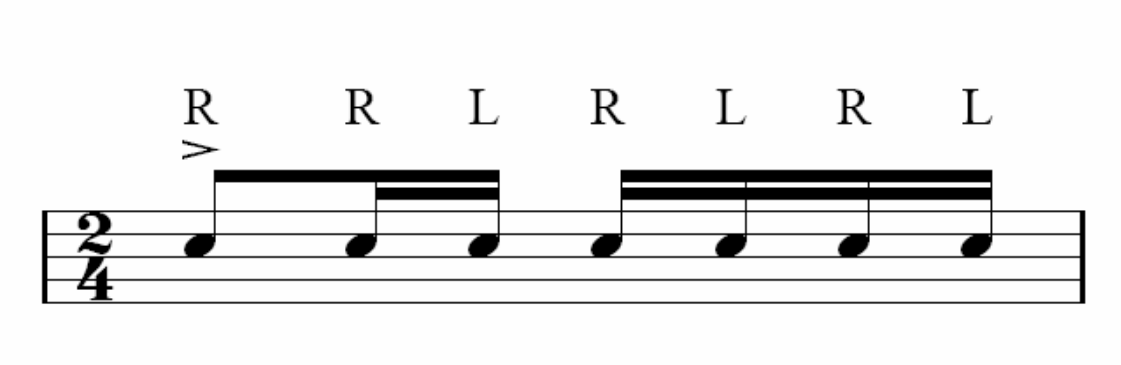
Pete Lockett – Fast Indian stickings involving singles.

This lesson involves a sticking approach which is really useful for executing very fast clusters of sixteenths or thirty second notes using singles. The idea came about when I recently had to execute some fast Indian style rhythmic passages on Bongos. In the past I had articulated these patterns with doubles combined with singles which seemed to work fine on drums such as Darabouka and also with drums played with sticks. Unfortunately, by using doubles on the bongos a lot of the attack and aggression of the patterns was lost. The other problem was that continually leading with the right made if very hard to articulate these patterns at fast speed for long periods. It lead me to the development of a set of phrases involving singles which alternate between right lead and left lead.

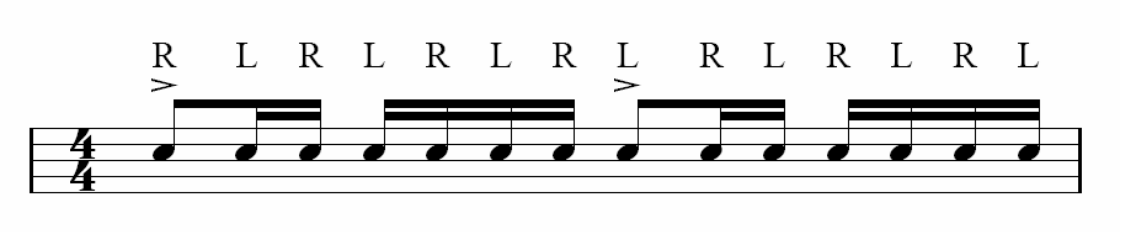
Take this phrase for example;

EX 1



It makes sense to play it as written, always leading with the right. However, try playing it like this;

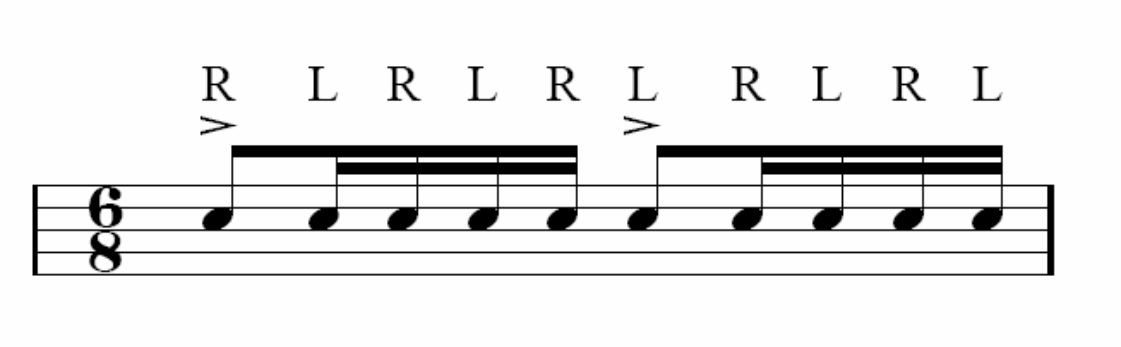
EX 2 - 4 1/8th note unit, forward and reverse.



