

LESSON #28:

BASIC ROCK RHYTHMS

The bass player's most important role in a rock band is to work with the drummer and lay down a solid groove. Rhythmic contribution is just as important as playing the right notes or adding melody to your bass lines. It's essential that bass players are familiar with the drum beat and in sync with what the kick and snare drum are playing. You may not always be playing the exact same beats as the kick drum, but it's usually a good place to start and will ensure that you're locked in with the drummer.

Let's start off with some basic counting. In most rock and blues, the music is divided into measures of four beats, known as 4/4 time. When a band counts off, "One, two, three, four" at the beginning of a song, it represents one complete measure of music. Different types of notes are held for different durations within a measure. For example, a quarter note gets one beat because a quarter note is held for one quarter of the measure. Quarter notes are counted as "one, two, three, four." If we divide those notes in half, we get eighth notes. Eighths can be counted as "one-and, two-and, three-and, four-and." We can further divide eighth notes in half to create 16th notes, which are counted "one-ee-and-uh, two-ee-and-uh," etc.

The example below shows the notation for quarter notes, eighth notes, and 16th notes, with counting prompts displayed between the notation and tab staves.

EXAMPLE 1



Moderately slow

Count: 1, 2, 3, 4 1 - and, 2 - and, 3 - and, 4 - and 1 - ee-and-uh, 2 - ee-and-uh, 3 - ee-and-uh, 4 - ee-and-uh

Now let's mix some quarters, eighths, and 16ths together within measures to create some typical patterns. Listen closely to the drums to familiarize yourself with each beat and what the kick drum and snare are doing.

EXAMPLE 2



Moderately

Count: 1, 2, 3 - and, 4 1, 2, 3 - and, 4 - and 1 - and, 2, 3 - and, 4 1 - and-uh, 2 - and-uh, 3 - and-uh, 4 - and-uh

One of the most popular ways to lay down a rock-solid groove is to play exclusively on the kick drum and rest on the snare drum hits on beats 2 and 4. This is the most basic way to give life to the groove and let it breathe.

The example below shows four different variations of a simple kick-drum pattern. Practice locking in with the kick drum while keeping your foot tapping in steady quarter notes—"one, two, three, four"—and you'll begin to feel the groove as it takes shape.

EXAMPLE 3



Moderately

Count: 1, (2) and, 3, (4) 1, (2) and, 3, (4) and 1, (2) and, 3 - and, (4) and 1 - and, (2) and, 3 - and, (4) and