

# **Building a Stylistic Concept**

By Steve Houghton

Drumming is 50% concept and 50% technique. Many drummers seem to have very good technical skills, but very little conceptual knowledge of the style of music they are attempting to play. A player must build a broad conceptual foundation to properly interpret any style of music. Then of course, application, or putting all of the ideas and concepts to work on a regular basis is the key. A drummer who doesn't get out of the practice room to try and play with live musicians will develop at a much slower pace and most certainly won't develop the interactive skills that a contemporary musician must have.

## **LISTENING:**

- Learn the history
- Famous drummers
- Famous standard tunes
- Understand song forms
- Transcribe tunes/solos
- Attend live performances

## **TECHNIQUE:**

- Develop independence
- Independence exercises may vary from style to style. For example, in jazz, we try and keep a ride cymbal beat going while we practice snare drum and bass drum ideas underneath. In Latin, we might keep a "clave" going in the right hand or a cascara in the right hand, as we work on different rhythmic ideas with the other limbs.
- Develop touch, sound, and phrasing.

## **APPLICATION:**

- This is perhaps the most important facet of the development because it is a chance to put your ideas and concepts to the test.
- Play along with tracks every day; definitive recordings, play-along methods.
- Play with real musicians at every opportunity.
- Be aware of the phrasing of the other players in the rhythm section.
- Key in on the phrasing of the soloist.
- Be aware of the song form when performing.
- Analyze/emulate classic drummers when playing. Make an effort to sound like someone else at some point. It is healthy to really understand what makes a certain player sound the way they do.
- Develop your own style and sound.