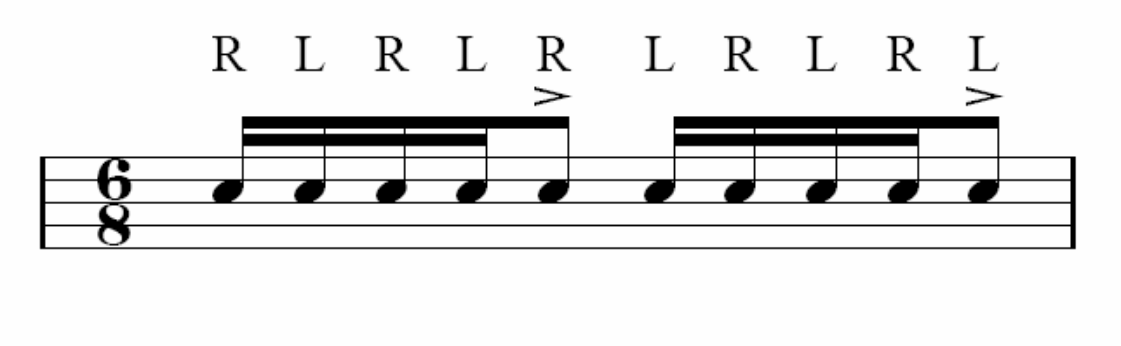
I guarantee that with a small amount of practice you will be able to get this a lot faster than example 1. In ex 1 the right hand is continuous and never gets a break. In Ex 2 the work is divided more evenly between the hands. The issue here is getting the left hand as strong as the right. The importance of this cannot be over emphasised.

Having embraced this concept lets get a few building blocks of various lengths so we can develop some more interesting patterns and phrases.

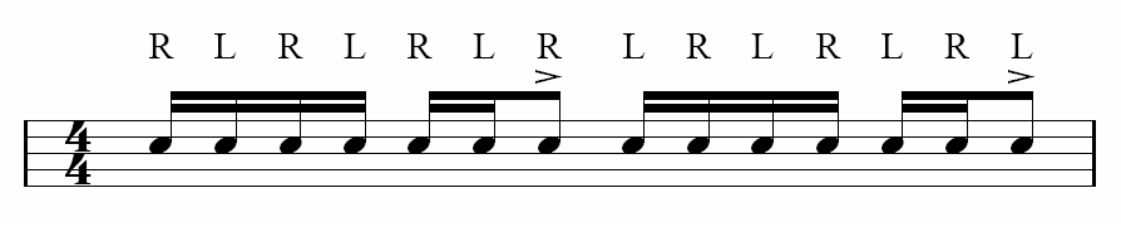
Ex 3 – 3 1/8th note unit, forward and reverse.



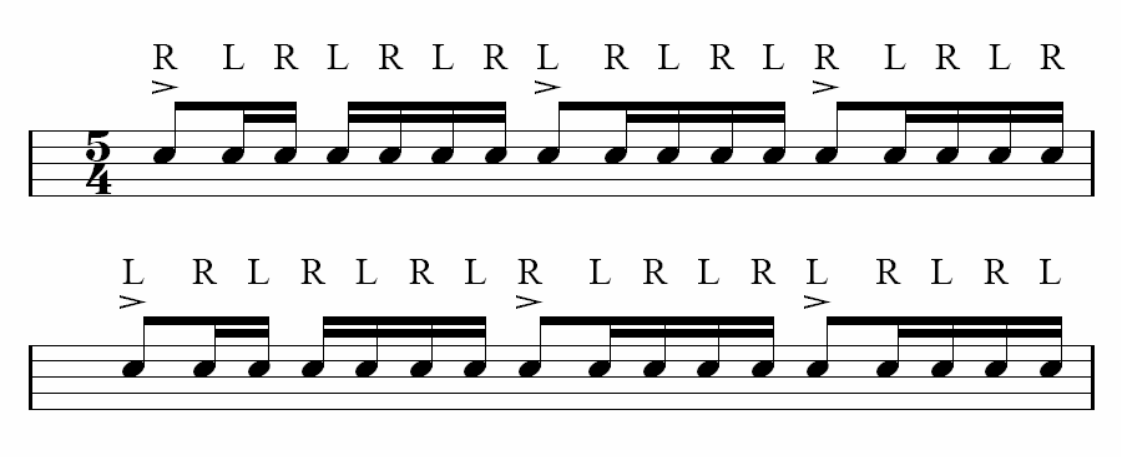
Ex 4 - 3 1/8th note unit, forward and reverse offset.



