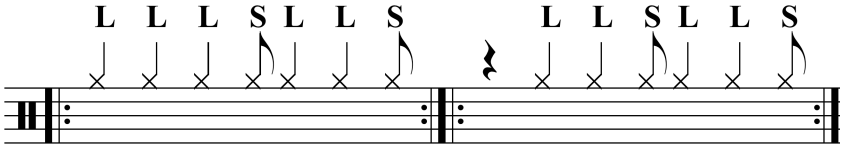
The Whacky Bell Meets 3:2
By Jerry Leake

BELL ANALYSIS

The original bell pattern used for this article has three basic characteristics: a 2-bar phrase with a shift in "feel" from the first bar to the second, no bell strokes played on the downbeat of either bar, and a repeating element to mark consistency in the phrase. This approach is uniquely different from the more traditional binary and ternary bell patterns of African music.

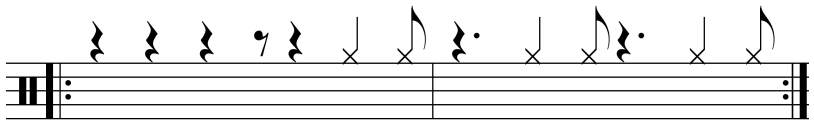
The first bar of my "Whacky Bell" is similar to a popular Afro-Cuban bell pattern built as LLLSLLS (L = long strokes, S = short strokes). This is shown in bar 1 below. For this article the first stroke has been eliminated from the downbeat, as shown in bar 2.

Bell – Bar 1



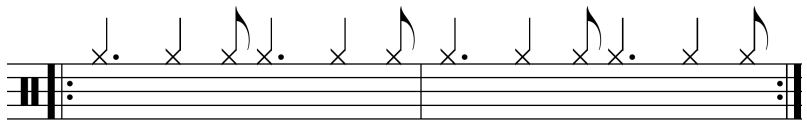
A 1-beat "repeating element" happens three times in the 2-bar phrase. The first element appears on the 4th beat of the first bar, and is repeated on the 2nd and 4th beats of the second bar. To highlight this characteristic all other strikes have been eliminated, as shown below.

Bell – repeating elements



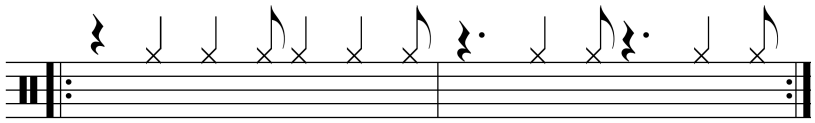
The motif shown above has a "swing-like" quality that is found in a typical jazz ride cymbal pattern (shown below).

Jazz Ride Pattern



The complete 2-bar bell pattern is shown below. As it is applied to the examples that follow, the player will experience a prominent “6” feel in the first bar and a “4” feel in the second.

Whacky Bell: 2-bar phrase

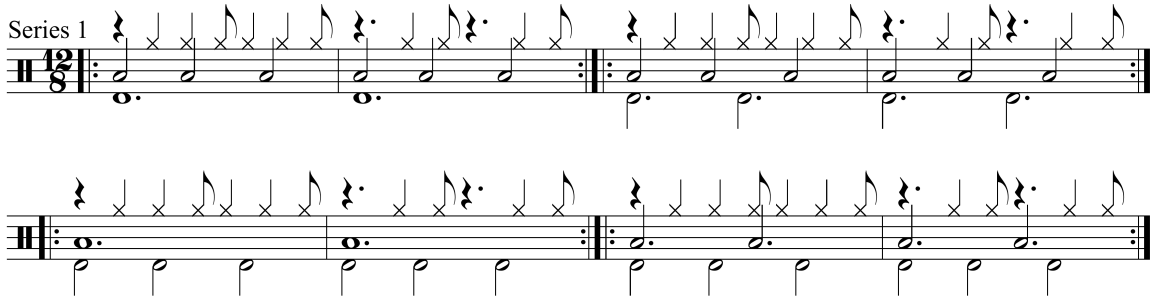


3 : 2 ON DRUMS

As the strong hand plays the 2-bar pattern on cymbal or bell, the weak hand and bass drum explore combinations of 3 over 2 and 2 over 3 (shown in Series 1 below). In the first 2-bar phrase of the first line the snare renders a 3 cross-rhythm in both bars. In the second phrase of the first line the bass drum establishes the “2” cross-rhythm (dotted half notes) to complete the 3:2 relationship with the snare.

