

# BRUSH TIME

by Adam Nussbaum



For many, the brushes in particular have been a mystery because of the different kinds of motion required to articulate the time.

The brushes can be played in vertical motion like sticks. But their truly unique trait is in the way they can be played in a circular horizontal manner that creates a wonderful feeling.

When brushes are played this way, you're not only articulating the beat, but also playing the space between the beats. This creates a legato flow that has made me aware of hearing that space. This has had a positive effect on my stick playing as well. I'm now more aware of the width of the beat.

Now you probably wonder how can we articulate this with the brushes?

Try this exercise. It's easier than it sounds. Take a snare drum and look

at the batter head as if it were a clock. 12 o'clock at the top, 3 o'clock on the right, 6 o'clock at the bottom, and 9 o'clock on the left. See the diagram below.

(Ex. 1) Put your **left** hand at **9** o'clock. That's the starting place, **beat 1**. Now sweep up **clockwise** past 12, and downwards to **3** o'clock, **beat 2**. Continue the sweeping motion down past 6, and back upward to **9** o'clock, which is now, **beat 3**. Keep moving up past 12 and down over to **3** o'clock, now **beat 4**. Continue the motion around to **beat 1**. Repeat and keep this clock-wise motion **smooth** and seamless. You now have made two 360-degree motions, each equaling a half note.

What about the other hand? We just start in a different place and go the other direction but the same concept holds true. (Diagram ex.1)

(Ex. 2) Put the **right** hand at **3** o'clock. That's the starting place, **beat 1**. Now sweep **counter clock-wise** up past 12, and downwards to **9** o'clock, **beat 2**. Continue the sweeping motion down past 6, and back up to **3** o'clock, **beat 3**. Keep moving up

past 12, down back to **9** o'clock and **beat 4**. Continue the motion around to **beat 1**. Repeat and keep the counter clock-wise motion **smooth**. (Diagram ex. 2)

Within this system the beat can be subdivided many ways. Here's one way. Divide the drum into eighth notes. **12** o'clock can be the **1 and**, also **3 and**, **6** o'clock can be the **2 and**, also the **4 and**. Another way is to divide the drum into triplet segments. These divisions can help you gauge the speed of your motion (the time) and keep it even.

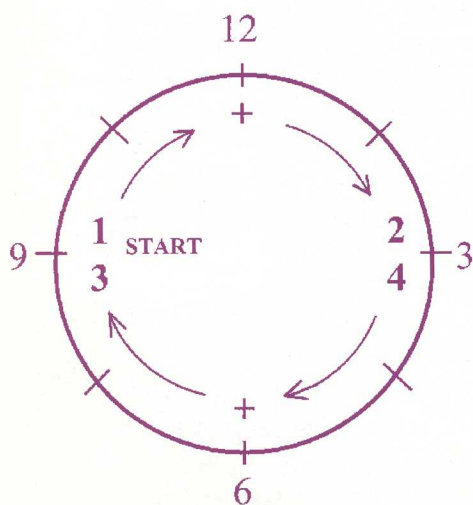
Remember this equation: **motion = time & time = motion**. The slower the tempo means you have more space and a bigger motion. The faster the tempo means less space and a smaller motion. Try to apply different kinds of sticking articulations to the brushes. Experiment!!!

Listen to the greats and watch how everyone has their own choreography. Having some knowledge of the brushes has expanded my tonal palette and generally improved my playing.

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Ex. 1

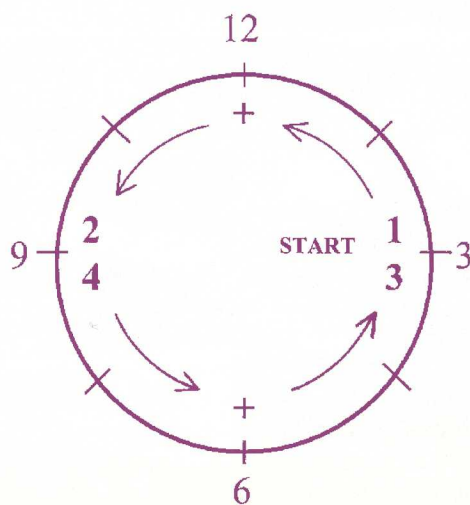
## LEFT HAND



CLOCKWISE

Ex. 2

## RIGHT HAND



COUNTER CLOCKWISE

## ADAM NUSSBAUM

His most recent work has been with the John Abercrombie Organ Trio and the James Moody Quartet. He has worked with such artists as John Scofield, Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, The Michael Brecker Band, Gary Burton and many more. Within his busy work schedule, Adam finds time as Music Educator at "The New School" and also as an Adjunct Professor at New York University.