Ex 5 - 4 1/8th note unit, forward and reverse offset.



Ex 6 - 5/4 unit, forward and reverse.



Notice that with example six it is a much longer and more interesting phrase. (Obviously this can be offset as in the previous offset examples). This is where we want to get with this concept with the objective of being able to improvise freely in sixteenths and thirty seconds moving backwards and forwards between right and left lead. It can lead to some interesting accents on either hand which can be played on other drums, cymbals etc. It is also for integration into the 'left hand lead' style of playing used by players such as Simon Phillips.

Now we will we will elaborate on some of these 'reverse phrasing' patterns. Remember, this is a good way to articulate fast sixteenth and thirty second note clusters and phrases alternating right and left hand lead. The results can be similar to some of the phrasing you hear in Indian percussion. Check out some of the recent stuff by Steve Smith and Russ Miller, along with the amazing music of Shakti with John Mclaughlin. Also, there is a piece on Benny Grebb's new DVD that we did together where these type of phrases have been used.

Lets take some simple additions to create patterns in 4/4.

3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 16

This simple mathematical approach is great to build rhythmic patterns using simple building blocks. For example, if you were working in 5/4 then you could have;

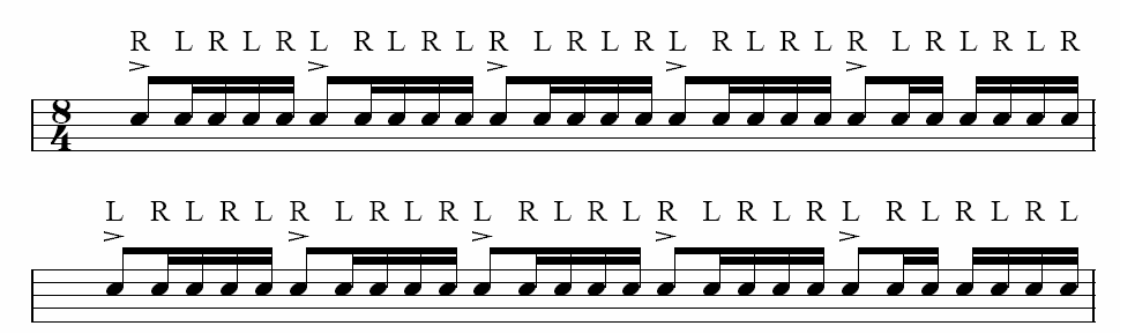
3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 4 = 20

or;

3 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 20

The possible permutations are endless. It also makes working in odd time signatures a lot easier. Lets look at our 4/4 equation and use the rhythmic motifs from last months article. (I will notate these in their individual components to make the concept clearer. It means writing these first two examples in 8/4).

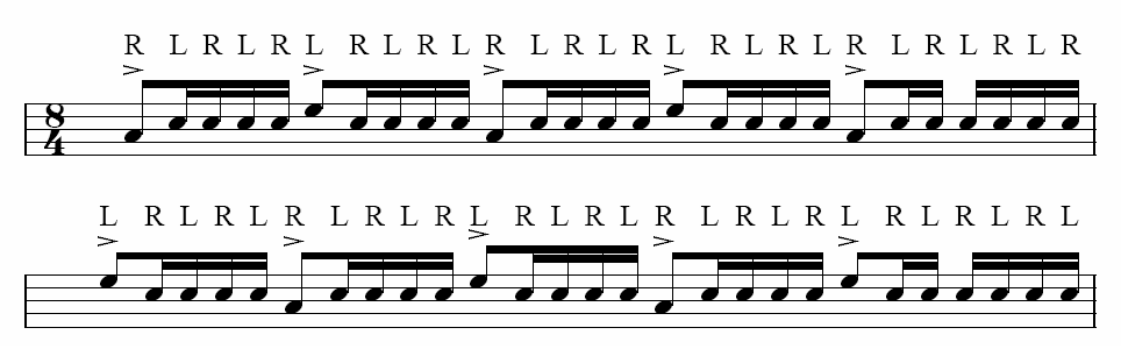
EX 1 (3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 16)