As shown in the third and fourth examples (second line) the snare and bass drum have switched roles, resulting in a 2:3 alignment. This model of switching roles will occur for the remaining examples.
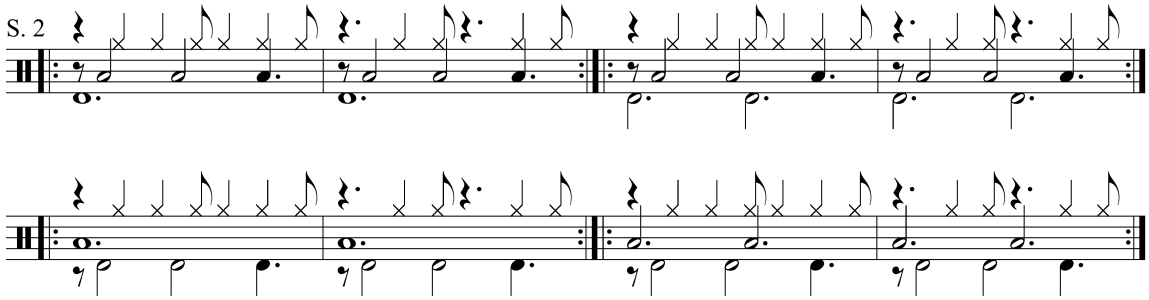
Series 1



Series 2

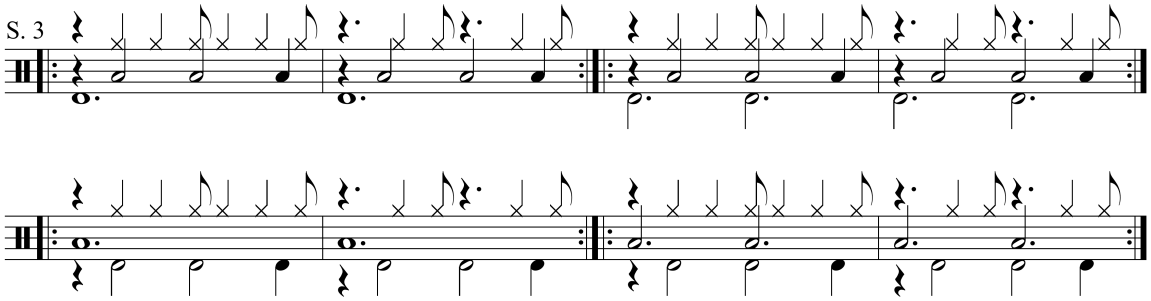
In Series 2 below the previous 3 cross-rhythm that began on the downbeat of each bar has been shifted forward by one 8th note to “second position.” These more challenging and abstract phrases open new doors to rhythm tension and resolution. This is especially true in

the second line where the bass drum is in the 3 cross-rhythm. Repeat each example numerous times.



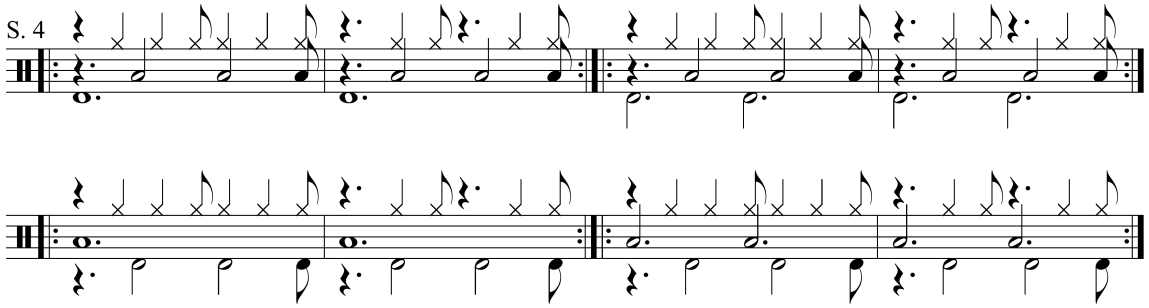
Series 3

Series 3 continues the concept of "rotating" the 3 cross-rhythm to the 3rd position, as shown in the first 2-bar phrase. Phrase substitution and rotation prevail between snare and bass drum.



Series 4

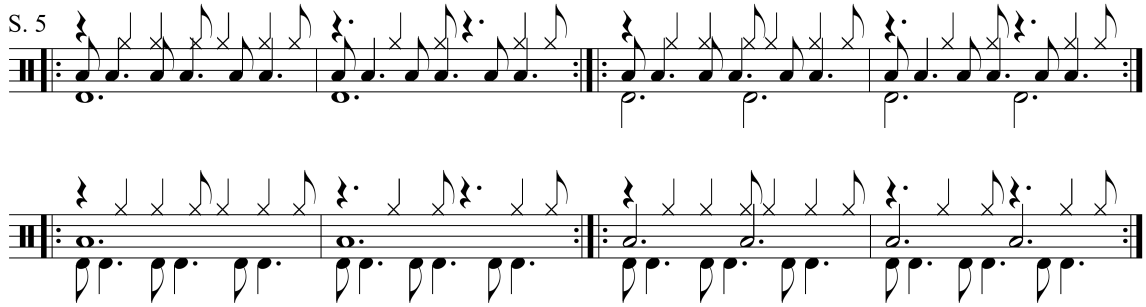
Series 4 marks the fourth and final position of the 3 cross-rhythm. This is indicated by the third hit that appears on the last 8th note of each bar. When Series 1–4 are fully internalized it will be time to move on.



