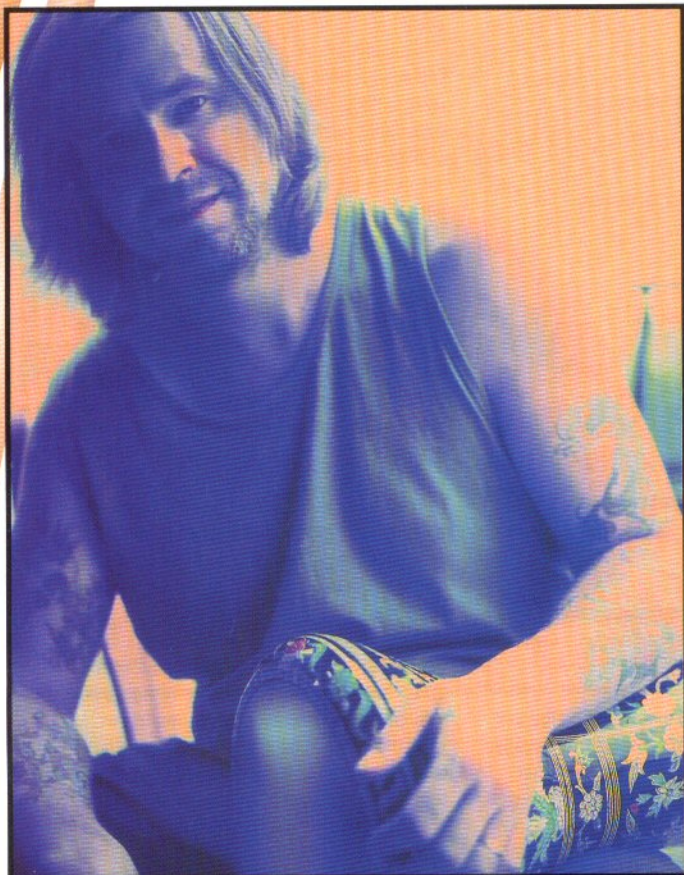


# PICK UP THE PIECES



## Part 2. Peter Lockett gets to work on some of the staples of the jobbing percussionist's art

This month we'll begin taking a look at a few different sound colour combinations using elements from the percussion set-up I described last month. First up we'll take a look at the most used instrument on pop sessions ever – the simple shaker. It's easy to overlook an instrument such as the shaker but, for the amount of times it's asked for, it really is worth spending some time with it at lots of different tempos. Some tempos, particularly some medium slow ones, are absolute agony to perform smoothly for a whole song. Both your forearm and shoulder muscles begin to lock up, making it easy for you to lose concentration.

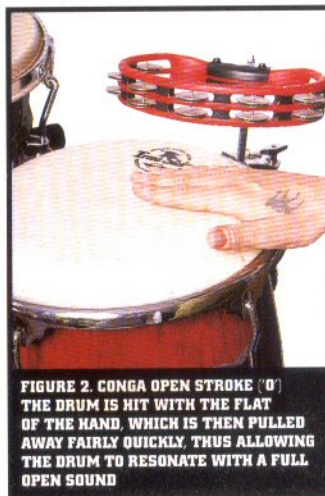
We'll start by looking at two semi-quaver based patterns before

adding some other rhythmic components with the left hand. Hold the shaker with your right hand, as shown in **Figure 1**.

Now, by moving it sharply backwards and forwards you should begin to get a regular pattern going – the internal beads hitting the inside front and inside back of the shaker. You should avoid any slushy movement of the beads



**FIGURE 1. THE CORRECT WAY TO HOLD A SHAKER. HAND TATTOO OPTIONAL.**



**FIGURE 2. CONGA OPEN STROKE ('O')** THE DRUM IS HIT WITH THE FLAT OF THE HAND, WHICH IS THEN PULLED AWAY FAIRLY QUICKLY, THUS ALLOWING THE DRUM TO RESONATE WITH A FULL OPEN SOUND

quite often used in Brazilian music

**Exercise 3** sees us making all the notes equal with accents. This is an excellent way to pick up a chorus or subtly lift the music. It's amazing the effect a good shaker take can have on



**FIGURE 3. CONGA MUTE STROKE ('M')** THE DRUM IS HIT WITH THE FLAT HAND, INCLUDING THE BASE OF THE WRIST. IT IS LEFT ON THE HEAD MOMENTARILY AFTER STRIKING. IF THE DRUM IS AWAY FROM THE FLOOR A WARM, BASSY, MUFFLED TONE SHOULD RESULT

around the inside bottom of the shaker. The movement should always be away from you on the beat and towards you off the beat:

Now we'll add an accent on the quarter note as in **Exercise 2**. This is a very common way to play shaker,

