

# Swing Interpretations

## Modern Groove Applications

by Stephane Chamberland



**There's an interesting relationship** between two-note (binary) and three-note (ternary) subdivisions that can help you develop better vocabulary and feel on the drumset. To understand this relationship, play an 8th-note triplet with your right hand while playing a straight 8th-note subdivision with your left hand, as demonstrated in Exercise 1. Try switching the hands, or move one of the hand's phrases to the bass drum or hi-hat foot. For example, play the triplet with your left foot while playing straight 8th notes with your right hand. Another option is to play the triplet with your left hand on the hi-hat while playing straight 8th notes with the bass drum. These variations can open the door to some interesting ostinatos.

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You can also interpret straight 8th notes by using an 8th-note triplet subdivision. In other words, two 8th notes will equal an 8th-note triplet without the second partial. Ted Reed's seminal book *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* contains plenty of material to help you practice this interpretation. It's important to master this concept in order to play the different swing variations we'll explore in this article. Start by taking a look at the following exercise, and notice the difference in two interpretations.

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When you apply this interpretation to funk grooves, you will discover many interesting ways to swing the notes in order to change the feel and essence of the groove. Let's explore some of the ways to swing straight 8th- and 16th-note patterns.

Frist we'll play a groove as written with a straight feel. Play along to a metronome, and make sure to play the ghost notes softly. You can also add accents to the hi-hat rhythm and modify the bass drum pattern for variations of the following exercises.

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Shuffle and jazz are closely related, so it's important to practice comping patterns with both jazz and shuffle ride patterns. As we shift into an 8th-note triplet subdivision, we'll start with a shuffle pattern. You'll also have to adjust the feel of the snare and bass drum parts. If a snare or kick note falls between two 8th notes on the ride, keep it between the cymbal partials, as demonstrated in the following exercises.

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Also try using a jazz ride pattern by removing the third triplet partials of beats 1 and 3 from the shuffle pattern. With this concept, you can turn any shuffle groove into a jazz pattern.

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Next we'll try swinging 16th notes. This interpretation only affects the "e" and "a" of each beat—8th notes will remain even. In the following exercises, we'll swing the 16th notes by displacing them by one 32nd note. Steve Jordan and other masters often play with this type of feel.

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Once you understand these concepts, apply them to other grooves, and compose your own patterns with a swing feel.

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