Series 5

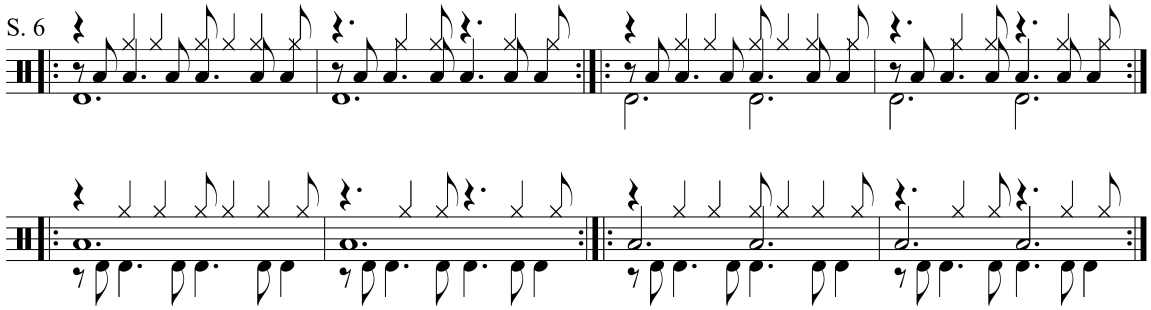
Series 5–8 follow the same model established with 1–4, except there are "double hits" applied to the 3 cross-rhythm. To assist with Series 5, refer back to Series 1 that reveals the first hit of the 3 cross-rhythm in

the same position as those below. The secondary hit of each pair follows the first, like a double bounce.



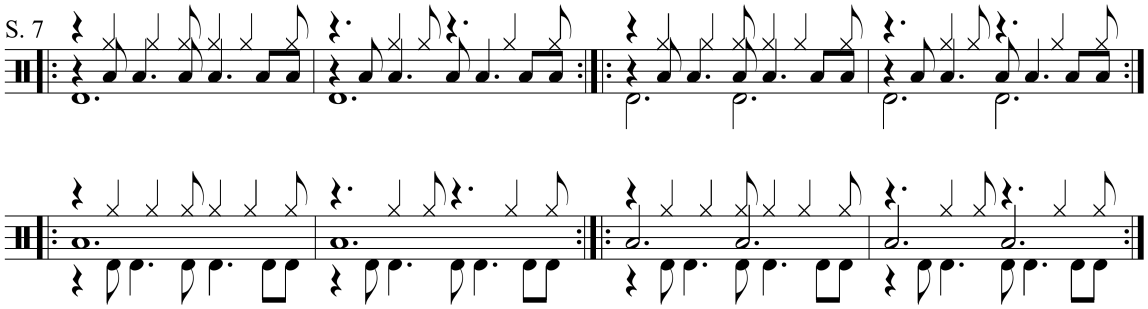
Series 6

Applying double hits to a rotated 3 cross-rhythm adds more complexity to the phrase. To assist with Series 6 below, refer to Series 2 that shares the same starting position of the 3 cross-rhythm.



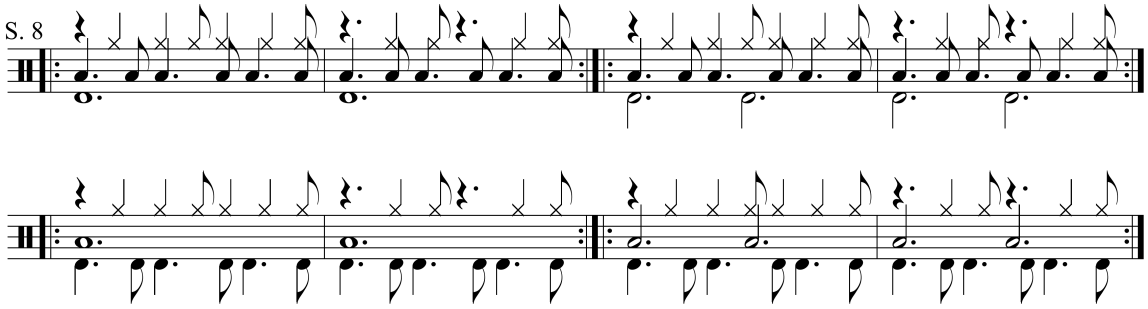
Series 7

Refer to Series 3 to apply the same starting anchor points for both single- and double-hit approaches.



Series 8

Refer to Series 4 to apply the same starting anchor points for both single- and double-hit approaches.



Triple Hits

If you are looking to go deeper, triple hits for the 3 cross-rhythm are possible. However, at a certain point in permutation studies such as this, what is possible may not be what is most musically practical.

Conclusion

Even if you never actually perform any of the phrases presented in this study, the enhanced rhythm vocabulary and independence will strengthen your skill as a musician, composer, and arranger. By seeing what is possible with unusual combinations such as these, retooled instincts will guide you toward new ways to serve the music and your musical soul.