Notice how this spans over two 4/4 bars because we end on the right with the last stroke in the first bar and therefore begin with the left in the second bar.

Now lets orchestrate some of these accents out on the toms.

Ex 2 (3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 16 with accents on toms)

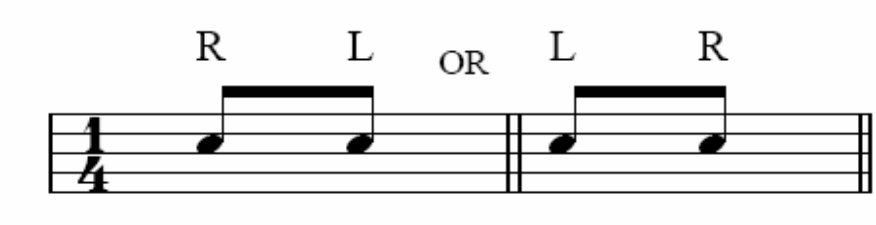


You can use these components in any order. They will always add up to 4/4 (8/4)

3 3 4 3 3
3 3 3 4 3
3 4 3 3 3 Etc.

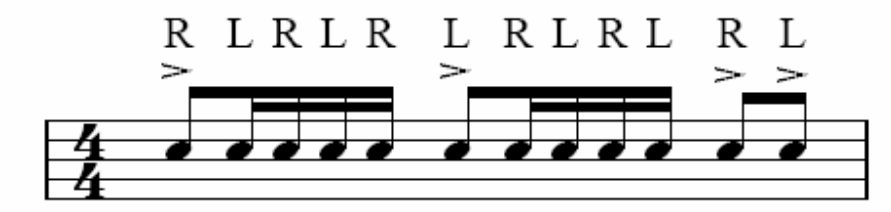
Now we will add a simple 2/8 unit to our core phrases which will give us a little more choice in building patterns.

Ex 3 New core phrases in 2/8



Now using this and the 3/8 phrase we will create a simple new 4/4 pattern

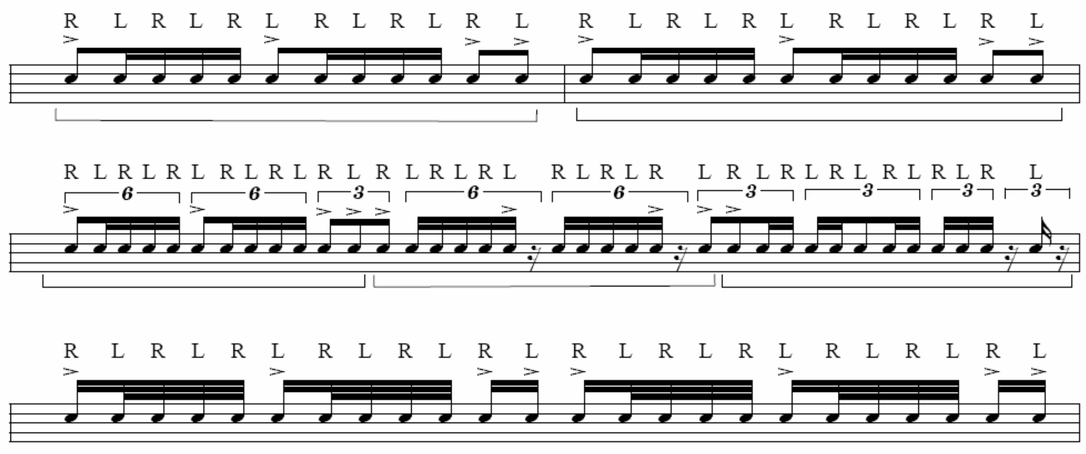
Ex 4



Now we will modulate this through three time levels, sixteenths, sixteenth triplets and thirty second notes. Depending on the tempo, these patterns can sound great as sixteenths but they are truly

ripping as thirty second notes. Modulation through triplets is also a great exercise. Bear in mind you are not learning anything new technically here apart from how you 'HEAR' the phrase. Playing a quarter note foot ostinato through this will help the understanding of this a lot. Do it with a metronome. Start slowly and build up. It develops an understanding of gear shifts often used by great players such as Keith Carlock.

