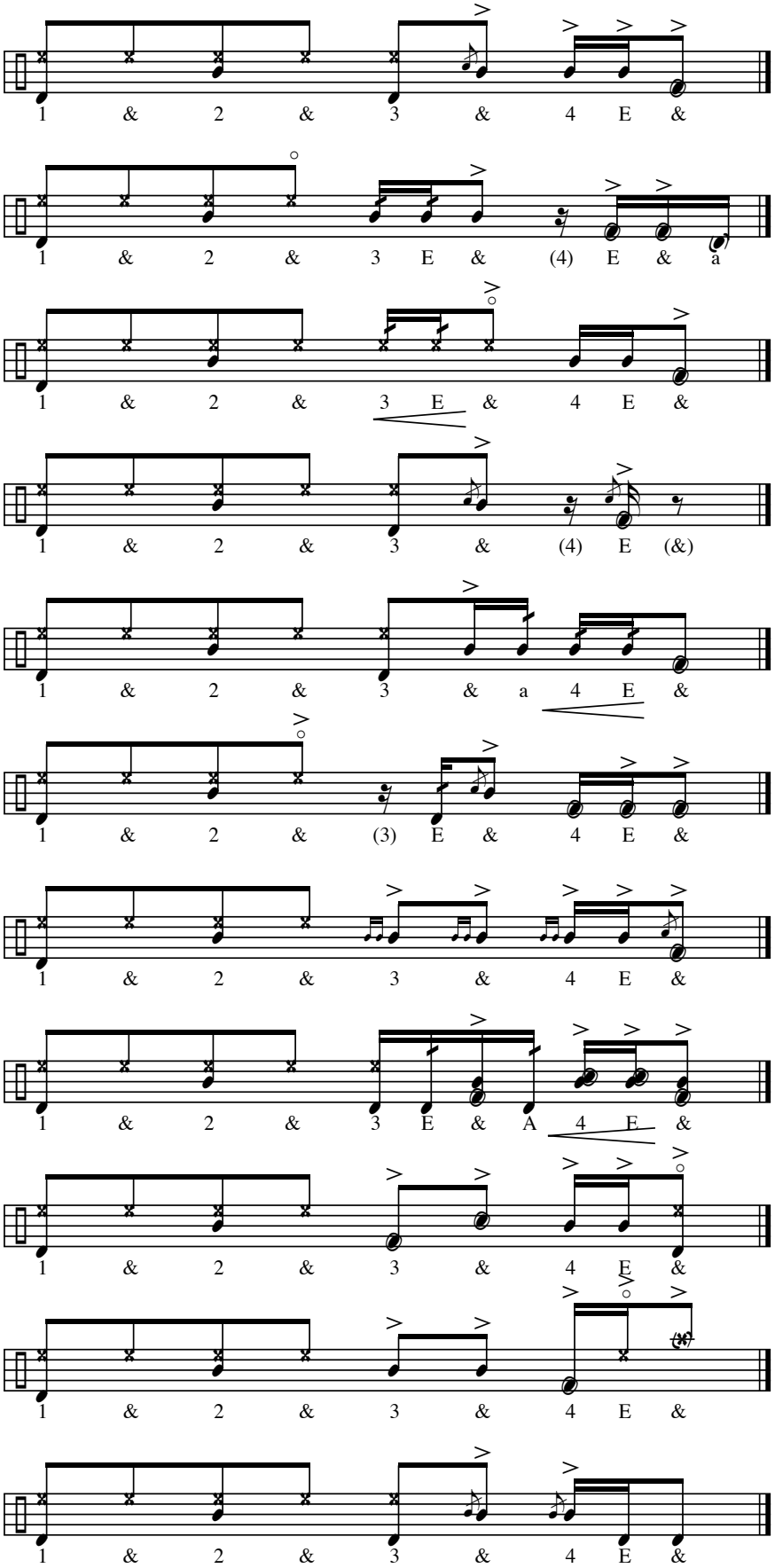
Fill Variations (Ornamentation):



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