**Ex 1**

**Ex 2**

**Ex 3**

**Ex 4**

**Ex 5**

**Ex 6**

**Ex 7**

**Ex 8**

**Ex 9**

**FIGURE 1. THE CORRECT WAY TO HOLD A SHAKER. HAND TATTOO OPTIONAL.**

**Ex 10**

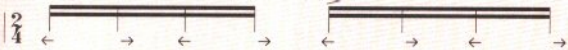
Tambourine held vertical



(arrows indicate direction of sideways shaking)

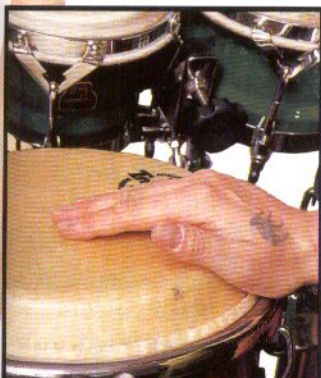
**Ex 11**

Tambourine held vertical with accents



but the pattern starts on beat two instead of beat one. Now we'll combine this with our shaker pattern (Exercise 6). I've omitted the arrows from the shaker pattern to ease congestion in the transcription. Refer to Exercise 1 if there is any confusion. Also, for now, play the 3/4 left hand pattern on a cowbell or woodblock to get familiar with the feel.

Now we'll take a look at the three basic strokes on the congas – open, slap and mute (Figures 2, 3 and 4). I



**FIGURE 4. CONGA SLAP STROKE ('S'):** FOR THIS STROKE THE DRUM IS HIT SHARPLY WITH THE HAND CUPPED. THE FINGERTIPS GRAB ONTO THE HEAD AND PULL TOWARDS THE PLAYER SLIGHTLY TO CREATE A SHARP, STACCATO, SLAPPING SOUND

a track, especially if there are a few rhythmic discrepancies which need bringing together. I look at the shaker as a sort of rhythmic bonding agent.

Now we'll combine shaker pattern number one with patterns derived from what has been nicknamed the Brazilian 4/3 clave. The concept of this pattern is most easily explained by looking at it (Exercise 4).

But, like many idiomatic musics, the feel comes from displacing it into an offbeat position (Exercise 5).

This is exactly the same as Exercise 4



**FIGURE 5. PLAYING THE SHAKER PART ON A TAMBOURINE IS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO CREATE SOME VARIATION**

will do this with brevity and suggest a bit of research with some dedicated conga study books. This series sets out to look at the broader picture rather than the details – and there's a lot of those where congas are concerned.

Now we'll look at a few variations of the 3/4 clave using these strokes in

the left hand with the shaker pattern in the right hand. These are only a starting point and should get you on the road to creating many variations of your own. Be aware, however, that these patterns are not traditionally Brazilian in any sense.

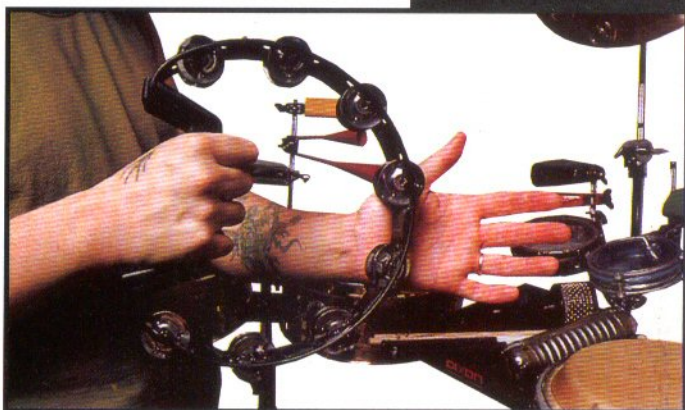
Alternatively, you could come up with some high-low melodies on the agogo bells. Start with the basis of

**Exercise 7** by making the open tone into the low bell and the slap into the high bell. **Exercises 8 and 9** can be transposed onto three bells. Try all these patterns with both shaker patterns (Exercise 1 and 2). Alternatively, for a different sound colour, play the shaker patterns with a tambourine (Figure 5).

We'll end with the backing singer's virtuoso tambourine part – basic, but always in demand. The tambourine is held vertically (Figure 6), and is shaken 'stiffly' from side to side. The accents in **Exercise 11** are created by hitting the hand as in Figure 7. That's all for now... ♦



**FIGURE 6. THE CLASSIC 'BACKING SINGER' TAMBOURINE METHOD. CLEAVAGE AND BIG HAIR OPTIONAL**



**FIGURE 7. CREATE ACCENTS BY HITTING THE TAMBOURINE AGAINST THE OPEN HAND**