Ex 5 Modulation through three time levels.



I have indicated the phrase lengths under the notation to ease understanding. It is not always immediately apparent how to find a direct application for things like this. However, it continues to develop and push your rhythmic skill sets and every min spent in the practice room working on material like this puts you in a stronger position technically to achieve the goals you aspire to as a player. Keep working and searching but above all, keep believing. Do not expect the results to be instant and be patient.

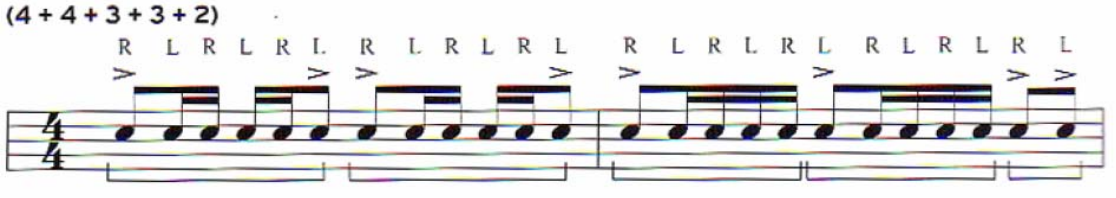
Now we will conclude our look at the 'reverse phrasing' patterns we have been developing. These stickings are good for any single or multi toned percussion instruments, from snare drum to Congas, drum set and tuned percussion. Below I am going to notate each example on one line but I want you to go through all the following steps with each one.

1. As written
2. Play all 'R' accents on floor tom and all 'L' accents on the small tom

3. Add quarter note foot ostinato. (Also, work on other common foot ostinatos as well, such as left foot clave etc)
4. Play four bars at sixteenth note level and then four bars of thirty second note level. Do this with and without the foot ostinato.

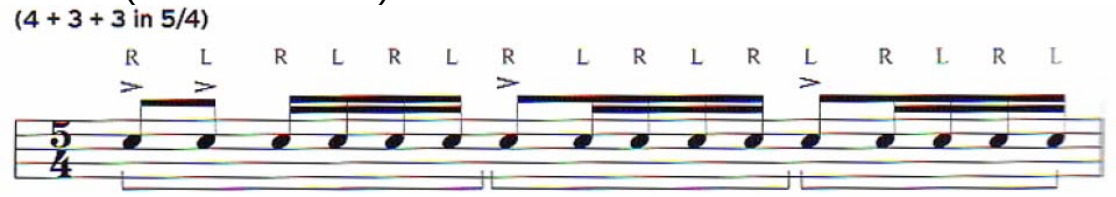
I will indicate the phrase lengths underneath each example. Remember though, these are only the phrases we have already looked at in the previous articles. However, sometimes these are displaced and / or slightly altered. The concept however remains the same.

Ex 1 (4 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 2)



Ex 2 (3 + 3 + 4 + 3 + 3)

Ex 3 (4 + 3 + 3 in 5/4)



Example 4 is slightly more elaborate. It takes the 5/4 bar in example 3 and repeats it twice and then extends it further with four repeats of the 3/8 phrase. This clearly shows the use of the odd length phrases in creating interesting phrases in common time signatures. I have written this one as a single bar of 16/4 to make the individual phrases more apparent. It could similarly be written as four bars of 4/4.

This would be a great basis for a two bar fill or else a ripper as thirty second notes!

Ex 4

Adding these approaches to your playing will greatly increase your rhythmic vocabulary. In the beginning you might find yourself using memorised phrases. This is fine but the goal would ideally be to improvise with these concepts and come up with variations and patterns on the spot. It flows easily because of the hand to have reverse motion so once you become familiar with that and the left becomes equally balanced with the right, you should be well set to go.