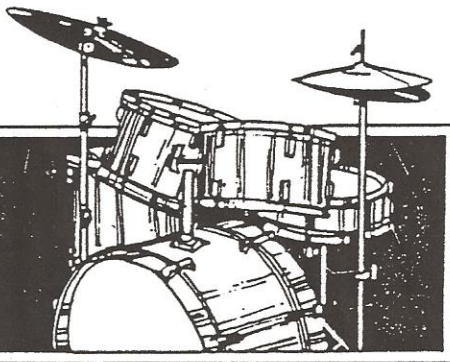


# Drum Set Forum

Ed Soph, editor



## Accent Applications to the Drum Set

by Jack Mouse

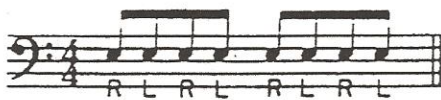
The music dictionary defines an accent as "emphasis or stress on one tone, note, or chord." From this ambiguous definition arises a number of questions. How is the desired accent played? When should an accent be used? What type of accent would be most effective in a particular musical situation?

The most familiar accent is the *Dynamic Accent*. The musical notation for the dynamic accent is: (>). For example:



These accents result from playing the accented notes louder than the unaccented notes. The most important fact to consider when playing dynamic accents is that the accented notes within a rhythmic figure are always relative to the unaccented notes in the figure. Thus, the louder we play the unaccented notes, the louder we must play the accented ones. If not dealt with in a musical manner, the dynamic balance of the entire ensemble will be disrupted.

A beginning player often has problems eliminating unwanted dynamic accents. In attempting even single



strokes he will play them like this:



This is obviously a technical problem.

The right hand is stronger than the left. He might also execute them this way,



using the accents as a time-keeping device.

Another type of accent is the *Tonic Accent*. The tonic accent results from a higher pitch. Higher pitches tend to "stand out" or to imply more emphasis than lower pitches. Try this pattern between the small tom and the floor tom:

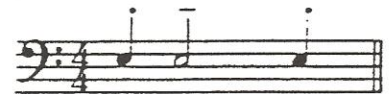


You can hear that the notes on the small tom are emphasized in relation to the notes on the floor tom.

The obvious musical problem is one of selection. Which drums (or cymbals) ought to be used when playing a rhythmic figure? A thorough awareness of the tonic accent should enable the drummer to play more melodically.

The final type of accent is the *Agogic Accent*. The agogic accent results from notes of longer duration which imply more emphasis than notes of shorter duration. We have long sounds (cymbals) and short sounds (drums) on the drum set. The hi-hat is capable of both effects. The player may play an agogic accent on the hi-hat by "splashing" the cymbals to achieve a sound of longer duration or he may produce a sound of shorter duration by closing the two cymbals and producing the characteristic "chick" sound.

Knowledge of the agogic accent is very helpful when interpreting a drum chart. Here is a rhythmic figure which appears often in drum charts:



The dot (·) over the first and fourth beats indicates that a short, or staccato note is played. The dash (—) over the half note indicates that a longer sounding note is played. The short quarter notes ought to be played on the drums and the longer half note on the cymbals (or cymbal). Upon listening to this figure you will notice that the second beat (the half note) is emphasized, thus producing an agogic accent.

By this time you have probably guessed that these three types of accents may be used individually and in combinations. For instance, a single accent can be both dynamic and tonic, dynamic and agogic, or tonic and agogic. For that matter, a single accent may be dynamic, tonic and agogic.

Unfortunately, these three types of accents are often neglected by drummers. As you listen to recordings, or when you attend a live performance, notice how all of the melodic/harmonic players use these accents.

I hope that you have found the information in this article enlightening and that you can apply it as a tool towards achieving a higher level of musicianship.

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